

General Meeting
December 8, 2020 6:30 p.m.
Zoom meeting

6:33 p.m. meeting called to order by Reema Aggarwal after determining the presence of a quorum

PTA Meeting Welcome & General Updates (Reema Aggarwal & Tanea Foglia)

- Welcome and thank you for coming. We have a packed meeting.
- This is the second meeting of the school year. Will focus on the physical and mental health of our students tonight.
- Holiday Drive
 - We have gifts for 59 families and need a few more items. We will circulate the Amazon wish lists again.
- Fall Garden
 - We paid for the fall revival of the circular garden in the front of the school
- Read-a-thon
 - Raised over 14K, with over 164 students and 120,000 minutes read!
- Dine out
 - Next up is Mod Pizza on 12/10

PTA Updates



Community

- Holiday Drive
- Gifts for 59 families
- Need a few more basic items
- Fall garden



Fundraising

- Read-a-thon
- Raised over \$14K
- Over 164 students read more than 120,000 minutes
- Dine Out – 12/10 @ Mod Pizza



Other

- School of Excellence
- Ongoing teacher appreciation and support



- Pep Meeting poll
 - We will have a meeting in January or February where we host a Parent Encouragement Program (PEP). Please vote in the poll that we have opened on Zoom right now. More details to follow.

PEP Meeting Poll



- **Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) meeting options**

- **Positive Discipline During the Coronavirus:** During the challenging times of 2020, children and families are experiencing many changes that make limit-setting difficult for parents. Move away from punishment and toward using encouragement, consequences, limits and agreements, for an approach to discipline that stimulates cooperation and self-restraint.
- **Why Don't My Kids Listen to Me? COVID Edition:** Is it harder to communicate with your child now that the coronavirus has changed the way we live day to day? Do you find yourself giving in to your kids' demands and/or yelling at them? Get a taste of PEP's approach to positive discipline, plus specific actions you can take to gain your children's cooperation without nagging, bribing or yelling.
- **Power Tools for Power Struggles:** Frequent power struggles, whether between adults or between parents and children, impact relationships, especially while everyone is working and schooling at home together. These struggles can intensify with the added stress of the Coronavirus. Learn what happens when a conflict develops and gain some insights into redirecting that energy in ways that tend to solve problems and bring people closer.
- **Raising "I Can" Kids in a COVID World:** Tired of hearing the words 'I can't'? Looking for ways to empower your children with a positive 'can-do' attitude during difficult times? Learn strategies to increase your child's sense of feeling connected, capable, competent and courageous during this pandemic.

Treasurer's Update (Ana Carrion)

- As of November 30, 2020
 - Raised \$12,865 this year, mostly from read-a-thon.
 - Expenses to date \$6,177. This is teacher supply reimbursements, school support, refreshing circular garden in front of the school, annual registration, and taxes.

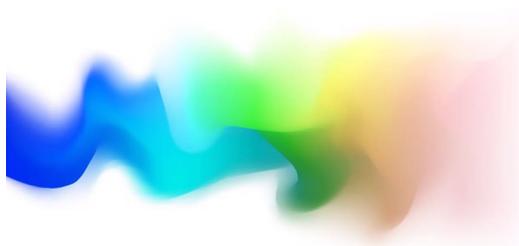
RCFES PTA Budget to Actual			
Nov. 30, 2020			
	Budget	Actual	% breakdown
FY20-21 Income	\$40,750.00	\$ 12,865.08	31.57%
Expenses			
Academic Support	\$27,200.00	\$ 2,199.66	8.09%
Staff Support	\$21,525.00	\$ 1,609.10	7.48%
Community Building	\$7,450.00	\$ 1,207.52	16.21%
Management and Administration	\$5,726.00	\$ 1,160.85	20.27%
Total Expenses	\$61,901.00	\$ 6,177.13	
<i>As of Nov. 30, 2020</i>			

Updates from RCF Administration (Ms. Mensah and Mrs. Lowndes)

- Join us each day from 8:45-8:55 a.m. for the Tiger News Network morning announcements. Friday morning announcements will include staff.
- Thank you for your kindness to the teachers and your support of the community. It makes a huge difference.
- Kids will be signing the “No place for hate” pledge. Look for that in the coming weeks.
- MCPS Parent Preference Survey was due 12/7/20 and we thank you for your participation. We have been analyzing the data today to develop a plan. Next we will take the data and begin to form an instructional plan that will accommodate our school’s needs. On December 15 the Board of Ed will be approving a broad MCPS plan and we will continue to work on our own plan after that.
- Thank you again for all of your support.

Mental Wellbeing Presentation: Checking in on your mental health – Janet Osherow, MSW, LICSW

- A lot of change has happened this year and our lives have been turned upside down.
- Many of us have had stress and are feeling down. It is important to protect our own mental wellbeing, not just the wellbeing of our kids.
- How can we tell if something is more serious? Is this depression or situational depression? Try to talk to friends or seek mental health support for more information.
- Mental health is something we can talk about and get treated. Medication, therapy, and support from friends are just a few options to feel better.



