

CHAMPLAIN PTO

PTO Meeting Minutes February 16, 2021

Attendees (via Zoom): Jessica Blackman, Vanessa Berman, Angela Duquette-Catlett, Joelle van Lent, Erica Houskeeper, Ranjit Buddy Singh, John Stanton-Geddes, Brettan Martelle, Ruth Henry, Katlyn Morris, Joe Resteghini, Rebecca Grannis, Stan Weinberger, Chelsea Tedder, Beth Rice, Janet Breen, Brianna Johnson, Simon Bird, Heather Chernyshov, Connie Coleman, Heather Pearson, Kerrie Mathes, Kathleen Bray, Laura Rabinovitz, Carrie Roy, Abby Dery, Katie Mobley, Amanda Maley, Kirstin Boehm, Jessica Strolin-Goltzman, Laura Lipton & Linden

Updates and Q&A with Principal Joe Resteghini

Principal Joe Resteghini shared that two classes are currently in quarantine. Reports from the health department indicate that both classes will be able to resume in-person on Thursday, Feb. 18th. He wishes everyone a safe and healthy break next week.

A large scale, whole school event is planned upon return to school on Friday March 5th.

The state is still planning to begin standardized testing beginning in March.

Interactive session with Dr. Joelle van Lent – Fostering Resilience

Joelle is a clinical psychologist in Vermont who works with 11 school districts, including the teachers and staff at Champlain Elementary. Her area of focus is adversity, stress, trauma & resilience.

Fostering resilience in 2021 – Wisdom & Hope

Joelle suggests a main theme for each day is connecting wisdom & hope, with realistic optimism. Kids need hope. They need to know that things will get better and that lasting good will come out. We should keep the focus on the day we are in.

Does adversity make us stronger? Joelle believes that it depends on the elements we have control over that influence our outcome.

What promotes resilience?

- Social support & sense of belonging. Making sure that every student feels a connection to their classroom and school. That they have a trusted adult and a best friend. These are the social-emotion skills that Champlain focuses on.

- Hope, the belief that a better time will come. We want to come out of stressful situations being proud of how we coped. Joelle believes that this generation of kids will be stronger because they have had direct experience going through something incredibly hard.
- Daily tasks / activities in which the person feels competent. All students and adults need regular doses of competent / confidence boosters. Create a sense of purpose & feeling of accomplishment. As a family, set a goal in the morning and discuss how it went at the end of the day. Parents shouldn't be perfect, and we need to role model appropriate behavior.
- Helping roles & responsibilities. People need to know that others are counting on them. It is important for kids to know there are expectations: chores, school work, etc. During Covid, Joelle suggests balancing these expectations- help with time management, managing emotions, starting & completing tasks and sustaining motivation.
- "Book ending" each day with a sense of purpose & a feeling of accomplishment. Look at how we are measuring success.
- The ability to put feelings into words & connecting with supportive people who can validate feelings without too quickly trying to fix, reassure or "Silver line" them. It is important for stressed adults to resist the need to fix things for their children. The growth mindset teaches us that we are a work in progress. Role model asking for help.

How do you control worry? (Productive versus unproductive worry)

When we worry, our brain is helping us remember. Worry can be growth promoting and productive. Help put kids in control of their worry. Set time limits and discuss-give worry your full attention. At the time limit, cap the worry-create a ritual (play a song, sing, dance, jumping jacks, sensory, change of temperature, etc.). Create a sentence that can be repeated. Joelle shared hers: "I did my best. Let that be good enough. Tomorrow is another opportunity." She shared that this a cognitive behavioral strategy and must be done over and over before it will become effective.

Joelle shared that during Covid, we need to remember that grief is not a hierarchy. Everyone has different coping methods. As adults, we need to validate instead of providing perspective.

Questions from parents:

How do we help families in our communities who are stressed? Respond without judgement. The more stressed that we are, the more likely we are to respond with judgement.

How do one address a child who feels like they are "missing out"? Joelle recommends naming the feeling first and validate your child. Humans like routine & predictability. Share with your child that sometimes things happen in a different order and reassure them that adults are figuring it out to make sure they are getting the skills that they need.

How do we battle the "fix it" mindset? Positive stress (day to day stuff) is good and motivating. Examples of positive stress are going to a new school, failing a test or trying out for a team. Kids need positive stress and adults shouldn't take away the problem. Name the feeling & cope together.

How does one stop the "What if" cycle? Joelle recommended the book, "The Whole Brain Child" by Daniel Siegel. Siegel talks about kids being in an emotion brain or a rational brain. As adults, we may not be approaching our kids in the same brain state. Joelle recommends playing out the "what if" cycle

with the child as a strategy. If this makes the child more emotional, recognize the child's emotions & feelings and move away from "what if."

How does one address a child who says they are awful? Step one of self-compassion is self-kindness. Adults need to model self-kindness. When a child is speaking negatively about themselves, it is okay and necessary to disagree with them. "You wouldn't say that about one of your friends," Joelle suggested as a response.

How does one handle a child with lots of worries and melt downs? In the moment, Joelle recommends writing all of their worries down. The next day, create a family worry time and make it a ritual. Anxiety builds up if left unattended.

How does one handle current events & concerns about Covid with kids? For adults, Joelle recommends choosing two news sources & a set time of day to read the news. Create a predictable source and pattern. Schedule a time of day with your child to update them on news as you see fit, or to check in with them regarding their exposure to news.

How does one address sleep disruption & night anxiety? Joelle recommends setting a scheduled "worry time" where everyone can get all their worries out. Bedtime routines are important. If a child wakes up during the night with anxiety, shift away from the worry.

How does one address a child in a high-emotional state? Joelle recommends less talking and remaining calm. When the child has calmed down, acknowledge that they had some big feelings that you want to talk about, but focus on doing something together (a walk, games, etc.) first. Think "What do you need?" versus "What is wrong?"

PTO updates

- PTO President Jessica Blackman will be sending out presentation notes and PTO information via email.
- PTO Treasurer Rebecca Grannis shared that the grant round for teachers is in process, with applications being accepted through Friday February 19th. Currently, two applications have been submitted.