

Discovery Community School

Steering Meeting Notes

February 5, 2015, 6:30pm

Location: Sandburg Library

6:35p WELCOME Rachel/Susan

6:35p PRINCIPAL'S REPORT Heather

- Islandwood kids returned today—wet but wonderful
- State testing in April and May
 - Teachers are going to have students practice so that they are comfortable with the format
 - Exact dates will appear in *The Informer*
 - Students will only test in the morning, not the afternoon
 - Students will do fine on state testing
- Recess ball issue update
 - Fence will be raised
 - No balls allowed from home
 - Two footballs are designated for recess; one ball for games; one for flyers up

6:40p TEACHER'S REPORT Diane

- Diane reiterated that students will be well-prepared for state testing
- Youngers wrote welcome notes to returning Olders—Olders were happy to get notes

6:45p TREASURER'S REPORT Cris/Matt

- No current report
- checks from Islandwood have been received but not yet deposited

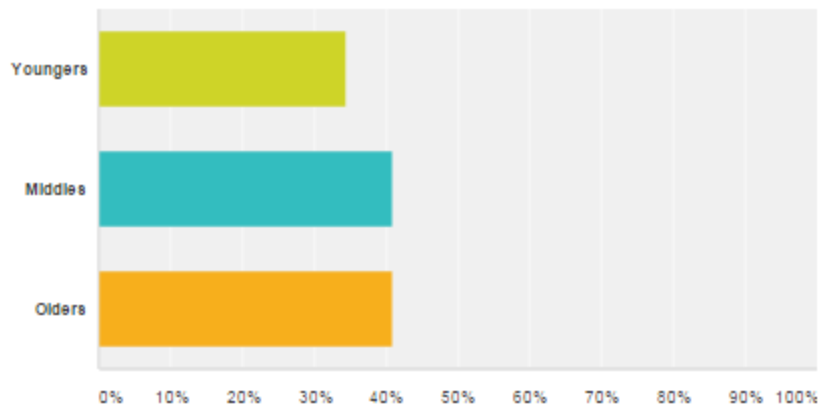
COMMITTEE REPORTS

6:47p NEW BUSINESS Rachel/Susan 45 minutes

- Janet-update on DCS Lottery
 - Took 92 applicants for 7 spots
 - Some of the parents contacted are still considering whether to accept the offer
- A DCS2 Facebook group has been created and populated with some pictures from the DCS site—with student pictures. Several parents concerned about this. Jennifer agreed to contact the group and ask them to remove the pictures.
- Upcoming Budget Process—Susan wants to remind us about budget discussions. The budget will begin soon to be approved in the community meeting in March
 - Budget to be prepared by Cris/Matt
- Islandwood—Amy. Groups led by college-aged students. Students learned a great deal about teamwork, the world of nature, stacking dishes, among others. Thanks to Cheryl and parent chaperones for all their work.
- Survey Results from Survey Monkey

Which class does your child attend? (you can check more than one box)