**Checking in
on your
mental
health**

Janet Osherow, MSW, LICSW
December 8, 2020

“Having kids in pandemic virtual school is just like having kids in normal school except you’re at school with them and school is in your house and everything is a disaster and you’re all crying and also you’re working a full-time job while all that is happening.”

tweeted by @Lizzie-Petrone



Is this Depression or “Covid” ?

Over the last 8 months, our lives and our children’s lives have turned UPSIDE DOWN. While we may be “ok” and our children may be “ok,” this has been A TOUGH YEAR for many. How can we tell the if what we’re feeling is something more serious ?

- Signs of depression
 - Might be useful as adults to think about to assess
 - This is for adults so don’t do it on your kids.
 - If you have concerns speak to the school counselors who can help you get in touch with support.

Signs of depression

*PHQ-9 depression scale (over last two weeks)

- Little interest or pleasure in doing things?
- Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping too much
- Feeling tired or having very little energy
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Feeling bad about yourself—or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down
- Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching TV
- Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed? Or so fidgety or restless that you have been moving a lot more than usual?
- Thoughts you would be better off dead, or thoughts of hurting yourself in some way.

* These are usually conducted by a professional, but you can ask yourself these questions

Ask yourself (or loved one) these questions and have them answer. Each answer gets a number. Total the numbers and the scale below indicates what "level" of depression you may/may not have.

Not at all = 0

Several days = + 1

More than half the days + 2

Nearly every day + 3

TOTALS:

0-4 = minimal or none

5-9 = mild

10-14 = moderate

15-19 moderately severe

20-27 severe

- What can help?
 - It can be very hard to ask for help. If you need connection please reach out.
 - Some people feel like they can't complain because other people are experiencing worse situations. It is okay to still feel things are hard.

What can help?

During this time of isolation, you don't have to be "alone" REACH OUT to friends and family & Practice Self-Care

- Set up a virtual date with friends
- Have a "check in buddy"
- Virtual game night
- Let someone know if you're feeling down
- See friends and family –safely—in person (air hugs are better than no hugs!)
- Know that it is OK to tell people you're NOT OK.

Some days I can't remember if I showered? What do you mean when you ask if I'm practicing SELF CARE???



- **Practice Self Care**

- There is a lot of research on happiness. Expressing gratitude can be very helpful
- Mindfulness and meditation can be very helpful
- Practice self-compassion and kindness to yourself
- Remember you are not alone!

Practice Self Care

- Express GRATITUDE even in the hardest of times!
studies show practicing gratitude can greatly improve happiness.
- Meditate (even 2 minutes can make a difference—because sometimes that's all we have, right?)
There are FREE meditation apps that can help (headspace, insight timer, calm are just a few)
- Put down the laundry basket and watch a favorite show! (or read a book/magazine)
- Take a walk/run/nap/yoga class—whatever will recharge you
- Take an extra 5 minutes in the shower (ok, maybe 3 minutes—those kids aren't giving us 5, right?)
- BE KIND TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS –no parent, student, teacher or administrative staff was meant to run this way! Some days are going to be harder than others.

REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ALONE...

there are people who love you, need you and will be there for you!

- There are lots of resources out there. Please check out some of these resources and get in touch with the school counselors if you need additional assistance.

RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is in a crisis

- Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis text line: Text 741741#
- SAMHSA National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

To find a therapist near you:

<https://psychologytoday.com> * You can search by location, insurance

There are also text/virtual platforms such as Betterhelp.com and TalkSpace

***NOTE: You do not have to be “in crisis” to see a therapist or counselor. A therapist can guide you through good times/ decisions as well. ☺

Strategies for Distance Learning Engagement and Creating Emotional Connections (RCF Counseling Team) – Sarah Cohen and Lynsay Gillis, School Counselors

- Thank you for having us. We are appreciative of your support.
- We both have children and understand this is very challenging.



Hello!

We are your school counselors!

We understand the stress, anxiety, and difficulties that come along with distance learning and the current climate of our world. We are here to help! We both have 2 children and all four of them are under the age of 5! We get it! Parenting during a pandemic is hard work!

MRS. GILLIS
Pre-K, K, 2, 4

MRS. COHEN
1, 3, 5

3

- **How to help your children**
 - Many children are stressed and it presents in different ways.
 - Children can sense how parents are feeling
 - Talk to your child about how they are feeling. Keep it open ended and help them label the feelings. Tell them they are not alone and that their feelings are normal.

Validate and Normalize

What we know!

- Many children are stressed and anxious right now. This can present as being disorganized, unfocused, sleep irregularities, and irritability.

What you can do at home!

- Discuss your child's feelings openly.
- Validate their feelings.
- Lastly, normalize!

