

IFA All-Family Meeting
November 17, 2020
Held via Zoom

Welcome and introductions

Welcome from Martha--president of the IFA Board

Agenda:

IFA Introductions
Small group breakouts
IFA Activities to Date
Family Survey Feedback
Draft Budget
20-21 Planning and Volunteer Need
Where to Find Us!
Q&A with Head of School

Introduction of the IFA Board

Martha introduced the 2020-2021 IFA Board

Small group breakouts for participants to get to know each other

IFA Activities to Date:

- The community came together to create school supply bins. This was a huge effort so the school and IFA appreciate everyone who volunteered
- Several families helped organize virtual grade level socials and gatherings.
- The IFA VP Leah Squires is participating in the Head of School search committee

IFA Survey Results

- IFA recently fielded a survey to ITDS families
- We received 90 responses representing 143 students. Most families were PK3-K (40 students).
- There was interest in in-person outdoor activities as well as virtual activities
- Several people expressed interest in leading and coordinating these events-we will reach out to those who volunteered.

IFA Budget Review

- Background on the IFA budget: it was seeded by families who did a lot of fundraising for a playground on the roof of the old building. After funds were raised, the community decided it didn't make sense to spend funds that way. So that money was put into the reserve to fund IFA activities. Since then, the IFA has been drawing down those funds.

Each year, expenses are not covered by revenue so we draw a few thousand dollars out of reserve

- At the first meeting of the year, the IFA Board shares the budget and goals for the year.
- This year is a bit different as we typically have more money coming in from events like movie night, the chili cookoff and sibling/family photo shoots.
- This year we might do outdoor student photos in the spring along with sibling/family photos. But other activities to raise money will be limited
- This year, we are expected to spend down nearly \$7K from the reserves.
- Major planned expenses include:
 - Inspired Evening event
 - Funds for any afterschool programs to support and allow all kids to participate
 - Gift for current 8th graders
 - Additional money for teacher and staff recognition
- We didn't budget for many individual activities because it looks like the school will support these events at the grade and class level. IFA will focus on larger activities across grades
- Because we are conservative about what we can bring in, we anticipate we will bring the reserve down to about \$15K. We think that if we end the year at this amount, we have the equivalent of 2 years of expenses in the bank
- We also have an MOU with the school for funding. The school will set aside 10% of funds raised by families. And the IFA Board in the following school year will decide if they need to use these funds.
- The IFA Board has discussed this and an earlier version of the budget expected to draw down more of the reserves. But the IFA Board feels comfortable with this planned budget.

Draft Calendar

- December social event: potentially in-person and/or virtual
- Hannah Mullen will lead staff appreciation efforts along with grade/class reps to help support collection of gifts for the holidays. This would be in addition to what the IFA has budgeted
- We will host another IFA all-family meeting in January. Hopefully, this event will offer some opportunities for self-care for family members. We may look for volunteers to lead some of the breakout groups.
- In February, we will hopefully hold our annual chili cookoff virtually. Stay tuned for details: potentially sharing chili on social media or sharing recipes.
- We will have another all-family meeting in March-potentially education night. In year's past, those from the school have joined to help families learn a skill or content area to support students
- April/May--this will be our main fundraising push during our spring giving season. This is typically when we have our Inspired Evening
- May: all-family IFA meeting along with elections for IFA board
- May 22: a family social event, perhaps in person?

Volunteer opportunities

1. Grade/class level reps--look for Principals Newsletter on 11/6
2. Fundraising: A number of IFA Board members are supporting this--but looking for more people to support online auction, monthly giving, Inspired Evening event, Spring Giving
 - a. Great opportunity to be creative and partner with board and staff!
3. Family Social Events: led by Tim, Justin, and Taleakah from IFA Board. They are striving for 3 events this year
4. Staff appreciation--led by Hannah Mullen
5. Community Service Learning--looking for a leader here coming out of the survey! How can we coordinate these opportunities for students and families to get involved?

Make sure you receive school-wide and grade-level listservs! Inspired Families Google Group--reach out to Tim Street on ITDS Staff to be sure you are on the right Google group

Next meeting is January 13

Conversation with Debbiy Dantzler Williams, Head of School

From Debbiy--thanks for inviting me to speak to families. Thanks for sharing questions with me ahead of time.

What specific public health metrics does the school review to decide about return to in-person learning? And what level of community spread would leadership decide is safe?

We are looking at two things to support decision-making

1. Survey of families and staff to determine staff capacity to maintain quality of instruction
2. Array of data we get from communication from city officials and other school leaders
 - a. Weekly calls with OSSE
 - b. Director of DC Dept of Health, Lead epidemiologist, Director of Education, Director of Public Charter Board
 - i. Dr. Heidi Schumaker (Chief of Health and Wellness at OSSE-she gives the clearest sense of guidance that the city is giving). This week we learned that the city is going to be able to provide schools with assistance staffing isolation rooms and doing testing at school. We know testing will increase the comfort of staff
 - ii. Dr. Amil Mongola--Lead Epidemiologist at DC DOH. Helps interpret numbers from CDC. Look at info on DC Covid site. Can look at a number of metrics
 - iii. We are in Phase 2 and as we look at the data on Phase 2--there is no one directing charter schools to open. All schools can make the decision on their own
 - iv. Debbiy is in regular communication with other school leaders to share/pool information and support decisions

Do you have a threshold that you have determined about which level would help you move to in-person learning

Have not pre-identified a level, but looking at when we could provide staffing as well as the level of community spread. Right now we are looking at a trend of increased numbers.

