



SCHOOLS

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2016

DRIVING DISCUSSION



The Jefferson Middle School Shared Decision Making Team recently met to talk about parent surveys with the help of parent reps. Pictured from left are Gina Hess, Jefferson Middle School teacher; parent representatives, Kim Malarkey, Val Tilburg and Sue Cunningham; and Julie Livengood, library media specialist.

Submitted photos

Jefferson Parents Provide Survey Input For Shared Decision Making Team

“Can everyone look through the draft of the parent survey and check that the questions are all relevant?” asked Kim Malarkey, Jefferson Middle School parent. “Unless the responses are relevant for students and staff, we should take it out.”

“Why don’t we take the survey back to our Professional Learning Communities to discuss and then give you feedback?” offered Amber Promber, Jefferson Middle School teacher.

Malarkey, along with fellow parents Sue Cunningham and Valerie Tilburg, are members of the Jefferson Shared Decision Making Team. They were discussing the parent survey being created with the help of the team. The goal of the survey is to build parent involvement and create a better relationship between Jefferson and par-

ents — all for the betterment of the students. The survey will be in English and Spanish and will be available online at Jefferson Middle School’s Facebook page, Jefferson’s website, at www.jamestownpublicschools.org, a link will be emailed to parents who have provided email addresses and hard copies will also be available at the school until May.

“We are trying to make the survey short and sweet and very tailored to Jefferson parents,” Cunningham said. “We are looking for activities parents would like to see at the school and finding out things such as, are kids using the agendas the PTA provides every year, and if not, maybe it could be a cost savings that could be used in a better way.”

The survey will ask questions such as:

“What do you hear about Jefferson from your child?” and “What kind of information can Jefferson provide to help a middle school child succeed?”

The questions range from academic to social/emotional issues to local community issues. The survey will also ask what types of trainings parents would like the school to conduct to help their children in school and if they know how to use the Parent Portal, and if not, why? The results of the survey will be used by the Shared Decision Making Team to help develop their School Comprehensive Education Plan.

“We are so lucky to have active parents like Sue, Kim and Valerie involved in our school and the Shared Decision Making Team,” said Carm Proctor, Jefferson Middle School principal. “They are the eyes of

all the parents at Jefferson on the team and have diverse opinions, which we welcome. We want to hear from our parents about how we can improve our school.”

The parent survey, which falls under parent/family engagement, is just one of many goals on the Jefferson Shared Decision Making Team, which looks at all the needs at the school, including academic ones. Shared Decision Making Teams do more than just make decisions — they also analyze, discuss and plan. Their work emanates from the belief that the productivity of schools is critically dependent upon the degree to which members of the school community, especially teachers and parents, understand and share in the district’s mission, vision and goals which shape their work with students.

CASAC Helps Students With Negative Behavior

“From your activity sheet, how do you think people feel after a few drinks? Think about it and write down a couple of words that describe how someone might feel,” said Laurie Reynolds, prevention educator for Chautauqua Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Council (CASAC), a United Way Agency.

“Buzzed, aggressive, happy, sad,” said the Jefferson Middle School seventh- and eighth-graders.

“Those are all good words. Do you think these words describe physical or mental effects to a person who uses alcohol? Mostly mental, right? One of the things we will discuss today is that it’s often the thinking, not the drinking that affects you,” Reynolds said.

Reynolds met with Jefferson students as part of CASAC’s Alcohol Literacy Challenge (ALC), which is a brief classroom-based program designed to alter alcohol expectancies and reduce the quantity and frequency of alcohol use among high school and college students. The meeting is a collaboration with Thom Wright, Jefferson School counselor, in an effort to bring in outside agencies to talk to students about issues they are learning about in health class. Harry Snellings, Jamestown police chief, will also come in to talk to students about drug prevention and the issues currently happening in Jamestown.

Reynolds talked about alcohol expectancies being an individual’s beliefs about the anticipated effects of alcohol use, including those that are positive (e.g., increased sociability) and negative (e.g., impairments to mental and behavioral functioning). ALC aims to

correct erroneous beliefs about the effects of alcohol, decreasing positive and increasing negative expectancies. Students also learned the difference between pharmacological effects and placebo effects by watching a video study where half the students received an alcoholic drink and the other half received a non-alcoholic drink. Even those drinking the “fake” drink demonstrated “typical” alcohol effects of students who were drinking. She also showed the efforts of alcohol companies to portray positive alcohol expectancies in advertisements.

Jefferson Middle School seventh- and eighth-graders receive health curriculum every other year for 13 weeks from teacher Jennifer Restivo. The health curriculum focuses on social and emotional concerns, such as stress, and how they can affect a person’s physical health. She also discusses diseases and how to prevent them, eating healthy foods and physical activity. Restivo talks to students about healthy alternatives they can turn to instead of drugs, alcohol and tobacco products.