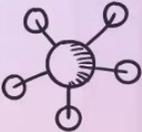
😊 😞 😐

- **How to talk about Coronavirus**
 - It is important to continue to talk to kids about coronavirus
 - Talk about changes as they are happening
 - Bring it up again especially as things change

- Tell them the facts and be open and honest. Its okay to say you don't know.
- We recommend reading this NPR story/comic with your kids:
 - <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/11/16/934679210/just-for-kids-how-to-stay-safe-from-the-coronavirus>

How to talk to your kids about the
CORONAVIRUS

- ★ Tell them the facts.
- ★ Be open and honest.
- ★ It's okay to say you don't know.
- ★ Acknowledge feelings
- ★ Read [this comic](#) together!



- School on Zoom

- New year is a good time to reestablish routines and expectations
- Suggested activity. Sit down with kids and talk about what the parent's job is vs the kid's job
 - Add conversation about what would happen if I don't do my activities and talk to them about what will happen if they don't do their responsibilities.
- Children want to know what is expected so continue to hold them accountable for their responsibilities and have the conversation often.

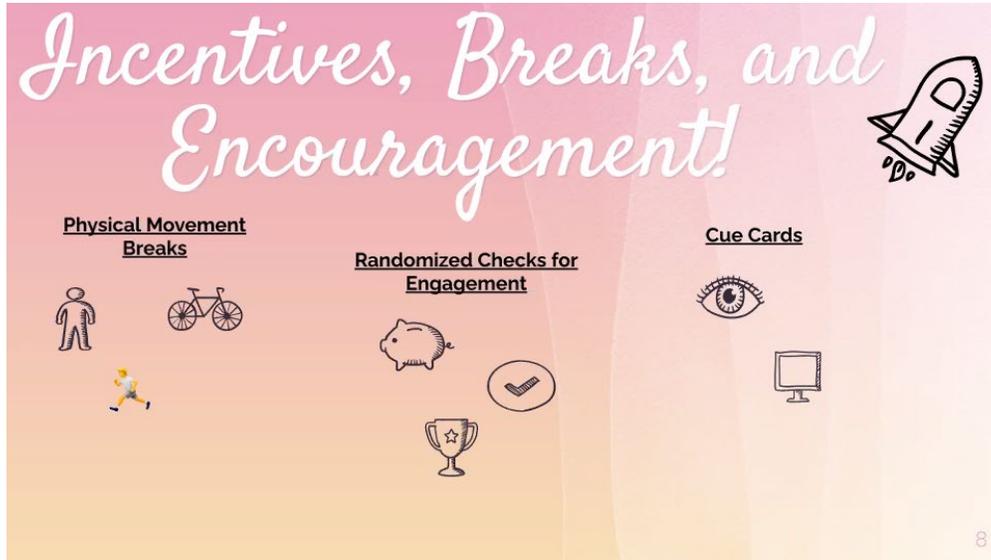
How to talk to your kids about the importance of...
School on Zoom

- ✧ My job, your job!
- ✧ Expectations & Routine



Parent's Jobs	Kid's Jobs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · work · laundry · cooking · cleaning · pay bills · grocery shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · make my bed · clean my room · go to school · do my homework

- Incentives, Breaks and Encouragement
 - Please help the kids get up during breaks rather than play video games during the breaks.
 - Could use cue/picture cards rather than verbal redirection



Zoom Tips you may not know...

Tip # 1: Fix that cluttered screen.

Tip # 3: Quickly mute/unmute



Tip # 2: Use side by side mode.

Tip # 4: Pin the Speaker/Spotlight

Positive Affirmations to Start the Day...



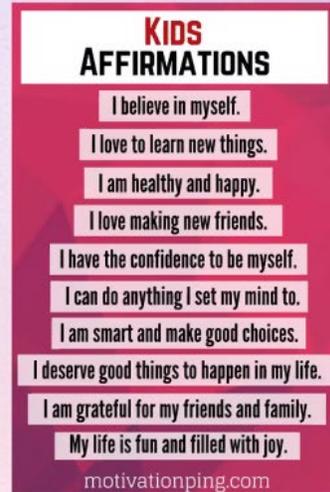
*I am strong.
I am brave.
I can get through this.*

I can do hard things.

This isn't always fun, but it is temporary and worth it!



I am in charge of my feelings and emotions.



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Reaching out to ask for help is a sign of strength!

Connect with us:

- Via email
- Via office hours
 - [Sarah](#)
 - [Lynsay](#)

Connect with resources:

- [Google Folder with Resources](#)
- [Our Virtual Calming Room](#)
- <https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/coronavirus/resources.aspx>



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Q&A

- How to help manage stress/anxiety in kids who are anxious about logging in
 - Try using an A/B week schedule
 - If you are late, it is okay. Talk to them about what would happen if they are late.

Close Meeting (Reema Aggarwal & Tanea Foglia)

- We are setting up a padlet. It is an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have for the RCF Administration. Will share that information on the listserv soon.
- Thank you for being here.
- Next meeting will be in March 2021. Will have a Jan/Feb stand alone PEP seminar.

Meeting adjourned 7:28 p.m.