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| **QUEST Meeting Notes** |   |

To return to the QUEST Main Page [**Click Here.**](http://pittsfordptsa.net/programs.cfm?subpage=1997165)

**Several Spring 2017 meetings were canceled due to weather.**

**2017-2018 Meeting notes will be posted here when available.**

**Quest meeting--2/7/17**

**UR Partnership**

* Eight PCS district students will qualify for the University of Rochester math course #165:  Linear Algebra.
* 50% discount on tuition, standard tuition is approximately $3400
* Locate the course on the Uo
* UR web site under “community”
* Unclear if registration will be done as a group on-line or in person in 8/2017 Update: Students can complete the full registration process online beginning this spring
* Course will occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00-3:15, thus clear 8th/9th hour schedules & ensure that Ensemble does not occur during this time (contact Lynn Drake)
* Will seek broader partnership with the UR and request a 2nd math class as well as other courses Update: The 50% discount will apply to any course a student wants to take at UR. The math class will be scheduled at 2pm to meet student needs.
* Prospective students should be willing, motivated participants who meet minimum requirements
* Ensure that transcripts come directly from the UofR (discuss with counselor)

**College Night**

* Mendon High School, 3/9/17 at 7:00 pm
* Choose 3/10 work shops, may attend more if you attend as a family
* Work shops cover financial aid, essay writing, interview/acceptance process….
* Lynn Drake:  good resource for educating freshman & sophomores at SHS about steps to take for college preparation

**History of Quest**

* Advocates for gifted education in PCS
* “Fizzled out 5-6 years ago.”
* Reformed 1.5 years ago

**ARI (Academically Responsive Instruction) process update**

* 3 Quest members on 20 person ARI process committee
* Establish process to identify students who need whole grade or single subject acceleration
* Ensure consistency across schools
* Restructure process & ensure implementation at all grade levels
* Request dedicated ARI counselor for middle and high schools
* Improve professional development for teachers on ARI
* Current options for acceleration

**Other Discussion Points:**

* Request fast track to AP classes (test out of honors or take concurrently)
* Request to group students by ability
* No official ability grouping in middle school:  discuss with counselor or teacher
* Helpful resource at Calkins: Amy Daniels, counselor
* CTY classes:  accelerated & condensed on-line or in person classes
* Request independent work

**Ideas for future Quest meetings:**

CTY rep to give talk via Skype

* Need a process to select “Teacher of the Year”
* May borrow, update, & improve existing process
* Discuss at next Quest meeting or wait until 2017-18
* Quest 2017-18
* Need Quest chair +/- co-chair for 2017-18
* Next Quest Meeting at SHS on 3/8/17 at 7:00 pm.
* Speaker:  Dr. Sandra Eller, psychologist & college admissions counselor

**Quest meeting--11/29/16**

Agenda:

* University of Rochester partnership
* ARI Committee Update
* Upcoming Meeting Topics
* Insights from the NAGC Conference

To get on the QUEST distribution list you need to go to District PTSA web site, set your preferences under e-news to include QUEST

You can get to this link from the QUEST homepage

<http://www.pittsfordptsa.net/programs.cfm?subpage=1997165>

Also a facebook group – search for “QUEST Pittsford PTSA”

Not a public group, so you will need to be approved

**Insights from NAGC Conference**

<https://www.nagc.org/professional-learning/nagc-63rd-annual-convention>

Assessments – a big focus

General trends

Science

Science update, NAGC

* Focus on development of Problem Based Learning (PBL)
* Benefits all students, not just talented and gifted
* Should be hands on, let students choose topics within a defined scope
* Allows for differentiation by the students themselves rather than the teacher having to do it
* Gifted kids often will master the primary tools/goals of the lesson quickly and then can move past these to self-enrichment if they are given flexibility
* Good for research based topics
* What we can do: Advocate for your child to be able to choose topics for projects

Idea for differentiation in research in elementary schools would be to give kids access to websites for older grades in addition to grade appropriate websites. This would allow advanced readers to be at the appropriate level.

QUEST can bring this idea to the schools.