Answered: 61 Skipped: 2

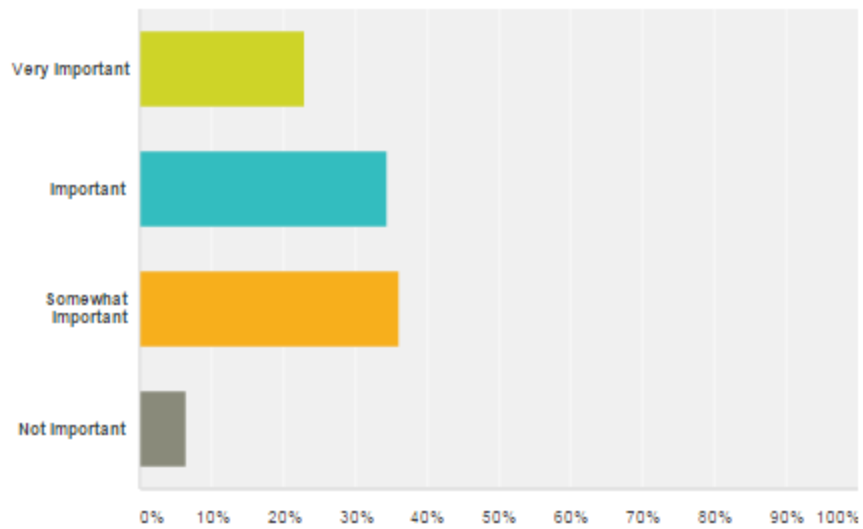


Answer Choices	Responses
Youngers	34.43% 21
Middles	40.98% 25
Olders	40.98% 25

Total Respondents: 61

How important are the DCS Community meetings for your family?

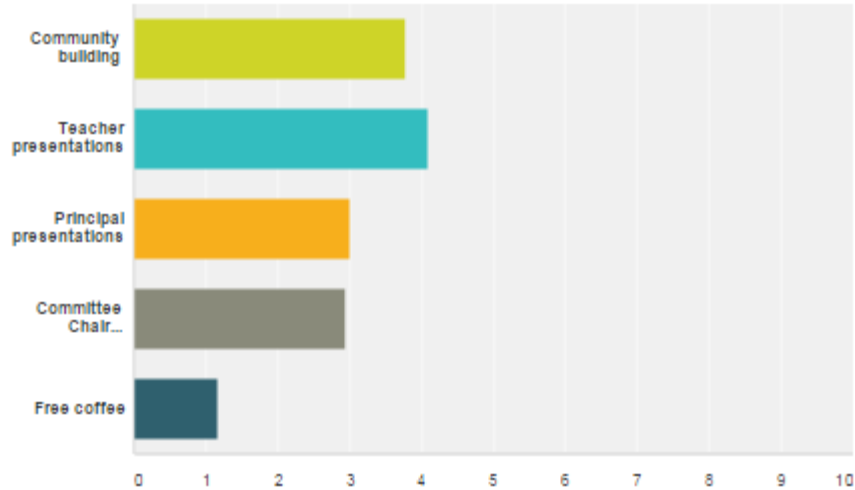
Answered: 61 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses	
Very Important	22.95%	14
Important	34.43%	21
Somewhat Important	36.07%	22
Not Important	6.56%	4
Total		61

What aspects of the meetings are the most relevant for you? Please rank in order of relevance: 1 being most relevant, 5 being least relevant.

