

September 13, 2010

During the PTA meeting on September 6th, I led a quick activity around Janney's vision and values and what families see and want to see in the realms of the parent community and classrooms. As our vision defines what we want to become and our six core values shape our actions and decision-making process, the activity started what I hope will be a long conversation around our lenses of success, areas of improvement, and how each of us can be part of delivering our core principles. The unedited notes from that meeting are below. You will see ideas that are within our work as well as those beyond our scope, contradicting statements that can become productive and engaging discussions and questions that have yet to be answered. In the immediate future, you are invited to be part of the values discussion by adding to the list at Back to School Night or by reviewing key points at the first Principal's Coffee of the year ("Values at Janney: What does our current work look like and what is next?") on September 24th from 8am – 9am.

- Pricipal Lycknell

REFLECTION

**** Classrooms ****

SEE

- Morning Daily Rituals
- Questions of the day
- Prioritizing & Delegating Duties to Students
- Jamboree still feels like a forced "sharing" moment
- Morning Meeting & Jamboree
- Multiple opportunities to share with classmates (at least in early grades), through morning meetings

WANT TO SEE

- Parental Involvement in the classroom
- More students assisting other students if they are lost or confused about any Assignments
- More parents in every class participating - Always some group of parents
- Respectful sharing of ideas & respect for different opinions
- More opportunities for parents to volunteer in classrooms
- Is it possible to use questions more with elementary school kids rather than give answers? Can they be asked to discuss their opinions?
- More story telling/reflection – less coloring (kindergarten) – How will you know?
- Reflection around: what does it mean to be a global citizen & how do I demonstrate my values daily
- Storytelling/Reading of longer books, perhaps one chapter per day with discussion of literacy devices (character, plot, etc.) – for younger classes
- Make the learning experience better for all of the children.
- Lots of open and honest communication between teachers and parents. I really want to hear form the teachers about how the kids are doing and what more the teachers may need to make the learning experience better for all of the children

REFLECTION

**** Parents ****

SEE

- Involvement in PTA, many activities , discussions PTA yahoo group
- Use of the list serve/yahoo group to share ideas
- Parents collaborating with each other on a daily basis
- Small groups of parents always together; other parents separated from the groups or not a part of a group
- A lot of new people, feels like more than ever
- Create a Parent Talent Pool
- Get us together to share we have a superb community – great people, experiences, minds. Let's find more ways for us to share our talents and learn from each other.

WANT TO SEE

- More collegial discussions on list serve – less hyperbolic speculation
- Would like more opportunities to work with teacher to understand the learning goals & methods – and how they impact my child specifically and the class broadly
- Teachers reaching out to parents early in school year for individual discussions
- Perhaps for there to be a vehicle for teachers to encourage kids to share what they do in school with their parents.
- More collaboration of “New” parents with the “Old” parents.
- More friendly hellos among groups of individuals
- Longer parent teacher conference time.
- Parent education – learn how to talk with and help our kids at home
- Online forums for Janney PTA
- Janney wanted (babysitters, etc...), private & password protected

ACHIEVEMENT

** Classrooms **

SEE

- Teachers who recognize that each child learns & is motivated in different ways and tailors how they interact with child
- I have always enjoyed the “just right book” concept for reading. I think this helps address the wide variety of reading levels in classrooms, particularly at the lower levels
- Love seeing active project-based learning. Like, jumping to count, dancing to learn rhythm, cooking to learn fractions.
- Janney does a great job in recognizing success: academic, extra-curriculum, social
- Joyful learning begins early on-with attention to each child’s potential
- I see great effort to identify those who are having difficulties in the classroom & providing individual help. I greatly appreciate that. Yes, I’ve seen this in some classrooms but not always.
- Rewards for their academic achievements during a school-wide program at the end of the year.
- All students trying to get with the “flow” of the academic program
- Excitement for learning!
- Students doing their best in each task given.
- Academic emphasis on group standards teaching to workbook, assignments not individual challenges

WANT TO SEE

- More advanced Math opportunities
- Smaller kindergarten class sizes
- Could you share what types of assessments (other than test scores) are used to “monitor student learning and inform instruction?”
- More active participative of following up on the individual needs.: example: tutoring if needed
- Reports from teachers in first few weeks about how my child is doing and what he is doing
- I want to see students find more meaning in their work and why it is important in their life
- All students proficient in Reading & Math – Programs to ensure all students succeed
- Down with tests!
- More quality after school offerings for everyone!
- Need smaller classes, concern that class sizes will inhibit achievement reflection
- Less (standardized) testing (I know, it’s not possible)
- Less testing may not be possible, but less test-prep is ...
- More homework in Mathematics given prior to testing or for any other venue
- Achievement demonstrating values, kindness, compassion
- More wide spread ability to calibrate teaching approached to the individual students’ levels & keep all challenged. Some teachers have done it exceptionally well; others not at all.
- Smaller class sizes!
- Selected books for each class to read as a whole to keep thee students above grade level

ACHIEVEMENT

**** Parents ****

Want to See

- Teach parents about how you are teaching the kids
- Not over-emphasizing achievement – more valuing of perseverance & individuality
- More communication about what parents do to help classroom work. What should or shouldn't we be doing at home
- Teacher to recognize children's different learning styles & include parents
- Compare Janney's results to similar non-U.S. school
- Explaining the students on relevance of their work
- I would like to see clear ideas & a plan to close the achievement gap across racial lines. What can we do as parents to accomplish this?
- Letting a child advance at own pace – what if child is more advanced than rest of class?
- More advance work – children able to do higher level if capable
- If children learn in different ways, how are our teachers ensuring that all students are growing/learnig, especially with such BIG classes
- More active guidance for summer break reviews materials
- Challenging students to surprise themselves with their capability and to stretch themselves
- A more challenging environment with fewer non-academic distractions.
- Better engagement and communication with parents/students regarding processes at the beginning of the school year (not policy).