We have decided that teachers cannot staff in-person and virtual learning at the same time. So this would require additional hiring which is incredibly difficult right now. The biggest thing is how we can staff when we return to school and make sure it doesn't impact equity and pose a challenge for families

The first thing we talk about is making sure we don't put students/staff/families in harm's way. We want to create a distance learning program that supports students. Don't want to disrupt learning. No one would advocate for distance learning as the best kind of learning. But we see it as the safest approach to ensure we are providing students with the best learning

Are you anticipating changing the initial hybrid model that was proposed in the summer?

We have made major modifications to the hybrid model we proposed over the summer given complexities and the prospect of how staff are feeling.

Do you anticipate us not moving to hybrid? Staying in distance learning until we can come back 100% in person?

We are really wanting to bring students back but there are so many complexities that we have discovered based on other schools and internal challenges. There are a wide array of considerations. We hope to bring students back to building before end of school year. But circumstances keep changing and science is changing. We meet multiple times a week as a leadership team to review information--look at information from other schools

Some concern that families have been hearing from me for a long time--trying to figure out how we can bring back students who are most challenged. Been discussing with YMCA to see if we could bring back employees to help support students in the building. The idea is that these students would participate in distance learning but with support of small numbers in the classroom. Those we hire from the YMCA to support. But teachers/families expressed some concern/disinterest in coming to the building just for distance learning.

We are constantly reevaluating our plans so see if we can bring students back without compromising what we are doing--and without introducing equity concerns.

We are also looking at community spread and concerns about increased transmission after the holidays. We planned for January 8 to share decision about end of January--but that may be too close to the holidays.

Ask for everyone to keep in mind that this is an unknown for all of us. Trying to uphold our mission to uphold the kind of learning that upholds the Four I's. We are not inclined right now to force staff to return to the building. We want to build up momentum with distance learning to make it better because that is going to be the structure for the majority of students.

We WOULD like to return to school this year. And we want it to embrace as many students as possible.

Is DC's offer to provide testing for both staff and students?

We are working to see if we could provide testing for students that come in the building as well as staff.

Were there themes from staff from the 2/3 who said they were not comfortable coming in?

The number one concern was being able to ensure that community was ready to operate under needed conditions. How would our tone and quality have to shift to make sure everyone can follow rules around social distancing, masks, etc. Teachers are concerned about difficulties following protocols.

Teachers are apprehensive about catching or carrying Covid to families. Many live in multi-generational households or have family members with compromised immunities. Fear of illness and complications

Talked with teachers about leave and leave modifications. For a good number of teachers, there is a personal fear of catching Covid

If we hopefully get to a point where numbers support some students coming to the school, what are you all thinking if public health experts say you can do in-person learning but staff still are apprehensive? How can you balance that?

I don't see a way to navigate that smoothly. What we have looked at is the possibility of bringing people to the building who are comfortable. But only one lead teacher expressed comfort. Had open office hours last week and spoke with multiple staff members. Concerns are growing because of increasing Covid cases. Don't see a smooth way to navigate it. Appreciate that the board isn't pressing Debbiy to say that staff have to come in or lose jobs

People are hearing all kinds of stories. For our staff it is a source of comfort that we reiterate for them that we are working to ensure safety and then asking them to return.

The physical preparation of the building is ongoing. Do walkthroughs periodically to look at resources and see what can be used for what. Learned from DOH that we need isolation rooms--at least one, ideally two. We have identified two isolation rooms on the ground floor of the building and are talking about how to staff them. This would need to be in place before any students return. Because we need to have the plans in place for students who show symptoms during the day.

If a child is taken to an isolation room because they developed symptoms, the entire group of children in that classroom would need to quarantine with testing recommended.

Having a hard time with the fact that the daily schedule for different grades is out of sync. How are you thinking about lining up the schedules more so that breaks are better aligned?

Unfortunately, our focus is on assembling an optimal schedule for each grade level. Brought this question to the leadership team. Principals will talk to instructional coaches to see if this is possible.

How frequent would students be tested?

Just got this information yesterday, so the logistics haven't been worked out. But it will be arranged with a private sourcing company. The city has taken the stance that they will not conduct testing without agreement between family and school. Will need to have this document signed in order for a child to be tested. Most likely this could be implemented in January-but that is a guess.

What can families do to support staff?

We sent staff DoorDash gift certificates on BTS Night. We have also given staff funds to enhance their workplace. Staff appreciate the flexibility with asynchronous Fridays. This gives them the ability to catch up on work, connect with more families. Teachers are putting in a lot of work and are under a lot of stress. We know that distance learning isn't optimal for children. So many children for whom this is very challenging. Many of our teachers are also parents, so they really do get it.

Reminder about Debbiy's ongoing small group conversations

Thanks to Debbiy for joining us and answering questions