

PTSA Parent Meeting Notes, 8.18.20

PTSA News

The PTSA has been active since school buildings closed in March. The PTSA executive officers (PTSA Board) met virtually with Mrs. LaGrange throughout the spring and several times over the summer to give feedback on the distance learning experience, support teachers and families in need, and foster a sense of community despite being remote from each other. Some highlights from the Spring include encouraging the development of a single resource point for class information on Tilden's website; publishing weekly movie lists and related activities; organizing the Tilden Cares donation drive for Tilden families in need; and collecting feedback through the Tilden Parent Survey.

Because of COVID limitations on meeting, the PTSA was not able to hold its normal elections. Most officers will remain in their current roles, with two exceptions. Michele Wisniewski resigned as Treasurer on 8/7/20 as her son is moving on to Walter Johnson. Heather Down was approved by the PTSA Board as the new Treasurer. Additionally, Sheri Weiss is resigning effective 8/24/20 as Tilden's Cluster Chair. The PTSA Board will meet and appoint Jim Bradley as Tilden's new Cluster Chair. The PTSA President and Mrs. LaGrange expressed deep gratitude to Michelle and Sheri for their hard work, wise counsel, and good friendship over the many years that they have graciously volunteered their time to help Tilden thrive.

The PTSA is continuing to help communicate resources available. One area of interest, student mentoring, is offered through the Silver Spring Cares site: <https://silverspringcares.org/quaranteen-tutors>. Students can either offer to provide tutoring help or seek assistance through this program.

All parents are urged to join the PTSA! Even though things will still look and feel different than normal as the year starts, our students and teachers still need support through parents' membership, ideas, and participation. A membership form with payment options (including PayPal) to sign up and for direction donations are available here: <https://forms.gle/Apbyb1CKiND23WVb6> and on the Tilden PTSA website. Parents are also encouraged to join the new PTSA Listserv as a way of getting valuable information. To join, please send an email with your name and student's grade to: TildenMS+subscribe@groups.io.

Principal's Update

Chromebook distribution or exchange and instructional materials will be available for pick-up on 8/26 and 8/27 at the new Tilden building at 6300 Tilden Ln. Please see the letter distributed by Mrs. LaGrange for the recommended pick-up times to avoid crowds. If your posted pick-up time doesn't fit with your schedule, call the Tilden Front Office to schedule a pick-up – they are now open on weekdays. A few clarifications:

- Students may use a personal device and opt not to pick up a Chromebook
- Chromebooks in students' possession from the Spring should be exchanged at Tilden for a newer model or returned to Tilden if the student plans to use a personal device instead
- Tilden Library books may be returned on 8/26 and 8/27 during material pickup

- Instructional materials will be for English Language Arts and Math only (these materials follow the new curriculum); materials for other subjects are not currently available but may be provided later

Class schedules should be available starting 8/26. Although not finalized yet, Tilden staff are anticipating using the 8-period model to continue to have an assigned homeroom, 1x per week. They are considering introducing a “Timberwolves pack” classroom (1x per week), selected by students based on areas of their personal interest. More info to come as school schedules get approved next week by the Board of Education.

Parents will be able to access assignments, grades, etc., through a new parent portal system (Synergy). Information on access and training, along with new parent passwords to access the site, will be sent next week. It is unclear if MCPS is sending them via postal mail or email. For the fall semester, students will receive all assignments on Canvas (myMCPS), not Google classroom. Each class subject will have a “tile” and contain the same categories of information for better uniformity. Assignments will be labeled in a way that indicates which can be re-done.

Q and A discussion:

Tilden administration and staff are aware that increasing student engagement from last Spring is important. This Fall there will be more live instruction. Hopefully, this will develop trust that helps students feel more comfortable to turn on their cameras. Teachers will take attendance by a variety of methods, whether cameras are on or not, but recorded lessons will also be available as a student resource.

The school is still waiting for a final decision at the County level regarding grading. It seems likely that we will return to more traditional letter grades.

Tilden teachers are thinking creatively about how to engage students, even for classes that are traditionally more hands-on, interactive, or require use of shared specialized materials. (For example, for FACS, actual cooking during the class will be optional and the choice will not affect a student’s grade.) Nevertheless, if the difference of doing the class virtually is enough to drive a student to want to change electives, that request can be made through the normal channels of contacting their counselor.

All classes will be held virtually for the first semester. Ideas for supporting your child in a virtual learning environment are:

- set up a place where your student can attend class and work with minimal disruption
- treat the virtual class like a regular classroom – come dressed appropriately and mentally prepared (e.g., avoid attending class in PJs and/or in bed)
- establish routines that help students be engaged (healthy eating, regular sleep)
- raise any concerns about the class first with the teacher

Summer reading and math packets were provided online (at the Tilden website) as enrichment tools. There is no submission requirement, although teachers may review what students volunteer to submit. Submissions will not be graded.

Sports will be conducted virtually for the 1st semester (MP1 and MP2), generally in 3-week sessions. Sports will be available to all grades (not just 7th and 8th) and will focus on individual development – e.g., finishing a 5K, getting a best time for 1-mile run, etc.

Clubs will hopefully continue virtually. Teachers are considering how to best conduct these. Clubs may require some parent support/participation. More information on this will be shared when available.

There is no information currently available regarding standardized testing.

Students with IEPs will continue to be supported, though some adjustment may need to be made given the distance learning format; paraeducators will continue to attend virtual classrooms to provide support. More guidance should be forthcoming on this from the County.

Special Note to 6th grade: Mrs. LaGrange acknowledged the need and desire for 6th graders to get to know each other. Admin and staff will be considering creative ways to facilitate this during the distance learning period, as at this time in-person events are not allowed.

Special note to 8th grade: Mrs. LaGrange is mindful of High School prep information (e.g., Apex at Walter Johnson) and the 8th grade promotion ceremony. Information regarding High School programs is not yet available, but parents will be informed when it becomes available. For promotion, plans will be discussed to prepare for both possibilities - virtual or in-person scenario.