“It is always good to bring in experts from the community to talk to students about issues to do with their health,” Restivo said. “It helps them to understand the real-world ramifications of doing negative behaviors and how it might not only affect their bodies, but their future. It also helps students understand what is happening in their own backyards. We are trying to educate students not just on their physical well-being but also social and emotional health.”



Yanira Castellano, Chautauqua Striders bilingual life skills educator, is pictured working with a group of Jefferson Middle School students during a lunch meeting.

Striders’ Bilingual Life Skills Educator Benefits Students

“I want to talk about growth and fixed mindsets today,” said Yanira Castellano, Chautauqua Striders’ Bilingual Life Skills educator, to a group of Jefferson Middle School English language learners. “In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success — without effort. In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work — brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. I want all of you to have a growth mindset.”

Castellano showed the lunch group a cartoon video to visualize growth versus fixed mindsets and then led a discussion how they can incorporate this into their everyday lives.

Castellano works with Jefferson students once a week in small group lunch settings to talk about life skills such as: listening and communication skills, impulse behavior, friendships, conflict resolutions, feelings and expressions, anger management and self-esteem. She

uses discussions and activities to help students develop necessary life skills. Castellano works with two different groups for 12 weeks at not only Jefferson, but also Jamestown High School, C.C. Ring and Lincoln elementary schools.

“Our students look forward to visiting with Ms. Castellano each week,” said Carm Proctor, Jefferson Middle School principal. “Various school topics are discussed with her and she gives suggestions and advice to make their school experience successful.”

As the Chautauqua Striders’ Life Skills educator, she also provides outreach to the Hispanic community by communicating directly with parents and conducting home visits. She is also part of the Hispanic Coalition.

“It is important to go to schools like Jefferson and provide outreach because it gives me an opportunity to work one on one and in small group sessions with students,” Castellano said. “I can really get to know them as individuals and I become a trusted adult they can come to if they have a concern. It really helps open up communications, both with the students and their parents, and allows for a collaborative environment between Chautauqua Striders, the schools and the Hispanic community.”



Laurie Reynolds, prevention educator for CASAC, is pictured presenting the Alcohol Literacy Challenge to Jefferson Middle School seventh- and eighth-graders.

Jefferson Fifth-Graders Learn To Become Computer Coders

Jefferson Middle School fifth-graders in Julie Livengood’s library media specialist Accel class are learning to become computer coders through an online course called Code Studio. Originally, Livengood’s classes participated in a one-day event of coding called the Hour of Code; a global movement established to encourage students to learn about computer science and held each year in December. Students loved it so much that Livengood decided to use the website’s curriculum, which has allowed students to delve deeper into computer coding.

“My Accel class is an enrichment class for those students who need a greater challenge and I thought this would be a fun way to incorporate computer science,” Livengood said. “The curriculum presents students with scaffolded, online activities which must be solved through algorithmic thinking. The critical thinking, logic, persistence and creativity necessary to complete each activity

helps students excel at problem solving in all subject areas. I’ve also deliberately created a classroom environment, which mimics the real-world workplace; students are encouraged to collaborate when they get stuck on an activity. Although it gets a little loud in here sometimes when they’re working together, it’s great to see them so excited when they figure it out.”

Students work on four different courses within Code Studio that get progressively more difficult, but by the shouts of encouragement heard in the classroom, students are enjoying the class.

“I really love doing the computer coding. I have never done anything like this before,” said Landen Piazza, Jefferson Middle School fifth-grader. “I’m using geometry a lot when I’m trying to figure out the code. By knowing about angles, it helps me figure out which way my action figure will turn. Coding is also helping me in math; I’m getting better at

geometry because it’s a fun way to use angles, and what I’m learning is in a real-life way. I think learning how to write computer programs is a good thing to do because it might be something I might like to do, or another kid might like to do, for a job when they get older, like coding video games.”

Along with computer coding, Livengood’s students will also get the opportunity to use the latest technology to create interactive video book-talks. Students will read a book, write a summary and then develop videos with their own voice-overs in the app, Tellagami. These videos will then become the interactive piece in Aurasma — an app, which uses augmented reality to turn everyday objects, images, and places into new, interactive opportunities through striking graphics, animation, video, audio and 3D content. Any student with an iPad can then focus it on the book cover and watch the video come to life, hopefully enticing them to read it.



Erica Papalia, Kiera Hicks and Evan Larson, Jefferson Middle School fifth-graders, are pictured working on a computer coding project during Julie Livengood’s Accel class.