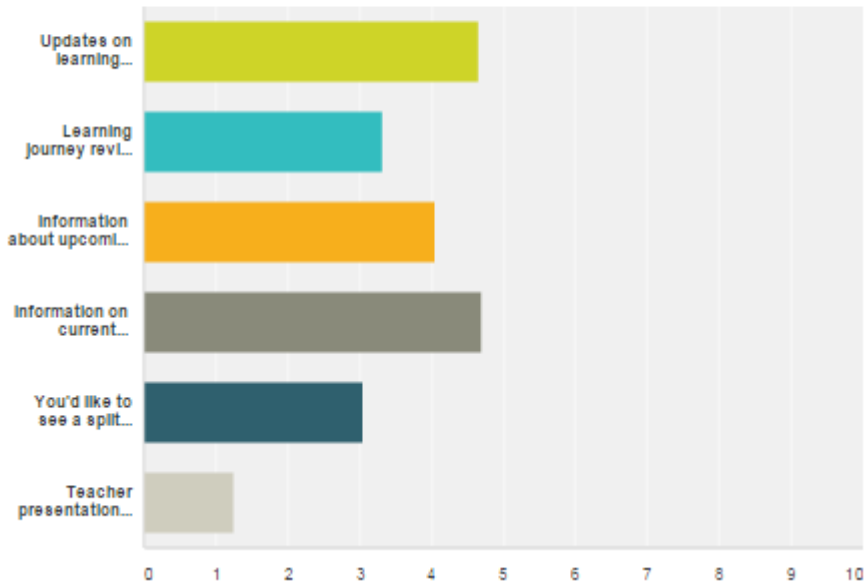
Answered: 60 Skipped: 3



	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Score
Community building	46.67% 28	13.33% 8	15.00% 9	21.67% 13	3.33% 2	60	3.78
Teacher presentations	33.33% 20	48.33% 29	13.33% 8	5.00% 3	0.00% 0	60	4.10
Principal presentations	11.67% 7	20.00% 12	28.33% 17	36.67% 22	3.33% 2	60	3.00
Committee Chair presentations	6.67% 4	18.33% 11	41.67% 25	30.00% 18	3.33% 2	60	2.95
Free coffee	1.67% 1	0.00% 0	1.67% 1	6.67% 4	90.00% 54	60	1.17

What about the teacher's presentations do you find useful? Please rank in order of usefulness, with 1 being most useful.

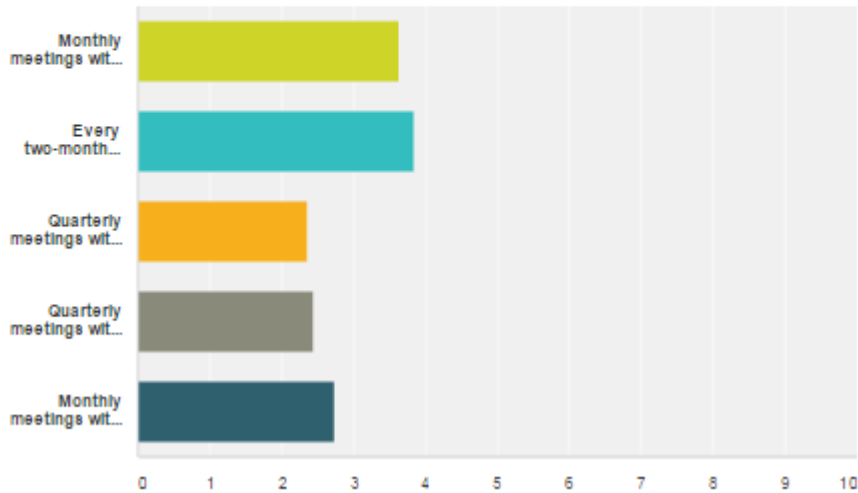
Answered: 55 Skipped: 8



	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Score
Updates on learning processes- such as new classroom tools, need for volunteers	32.73% 18	23.64% 13	20.00% 11	23.64% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	55	4.65
Learning journey reviews and enrichment activity updates	5.45% 3	18.18% 10	14.55% 8	27.27% 15	32.73% 18	1.82% 1	55	3.31
Information about upcoming assessments and examinations	14.55% 8	18.18% 10	38.18% 21	16.36% 9	12.73% 7	0.00% 0	55	4.05
Information on current curriculum	27.27% 15	34.55% 19	18.18% 10	20.00% 11	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	55	4.69
You'd like to see a split between academic and enrichment topics	18.18% 10	1.82% 1	9.09% 5	12.73% 7	52.73% 29	5.45% 3	55	3.04
Teacher presentations are unnecessary	1.82% 1	3.64% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.82% 1	92.73% 51	55	1.25

Regarding the frequency of community meetings, which scenario would you prefer? Please rank in order of preference.

Answered: 56 Skipped: 7



	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Score
Monthly meetings with teacher/principal presentations (as we have now)	32.14% 18	28.57% 16	17.86% 10	12.50% 7	8.93% 5	56	3.63
Every two-month meetings with teacher/principal presentations	28.57% 16	32.14% 18	35.71% 20	1.79% 1	1.79% 1	56	3.84
Quarterly meetings with teacher/principal presentations	1.79% 1	16.07% 9	23.21% 13	33.93% 19	25.00% 14	56	2.36
Quarterly meetings with teacher/principal presentations with a monthly newsletter	16.07% 9	7.14% 4	5.36% 3	48.21% 27	23.21% 13	56	2.45
Monthly meetings with the DC S community with quarterly meetings including teacher/principal presentations	21.43% 12	16.07% 9	17.86% 10	3.57% 2	41.07% 23	56	2.73

If you have any ideas or suggestions on frequency of community meetings, please let us know.