Committee noted that there is a general top down support for enhancing enrichment and that Mike Pero and Melanie Ward have been very receptive to ideas from QUEST and have been working very cooperatively.

Discussion of using parent volunteers in middle/high school, for example for PBL exercises.  Logistically difficult since not allowed to teach any core curriculum and not always optimal to be working with your own child, so practically speaking may not be a realistic goal.  Example: Day of Play – good idea but difficult to implement.

More opportunities in high school than middle school for mentoring, shadowing and internships.  Can have summer internships

Career Internship/Community Service Contact: Julie Wittig          267-1116

Idea of QUEST database for people who would be willing to have students shadow

Lots of early college programs for juniors and seniors – many expensive and have to be away from home for extended period, can get college credit.

Ideas for shorter programs: Hopkins (minicredits), Northwestern(2 weeks), Brown (1 week)

Laser lab – 8 week program, paid

NIH summer fellowships

MIT – very selective – 80 kids, free

**Report on University of Rochester collaboration:**

* U of R receptive –Wendi Heinzelman (Dean of Engineering) is reaching out to other departments but she has been very positive and it seems that the university is supportive of the concept.
* Trying to set up 1 to 2 courses in mathematics per semester
* U of R interested in a county wide collective – Michael Pero and Melanie Ward are reaching out to other districts to gauge interest/participation.
* Discussing tuition – would like to see it reduced (maybe matching SUNY?)
* No funding from schools, so parents would need to pay out of pocket but you do get college credit.
* QUEST looking at curriculum to find courses that would be likely to transfer credit
* Currently looking at Linear Algebra
* Students would need to provide their own transportation, but classes would be scheduled for around 2pm to allow for students to leave early from school to go at the end of the day.
* This is a somewhat urgent issue as a number of the former Calkins kids who are accelerated will complete the Sutherland math curriculum and would like to continue with higher level math (8 kids coming from Sutherland, 1 from Mendon).
* Also exploring possibilities at RIT
* Discussed other local colleges, but concerns about whether credits would transfer and whether the level of difficulty would be what we would want for kids who have been multiple grade level accelerated in math and are now at the level of college math.

**Other:**

* Title 1 and 2 funds can now be allowed for gifted education and professional development for promoting professional development for teaching gifted kids.
* We do qualify in Pittsford based on 6% of kids participating in free lunch program.
* Major theme at NAGC the conference was in identifying lower income or non-primary English speakers who are underrepresented in gifted programs.

**Current process is ARI =  Academically Responsive Instruction**

* Discussed universal screening for gifted programs – potential bias in testing and loss of human element are concerns (as well as lack of services and resources if more kids are identified).
* Our system is that a parents or teacher concern leads to screening.  Concerns expressed about human bias in this process.
* Discussed using 4th grade IQ testing (Otis–Lennon School Ability Test) as a universal screen with a certain score (eg 2 to 3 standard deviations above normal) being a trigger for further evaluation.
* Discussed greater transparency in the current system – would like parents to be getting more information about kids who are undergoing further testing and results of current test which are done to be available to all parents as a goal.
* Discussed that need to also would like to have above grade level testing as part of the process so that kids don’t “hit the ceiling” of the test.  Above grade level testing allows for more differentiation of the individual needs of gifted kids.
* Link to brochure: <http://www.pittsfordschools.org/programs.cfm?subpage=56286>
* District tries to identify “profoundly gifted” (as Pittsford has many very intelligent children and a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the majority of the gifted children in the system)
* The district recognizes that the current process is not necessarily working well and is working to revise it.  To meet this goal there is a 20 person committee (3 members from QUEST are representing parents of gifted children) which is reviewing current protocols and discussing revisions.
* More extensive discussion followed regarding the current process:

1. Identify need for acceleration

* Modified IOWA if initial screening indicates need for further screening.
* Team eval with counselor, teaches, psychologist
* Look at options
* Goal of IOWA is to evaluate:
* Ability
* Aptitude
* Achievement
* Other tools: WISK, State tests, ACT
* QUEST suggesting that if universal screening such as state testing is used, then may need to do further testing on all kids who get >99th percentile (which is a large number in Pittsford) and then look for the “profoundly gifted” among that pool.
* Overall acknowledgement that there are limited resources and a lack of teacher training.
* Generally high school is much better than middle school at challenging gifted kids.
* Discussed that Pittsford is behind many districts in promoting research and publication for students.
* PCSD is actively working on improving science in the middle schools
* Other opportunities that parents can encourage are out of school programs: STEM, Science Olympiad, Hopkins independent study courses, Academic Challenge Bowl
* Encouraged parents to pursue these options and to ask for students to be allowed to potentially work on outside courses in school if they have finished their regular work.

Many good resources for parents through Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

<http://cty.jhu.edu/>

Expressed that partnership between QUEST and PCSD has had some results and discussions continue - open science at the high school level, clusters in chemistry, school more open to students taking Hopkins independent study classes, shift in mindset, improved professional development.

**QUEST Meeting--10/26/16**

Lynne Drake, SHS School Counselor, gave an excellent presentation about scheduling, counseling programs in high school, and the college search. Here are some highlights:

Scheduling

* Teachers recommend placement
* Assemblies on electives
* Parent information night
* Program of studies book on-line
* Course selection sheet for students
* Students meet with counselors
* Make sure on track for graduation
* Core classes based on teacher recommendation
* Fill in other electives; 2 sciences or history, etc.
* 2 electives in 9 periods after core courses met
* Labs need to be accounted for
* If courses don’t have enough students, may not be offered
* Courses sometimes offered every other year to make it possible to run the class
* Sometimes students need to make choices; prioritize for core courses; do best to meet the needs but not possible to meet everyone’s needs 100% of the time

Counseling Program for Students

* Freshman year: meet to discuss how things are going, talk about things involved in to begin resume
* Sophomore year: early college planning, info sheet—get to know you, explore internships, job sharing
* Junior year: college search process to start thinking about criteria they are looking for; take PSATs in Oct; only offered to Juniors, test geared for Juniors; there is an SAT test for sophomores but currently not offered to PCSD students; SAT practice tests at the library; PSAT—national merit scholarship, connect to Khan Academy for practice
* Senior year: focus on college application process; counselors write letters of recommendation in addition to teachers
* Junior parent night in early November
* Senior parent night in early September, brought in financial aid person
* College night in March, can be tailored to what you need; several seminars running and can choose which seminars to attend: Thurs March 8, 2017, 7-9pm at Mendon High School
* Parents can come to appointments with students
* 8th grade visit day at the middle schools; each area talks about their courses
* Counselors assigned by last name and stay with the same counselor throughout 4 years

College seeking

* Standardized test: can take multiple times; don’t send scores until ready to apply; schools no longer manage test scores
* Colleges will look at whatever you send them, will pick the best score to use for admissions, whether SAT or ACT; some schools are score-optional, school will only use scores if they are provided
* Students typically apply to 8-10 schools
* Scholarships: FastWeb, FinAid—good sources of information; when apply for school, automatically considered for school-based merit scholarships; schools push out info on individual scholarships
* Skipping a grade doesn’t impact scholarship eligibility; communicate in application that child ready to go to college—come out in letters of recommendation, in essay, in text for additional information
* AP credits: score 3 or better, colleges will look at this for some kind of consideration; school website outlines what they do with AP scores
* Some will say can give credit but still need to earn X number of credits
* Some will allow student to come in as a sophomore

**QUEST Meeting--9/27/16**

At our first meeting of the school year, we briefly reviewed feedback gathered from the parent survey, updated the group about the positive changes that were made over the summer by the district, and explained the initiatives the district has committed to implement in the short term. QUEST committee chairs are meeting with district leadership in mid-October to discuss future goals.  The initiatives the district are currently implementing as a result of QUEST's work include:

* Providing a more clear and transparent articulation between the ARI process and the process for identifying students for the double accelerated math clusters.  This includes a more readily identifiable place on the district website for parents to get this information. (complete)
* A review of the assessment instruments used as part of the ARI process. (in progress)
* A meeting with the elementary principals to review the ARI and double accelerated processes to make sure that there is consistency across the five buildings in adhering to the processes as they are articulated (complete)
* A meeting with the middle school principals to review much of the survey report and begin discussions with them about steps to address some of the needs identified within the report, keeping in mind the overall middle school programming.
* Assessing professional development needs and opportunities for staff

At the meeting, QUEST parents also discussed the need for the district to have a community partnership with local area colleges that allows students to take college level courses at a reduced per credit cost. Several QUEST parents are exploring opportunities with local colleges with the goal of initiating conversations between district leadership and university leadership.

**QUEST Meeting--5/31/16**

The initial results from the parent survey were summarized.  The remaining time was spent informally networking.

**QUEST Meeting--3/2/16**

The meeting started with a brief overview of the parent feedback we have collected thus far.  We then broke into small groups to identify the critical issues and topics QUEST needs to address in the coming months.  The small groups were led by our Education, Networking, and Advocacy sub-committee chairs.  The committee chairs met prior to the general meeting in preparation for the work session, with a goal of actively engaging parents in the decision making process.  See the QUEST Committee Pages for more details on the work they have started.

**QUEST Meeting--1/5/16**

The meeting began with the District PTSA Co-Presidents explaining how QUEST can effectively communicate with school district leadership and collectively voice parent feedback.  They emphasized that parents should make an effort to understand the different roles PTSA committees play in the district's decision making process.  They broke down the organization of District PTSA and explained the functions of the school district committees PTSA members serve on throughout the year.

They were followed by Mr. Jeremy Duntley, cluster math teacher at CRMS, and Mrs. Becky Berardino, honors and accelerated math teacher at BRMS.  Mr. Duntley and Mrs. Berardino spoke about how students gifted in math learn and process concepts, the teaching styles and strategies they use in their classrooms to meet gifted students’ needs, and enrichment opportunities outside of school.

The meeting finished with a brief parent discussion about the direction QUEST will take.  It was decided that the next meeting would be a working meeting for parents to break into sub-committee groups to discuss the goals and action items QUEST will take in the coming months.

**QUEST Meeting--11/12/15**

Nancy Campbell, District Standards Leader for Instructional Challenge, was a fantastic speaker.  She gave a history of GT programming in the district and explained the district's approach and philosophies in serving the needs of high ability learners.  She did a great job communicating the identification process, how to engage in a dialogue with the school, and services available.  Parents greatly appreciated Nancy's insight information and were excited that the QUEST group had reformed.  Through the course of discussion, several questions and topics that parents would like to explore further came up:

**1.** **Transparency & Communication**

*There is a desire among parents for more transparency in sharing information and data collected on their children.*

***2.* Pace of instruction**

*Many parents expressed that a significant frustration they hear about at home is the slow pace of instruction at all levels.*

**3. Middle School**

*The lack of an IC specialist in middle schools and no accelerated classes except math is of major concern.  There is no continuation of services from Elementary School to Middle School.*

**4. Ability Grouping**

*Parents expressed that the lack of ability grouping in most subjects in elementary and middle school, other than math, has held back gifted students from reaching their full potential and in some cases been detrimental to their learning.  High achieving students are often asked to tutor/mentor students that need extra help. True differentiation rarely exists on a consistent basis in any subject, at any level.*

**5. Resources**

*Resources for testing and enrichment outside the district were discussed.  Visit the QUEST ‘Resource’ page for more information.*

**Questions from parents at the meeting and via email:**

1. Why doesn't PCSD have fluid ability grouping options across all subjects and grades in middle schools?

2. How will the potential changes to scheduling at the middle school and high school levels affect high ability students?

3. Is the district pursuing relationships with SJFC/Naz that may allow high school students to take classes at the colleges?

4. What district planning committees are available for parents to serve on so QUEST can contribute to discussions?

5. What outside opportunities exist for students (ie-testing, camps, online classes)?  .

6. Will more resources be directed to the elementary schools to expand existing GT programs?