EXPERIMENTATION

**** Parents ****

SEE

- Love Jamboree
- Too many buzz words & corporate speak dilute what seems to be an important message
- Jamboree was a scary endeavor for me & I assumed it would be for my kindergarten son. He did great! It taught me not to impose my own limitations or fears on him, so thanks for that.
- Jamboree is chaotic to quiet – more introverted kids

WANT TO SEE

- Programs in which parents lead older students in real world activities
- Celebrate mistakes! (as information on what doesn't work)
- Built culture where you feel safe enough to admit what you don't know.
- A team approach parent and instructor to meeting student needs.
- Opportunities to observe classrooms in action
- Science & History Fair
- Examples of experimentation with different programs? Successes & failures?
- Small grant applications from families!
- EXPERIMENTATION – consider separating boys from girls; say in kindergarten – and use different methods of instruction appropriate for each group. Boys learn different from girls
- Experimentation – Janney is a strong willed mass. Pushing against tradition “and how we always have done it” is hard but keep doing it.

Experimentation

**** Classroom ****

SEE

- Amazing new science program
- I was happy to see my daughter have a great first science lab experiment.
- New, improved Science program
- New Science labs are great, kids are loving it!
- Janney Jamboree – this was a great experiment that works
- I see the excitement when they discover something and it develops
- Learning about “testable questions” in Science – loving!
- Boring homework assignments
- Happy to see older kids encouraging younger ones to participate, I think it helps both to learn
- Teaching basic skills through worksheets and sitting at tables all day
- Sending more books home for kids to read & return
- Too much workbook homework

WANT TO SEE

- Meaningful field trips, especially for the younger grades
- A really deep level of learning for children interested in learning more.
- More risk-taking and learning outside the traditional box – eg: through hands – on service learning
- Would like to see more encouragement of open-ended work/projects – more emphasis on independent thinking
- Less formulaic days – so sometimes they don’t know what to expect when they come to school
- Creative use of a small space to foster exchange of ideas among students, while moving around the room (instead of just sitting at desks all day)

EQUITY

**** Parents ****

SEE

- Same core group of parents volunteering

WANT TO SEE

- Parent's role in equity defined. What should parent be doing to bring child/provide learning environment
- Student events with more diverse campuses
- Inclusion – Parents need to own this idea concept at home. If we really value it then teach it always
- COLLABORATION – Consider recruiting and training new parents to manage the PTA to ensure confirmed success.
- Would like to see was for more out-of-boundary parents to participate in the school
- Involve more different types of parents
- Inclusion committee/focus group for special needs
- All parents involved in the Janney community. All parents feeling welcome.
- A committee for tutoring, support groups, buddie programs, playdates
- More volunteering programs/activities
- Want to make sure there are appropriate opportunities for more advanced children to be challenged academically
- Would like to see the parents set a better example in this area. Our children are a product of their environment and a times are not inclusive.
- I would like to see some equity in the JED program. The hours after school should have as much focus as in school
- Lower the student support fee. Spend down the surplus.
- Having parents offer at home the same level of support, opportunity & experiences to their children as they expect the school to provide

EQUITY

** Classrooms **

SEE

- I see the teachers treating most kids fairly and think they try to teach to this statement.
- When a child makes good choices and how wrong choices may effect others and the outcome of their choices
- We need foreign language and cross cultural, programs - especially now with out Spanish!
- The test scores show a difference ability. Does this mean more resources are being provided to lower scoring students or more attention is being paid to those higher scoring students which is why they get higher scores?
- Kids are taught about different factors, races, cultures early on – and taught to respect them
- I see my color-blind children being sensitized to race – to notice color via Black History Projects me too!

WANT TO SEE

- Move cultural activities
- Want to see children actually studying people for their achievements, not their color.
- More discussion with students about inclusion and exclusion, e.g. “clubs” exclude people
- All student living up to their potential. All students challenged to learn and grow.
- I want to see the teachers and school respect the differences of each student and not favor and always reward the smartest.
- Kids examining gender roles and identify different but equal
- More diversity among student population .
- Not so much a desire but a concern/questions: does boy/girl make up in a class matter? My child’s is almost 2:1 boy to girl. Don’t know whether to be worried or not about that.
- More discussion in the classroom around difference. Even in Kgn. Kids could read Tod Paris picture book about different families
- I think we need to move on from Black History Month and include black history in the general curriculum.

INQUIRY

**** Parents ****

SEE

- Children being prematurely asked to sift through materials gathered on the inter-net and synthesize this information (third grad last year)
- Safe environment to ask, explore, create for both parents and students
- Parental involvement in academic activities relevant to their professions

WANT TO SEE

- Children first taught to read, evaluate and synthesize materials from age – appropriate printed matter (books) before being allowed to research the net
- Opportunities to work above grade level when kids have ability and interest
- Easier, better communicated ways for parents who work full time to be involved
- More focus on foreign language opportunities
- I want to see more Science as I think it makes kids more curious and inquire more. Want them to see science in all things.
- Create an inquiry group, similar to a debate.”
- Club idea – includes parents in activities.
- Ensuring that kids at the upper levels of reading and writing are given more challenging work

INQUIRY

**** Classrooms ****

SEE

- Great new Science Program! How can we foster cross cultural communication with out foreign language?
- Good integration of alts into other areas

WANT TO SEE

- Intellectual stimulation for all levels
- Continued arts integration
- More hands on Science for all grade levels
- Have enough resources to reward and support curiosity