Answered: 20 Skipped: 43

● Responses (20)

☁ Text Analysis

📁 My Categories

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Showing 20 responses

Tough for both parents to attend when you don't have a built in babysitter. If there was a way to handle that, then I could attend more

2/2/2015 5:24 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I would love to have more connection and engagement with the other parents and don't find the monthly meetings very helpful in this area - except for the one interactive meeting that Cris Pedersen had at the beginning of last year - I specifically remember who I talked to and I feel to this day like I know those 2 parents better. A previous school we attended offered free childcare during PTA meetings and I would love to see this available for monthly DCS meetings. Hire 2-3 "sitters" (from the DCS list even) to host games for kids in the commons while parents meet in the library and make meetings/gatherings more interactive. Then BOTH parents can attend and be engaged or if parents don't have a partner or their partner is traveling/working/etc. then that family can still come without having to arrange a sitter. We could use our "monthly meeting" time to build discovery AND community instead of boring-ish lectures (no offense!) What about having one or two meeting a year be parenting support oriented? Like bringing in a speaker and asking them to create a speaking portion and an interactive portion? Two ideas to start: Amy Lang from Birds+Bees+Kids to help parents figure out how to talk about "the birds and the bees" or someone from Gottman Institute to talk about EQ for kids, etc.? Basically a "Learning Journey" for parents? I really want this community to become a COMMUNITY. I want to know the other families better. Could we figure out a way for 2-3 families to do show and tell for 5-10 minutes each month so over the course of a year or two we really got to know everyone better? It could be an optional activity - not required. But it might be nice to know what people do, where they are from, who their other kids are (if they have non DCS kids) and what kind of pets or hobbies they have. Basic stuff. But there are lots of DCS parents whose names I can't remember when I see them! And I often don't know who goes with whom! I have one or two DCS families who I can call and ask to pick up my kids when I'm running late but I wish I had more connections in this community so that caring for each other happened more organically. Overall I adore DCS and I think we are doing LOTS of things really, really well so I'm not really trying to complain. I'm just saying if we want to take things to the next level we certainly can. :)

1/30/2015 1:19 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Monthly is very important but challenging too. Important because it is a tangible link to the entire community and difficult because I lose one night taking care of my kids (working parent problem...)

1/24/2015 2:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

As a new family this year I just want to say that the meetings are extremely important to us. I would love for the month lies to continue but boy oh boy I sure feel bad for those teachers and the principles having to come every month. Quarterly would be excellent

1/23/2015 5:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I prefer the meeting and presentation with the teachers only be for the parents of their respective class. That way teacher and parents will have time for open discussions on matters important for our kids and how we can support our teacher as well. Expectations are laid down on the table. Matters should be discuss as a team/as a community. Now if it pertains to issues about curriculum, principal should hear the parents as a group and we want to hear our principal's opinion as well. To be a part of DCS is a commitment. And at the end of the day, it feels good to be a part of a community!

1/23/2015 9:53 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

More time for teacher to share what's happening in classroom.

1/22/2015 3:14 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

The community meetings are a valuable tool. The community is the policy making board and the steering committee should be the equivalent of an exec committee. It too often seems like steering has become the in crowd that makes all the decisions while the community is left in the dark. Without regular and dependable community meetings this problem is exacerbated. Community meetings are needed to build community and the collaborative environment that was sold to parents when they applied to DCS. Better facilitation and timely agendas would fix many of the current problems with the community meetings.

1/21/2015 7:01 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I don't like the Wednesday night meetings as I have plans every Wednesday night. The Thursday meetings are so much preferred! :) I enjoy the teacher presentations, seeing what the kids are up to. I also find the other topics interesting, but some of the stuff can be pretty dry and not too relevant to me.

1/20/2015 10:15 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

if the format of the community meeting is changing, I would prefer that we retain 20 minutes or so of the meeting to conduct business regarding upcoming events. I am concerned that putting all business onto a newsletter would result in a loss of community, making us more like Sandburg and their PTSA newsletter. thank you for your hard work and effort to make our meetings relevant!

