

Lower School Parents Association Meeting Agenda - NOTES

Date: 9/4/2025, 8:30 a.m.

I. **Welcome (2-3 minutes)**

year. It's been a great start to the year.

Shefali Shah- 2 kids. We have 4 meetings this

Jen Greenberg - 2 kids in 1st grade.

II. **Lower School Administration Update**

Nancy Fleury

A. 4 children. Students are off to a great start. Weather has been amazing. Kids are enthusiastic and energetic. 3 goals that we are focusing on this year for a great year. Had a retreat this summer with Ben and Kara where we discussed these.

1. Utilize student data to provide targeted instruction. Test scores, progress tracking so that we can meet individual needs this year.
2. Strengthen our partnership with families through proactive communication. Shared commitment to character, values and academic excellence.
3. Expand use of Responsive Classroom for social emotional development. Focuses on the whole child.

Kara Zimmerman

Associate head of lower school PK - 1st grade. 17th year. 3 children - 2 in lower school, 1 in middle. Last year - rolled out common expectations. Silent signal and noise level that we're using in various spaces. This summer we brought a bunch of teachers together to strengthen our approach. Have to build the foundation first before we get into higher cognitive load. First 6 weeks of school - focus on social emotional learning. Community building and establishing routines. Being as proactive as possible with those responses to behaviors, emphasizing learning from missteps. Mistakes will happen our job is to wrap our arms around students and help them learn and grow from their mistakes. Students will feel self regulated and feel safe, known and valued.

Ben Thompson

Associate head for grade 2-4. Year 18, but first year at McDonogh. 2 boys - 8th grader and 10th grader. So in all 3 schools. Parent Partnership. Value of lifelong educators. Really everyone in this room is a lifelong educator, you will always be a parent. We want to augment that so our partnership comes into play and there are consistent values between home and school for childrens development. Link between home and school and parent involvement plays a critical role. We are trying to be really intentional about our partnership. How can we instill those values at home too and children will thrive. Excited about family partnership and how to augment that. **Nancy** - Parent news coming out on Wednesdays as opposed to Tuesdays this year. Separate button for each division. Will expand on goals at Back to School Night 6:30PM horn theater (parents only).

Picture days coming up Littles on 18th (PK-1st) and 19th (2nd-4th) regular shoes.

Carpool Reminder: Please dont drop children off before 7:55am for safety reasons. Want to make sure teachers are here.

III. **Guest Speaker**

school literacy specialist.

Julie Erb - 11th year at McDonogh. Lower

Caitlyn Sullivan - lower school Learning

Specialist. 9th or 10th year. 4 children. 2 are here.

Discussing Parent partnership through the lens of literacy so that we can raise awesome readers and writers. We have some amazing curriculum programs going and also new this year. Will hear more at back to school night. Wanted to discuss parent engagement today. There are really great ways you can support literacy at home.

All of our curriculum is grounded in the science of reading. 5 Pillars of literacy. Pillars sprinkled throughout these tips and tricks today.

4 E's - Encouragement, Engagement, Expansion and Environment

ENCOURAGE - leaning on your child's passion and what they are already excited about. When they finish a book - making it a big deal. Perseverance - praising their effort. Encourage them to see the connections. "Au" example. Point out when you see a "Caution" sign. Make that connection. Feeding into their passions. Example - if they want to make a Go Ravens sign. Lean into that when they give you that excitement for a literacy opportunity.

ENGAGE - Talk about their day. Engage with their teachers newsletter. Talk about the topics they are learning about and asking them about their experiences. Cuddle up for bedtime stories. Even for 4th graders. Get silly, be playful. Include them in playful opportunities - grocery list, thank you note etc.

EXPAND - There might be a time when a new world shows up in a book. Let's re-read this part...what do you think this means? Expanding on their oral language and in their reading. If there is a new topic at school example, Space - go to the library and take out books.

ENVIRONMENT - All the classrooms have reading nooks - you can do this at home. Creating book bins with seasonal topics. Let your child see you reading and going to the library. Model that value for them.

Remember - books may look different in the classroom compared to at home. Talking about the books you read - keep it light and keep it fun. Explore knowledge topics at home. Try to support what they are learning at school even if it's just a rhyming game in the car.

Parent Question - A lot of kids are reading digitally, is that ok? ... Caitlin - that's fine. That counts even if on a screen. Even listening to a book still counts as something.

Curriculum Programs - BookWorms (K-1st?). Phonemic awareness. Uflli foundations. CKLA (1st -4th) and layering in the Writing Revolution.

Shefali - We do try to have a different speaker at each meeting. Read parent news!

IV. Committee Updates

A. Boxtops

Blaire Miller

Download the boxtop app on the phone and select McDonogh lower school. Goal is \$300. Goes to the general needs of Lower School. Scan your receipts. Will give updates throughout the year. Pretty intuitive. Grade 2 is in the lead.

B. Community Engagement

Tiffany Schwartzberg

Community engagement co-chair with Judy. Lots of events this year. Driving the fun bus for the parents! Only agenda is to have fun and get to know each other. Lower School Parent Get together is Sept 26th - BC Brewery in Hunt Valley, will have appetizers. Can buy some drinks. Please RSVP! Lots of other events in the works: Opportunities to volunteer at Baltimore Hunger Project. Pickleball Event, Mahjong Learning Night

C. Trunk or Treat

Tricia Arend and Steph Slover

New last year. Oct 26th Sunday 3-4:30PM. We will be putting out a link so that you can RSVP and looking for families to decorate cars. MPA taking care of all the candy and will have a prize for the best car. Photobooth. Fun fall event for lower school.

D. New to You Book Sale

Jessica Barnes and Kathy Loden

If you have any books, we are always collecting them throughout the year. Bring to Edith's office.

E. Used Uniform Room

Rachel Cohn and Erika Hurwitz

Had a great turn out for the used uniform sales this summer. You can drop off outside Edith's office. We'll have periodic events when you can pick up clothing. Can also coordinate a time with Rachel/Erika if you need to get some stuff sooner for random growth spurts :)

Upcoming LSPA Events

- I. Thursday, September 11** - Back-to-School Night, 6:30 p.m in Horn Theater (parents only)
- II. Friday, September 26 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.** - Lower School Parent Social at BC Brewery
- III. Friday October 17th - 3:30 - 6:00 pm** - Honey of a Jam Fest at Roots Farm
Whole family event right after school. Fingers crossed good weather. Will be looking for volunteers.
- IV. Friday, October 24th 7:00 to 10:00 p.m** - EagleFest - stay tuned for details.
- V. Sunday, October 26th 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm** - Trunk or Treat at Burke Lot, McDonogh

Parent Comment - November 14th is our first faculty free.

Laurie Rosen - Join the facebook group! Always reminders about events in the group. "Like" the posts! You can always post if on a committee.

Shefali- If at all interested - please reach out to us. Always looking for volunteers.