1/19/2015 2:57 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Most of the time they are important, just skip the months where there is not a lot of planning going on (Dec, maybe Feb)

1/19/2015 11:28 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Include more interactive opportunities, like ways to get to know other parents. E.g. everyone stand up and talk to one another to find out children's names and ages, and make a long line from A to Z, or youngest to oldest.

Whatever happened to the exercise Cris Pederson did last year regarding our community values and vision?

1/18/2015 10:33 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

monthly meeting are great! Lets change the format to more informational about our kids academics and some of what we are doing now.

1/18/2015 8:07 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I have always liked the tradition of having one per month. I enjoy having the opportunity to see those in the community.

1/17/2015 10:06 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Information at meetings are often redundant to emails already been sent. Less total meetings with more meaningful information and community building interaction would be great. Keep announcements short when possible. Mix up the groups in to home schools, by interests, or things in common so to stimulate new conversations.

1/17/2015 3:22 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

None

1/17/2015 2:43 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I think it's important that we meet once a month or at least most months simply for community building and hearing from teachers. We could possibly make the meetings more interactive. Less focus on a series of presentations?

1/17/2015 2:07 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Currently, I'm the one who attend the meeting. My husband would like to take turn but the meeting time is too tight as he has to commute from Seattle. By the time, he's home, he was too exhausted. If we could have a weekend meeting sometimes, it would be nice.

1/17/2015 1:15 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Less meetings, but more relevant - academic content.

1/17/2015 12:30 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I would like more content directly from the teachers regarding testing, scores teaching methods, class room concerns etc. Also more content on what we can do at home to support learning. I would prefer to meet directly with my child's teacher and hearing SPECIFICS regarding my child's curriculum etc. I would prefer not to meet in December. Fewer meetings and with more relevant content would be a great option. It seems now that we meet often, but have little relevant content.

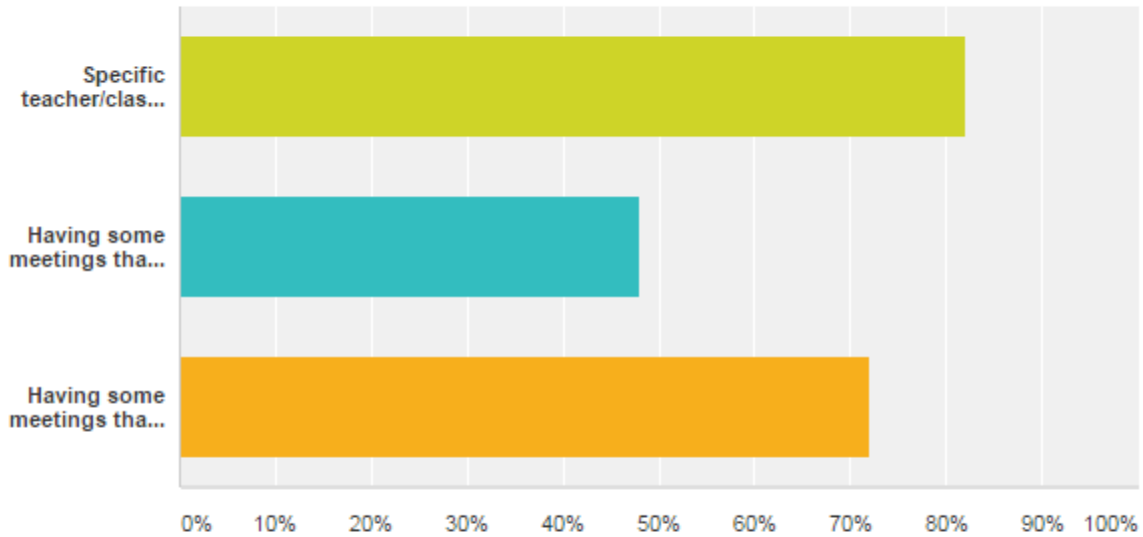
1/17/2015 12:17 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

That the Chairs get free massages. SMB

1/17/2015 11:13 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Do either of these meeting scenarios appeal to you? Check as many that apply?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 13



Answer Choices	Responses
▾ Specific teacher/class breakouts on a quarterly basis to discuss more in depth topics.	82.00% 41
▾ Having some meetings that focus on community building only.	48.00% 24
▾ Having some meetings that focus on a specific topic, such as with guest speakers	72.00% 36
Total Respondents: 50	

We welcome any other comments that you may have regarding the meetings, how they are conducted, content, and goals. All answers are anonymous. Please let us know what you think!

Answered: 17 Skipped: 46

● Responses (17)

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📁 My Categories

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Showing 17 responses

Whoops - hope you got my long write up a few screens ago. Thanks so much for doing this!!!

1/30/2015 1:20 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

My number one concern is that curriculum discussions feel 'off limits'. Not sure that is true, but that is my feeling. We do need the teachers involved. We love them and need them there - but they can leave after they give their presentation if they need the time!

1/24/2015 2:28 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Coffee!

1/23/2015 5:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Keep meetings on track and have speakers follow agenda and time specified. Informal conversations or more lengthy discussions should be tabled to discuss at a later time or with just specific individuals if necessary. These meetings are time away from the rest of my family after I've been at work all day, so the time parents are giving to attend should be respected. Meetings need to be more efficient and effective about sticking to agenda items, next steps and take aways. Updates from the Principal and the Teachers are the best thing about these meetings right now.

1/23/2015 1:18 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I know all live a busy life, let's not just be content dropping our kids to school and picking them up later. Let's be involve in their learning journey. They are only gonna be in this learning stage once. DCS is giving as an opportunity to be a part of that. Being a volunteer in the classroom, be with them on their field trip, assisting teachers with clerical work, member of a committee etc. Whatever your contribution, will be a big impact for our community as a whole.

1/23/2015 10:07 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I think the meetings are important... How else can committee leaders talk up their activities & drum up volunteers & support? Community is what you make it. If people want to be together in a group they will. I think Community Bldg could do more to help the meetings be fun & interactive? Games?

1/22/2015 3:04 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

All three ideas are good ones but please continue to have regularly scheduled community meetings and please allow enough time for the business of the community to happen. Business shouldn't be conducted only at steering.

1/21/2015 7:04 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I know that Steering has struggled with keeping Community Meeting relevant and productive for a number of years...good to see that we are continuing to try and improve, as well as adjust to current community needs.

1/19/2015 11:29 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

More work shop

1/18/2015 3:22 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

All of our time is valuable and with the increasing changes to our kids academics it would be helpful to have more information/education about our kids academics and how they are graded. A presentation of the the common core and how it affects each grade would be awesome. The breakout of more in depth topics regarding our kids academics and some of the community building would be awesome! Thanks for all that you guys are doing. The survey was a great idea!

1/18/2015 8:13 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I think space makes a big difference. The library is okay, but we lack connections because of physical barriers. There should be some element of connection and community building at each meeting - until we all feel like we know each other.

1/17/2015 10:09 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Thank you for collecting information and reviewing. It is always good to take a pulse check.

1/17/2015 3:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

None

1/17/2015 2:43 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

1. In the past, we let the parents box something to eat in the meeting. So, instead of free coffee, could we make a lucky draw for parents who attend the meeting. 2. One of our mission is to educate the whole child with active parent participation. I feel that we have not yet maximize the capability of the parents. For example, we have 6-7 field trips a year. As a parent, I feel that my job is not done by the end of the trip. Teacher could suggest parents to conduct a session to enrich what kids learn from the day. It could be either before or after the trip in order to inspire them in doing in-depth research. Maybe we could make use of the meeting to support teacher-parent learning journey add-on session.

1/17/2015 1:44 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Meeting with teachers directly would be very beneficial. I want to know what my child(ren) are learning. What are they studying that I can support at home? How are they doing? It is nice to hear briefly about learning journey's but what is it really like in the classroom? Are there issues with bullying I should know about? How is it going with the Sandburg/DCS relationship? What outside resources can I use. Perhaps a print out of suggestions directly from the teacher about things I can do at home such as access Envision or what can I can work on as far as writing. I would also like to meet in small groups to brainstorm ideas. Community meetings are an intimidating environment to express concerns. It would be nice if it felt like a safe environment to address issues. Maybe there is a way to ask questions before hand? It does not feel safe or welcoming to me at the present time. It seems as though those leading don't want to be there. Perhaps they could stand or seem more engaged. Maybe having coffee will help. ;-)

1/17/2015 12:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I think with the current setup, the meetings are more important for parents who are not at the school frequently. If I ever have an issue with something, I address it right away and in person. I wouldn't choose to wait and bring it up at a meeting. What I struggle with is the lack of direction/content sometimes at the meetings. I can skip them and feel confident that I didn't miss anything important. I really like the idea of having a meeting with a specific topic offered with maybe a short time before or after for teachers to talk or people to raise concerns.

1/17/2015 12:09 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Our DCS parents and teachers are the best! SMB

1/17/2015 11:13 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

- 61 people participated
- Evenly distributed between each of three classes
- Some discussion on the survey results
 - Some people talked about how difficult it is to have both parents attend
 - Some wanted individual teacher breakout sessions
 - Some felt we could work more on community building
 - Some commented on the need for meetings to be more organized
 - possibly small group breakout sessions in the future and other ways for people to introduce themselves

- a concerned raised about the purpose of steering
- Some comments on common core and curriculum—we discussed that curriculum is not open for discussion. DCS teachers teach the approved district curriculum. Concerns about curriculum and common core should be brought to teachers and principal
- survey results will be printed and shared with community at next meeting
- Susan proposed that the October community meeting should focus primarily on community building. Kids would come to this meeting.
- Discussion whether to keep the January community meeting
 - It's a busy time with info nights—both DCS's and other middle schools
 - Some argued that the January meeting is important with Winter Event coming up
 - Most wanted to keep the January meeting
 - Possibility to have a guest speaker or to make it a community building night
- Discussion to have more opportunities to have the kids come to community meetings or to provide babysitting.
- Janet explained that recently more and more people are confused about what a choice school is and they are not sure how we are different from other public or private school. Discussed how to address this concern—on website, on info night
- Discuss New Teacher Hiring Process (Heather): district process. We hire from the district pool. Teachers across district can opt to be put on transfer list. Based on seniority, these teachers get to transfer to schools with open spots. Heather interviews those on transfer list who are interested in coming to DCS. She is honest with them about some of the challenges of teaching at DCS (multiage classrooms, for instance). If the transfer list doesn't pan out, then we move to a hiring process, but transfers get priority. DCS teachers and Heather brainstorm what are the qualities of potential candidates. They turn these into questions to use during interview process.

8:00p COMMUNITY BUILDING Cariann 5 minutes

- Summer Swim Event. Cariann called City of Kirkland. Cost going up \$10, will be \$340 for two hours. Discussed if Saturday evening or Sunday morning would be best. Steering suggested Saturday evening. It will be scheduled in August. Date tbd
- Summer Picnic. Most people preferred OO Denny during weekday evenings. Date tbd.

8:10p COMMUNITY OUTREACH Renee 10 minutes

- Outreach programs update: big changes coming. Some confusion over Sandburg and DSC events. We didn't get enough food for the November baskets—and had to tap into budget to fill the baskets. We also haven't had much participation this year. Renee suggests we select five major events and focus on those.
- Discussed whether to keep the sandwich making project. Several people expressed how important this activity is. Renee agreed to do it.
- She also suggested that we join Sandburg in the major outreach activities (food drives, shoe drives, etc.)
- Renee also emphasized how important it is for students to be involved. Steering approved money for sandwiches and books to be donated to charity. Students will have a read-a-thon. Details will come soon
- Also discussed ways to get more people to participate in comm outreach. We need to stress this more during Info Night. Discussed email, facebook, and one-on-one encouragement

