



COMMENTS THAT WERE RECEIVED FROM PARENTS DURING RECENT PARENT MEETINGS

NURSERY/PRE-KG (14 parents present)

1. Give more notice of events and/or meetings
2. Provide weekly communication card to parents
3. Make sure all teachers know what's in students' files (medicines, allergies, etc.) including specialists
4. Post schedule and information –class parent, committees and who signed up, if help is requested for committees, yearly events and who's in charge
5. Don't take students to gym so early at noon
6. Continue to provide supervision before school
7. Stress that English is the language of instruction
8. Specialists include information in N/L monthly (third Friday of the month)
9. Spanish class do rhymes, songs, games, etc.
10. Bus nanny walk with students to class
11. All staff should be on duty and not eating breakfast at 7:30 a.m.
12. Would like more outside activities for students; parents liked the idea of a student-maintained garden
13. Suggest combining the two classes for some activities
14. Explain methodologies to parents
15. Enforce dress code for older students
16. Prepare one-minute videos of students, parents, teachers for marketing purposes
17. Pick a day to impress us—Discovery Day—parents bring friends and observe teaching at its best
18. Update website—mention that we're 50% Honduran and students can form friendships for life as well as interacting with other cultures; include where alumni have gone; highlight our workshop
19. Visit Nursery Schools to explain our program, The Discovery Experience, invite parents, teachers and administration to visit on Discovery Day; offer to have our teachers do in-service for them or have a day of job sharing
20. Write to U.S. Embassy families who are coming to Honduras for next post
21. Provide better playground equipment
22. Provide Early Childhood Coordinator
23. Require parents to spend a certain number of hours per month/quarter/semester as needed by the teacher, with specific guidelines
24. Work on improving student behavior at school events

(Parents expressed appreciation for the Weekly Newsletter, Z oo Alphabet, Developmental Learning, and no school uniform. They said that they felt listened to by the teachers whenever they had a concern.)

KINDERGARTEN (15 parents present)

1. Reduce the amount of candy at school, from teachers and from parents– suggest alternatives and guidelines; have one birthday celebration per month for all birthdays in both classes (some liked this idea and some did not)
2. Communication—If sending information by email, also send another way as email may not get through
3. Suggested use of notebook instead of loose notes home (others stated that the folders that are currently being used work well)
4. Post schedule and information (see #4 above)-this information would also help in scheduling pinatas
5. Make sure that parents are not talking to the teachers once school starts at 8:00 a.m.— teachers' attention should be on the students then
6. Discussion about birthday parties outside of school. General consensus was that this should be the family's personal decision concerning who to invite. However, if there is ANY school involvement (e.g. passing out invitations at school), ALL students in BOTH classes must be invited. This is in line with the current school practice.
7. Suggestions for Art—students should explore materials like clay, salt painting, etc.; prefer not using coloring book sheets; teacher suggest questions parents can ask their children about what they have learned; let kids get messy! (take dad's old t-shirt)
8. Parents aren't seeing a lot of music in every day—suggestion is to have music playing as students enter classroom—start the day with music
9. Some parents felt the computer class needs to be improved; other parents felt the computer class should be eliminated for KG
10. Ms. Florencia's computer needs to be fixed
11. Specialist teachers include articles in newsletter once a month
12. In Grade 1 teacher sends home list of websites they are using at school—would like to see this in KG too
13. Poll – what activities do you take child to now outside of school? Would your child participate at Discovery School if the activity were offered here?
14. Look into offering French (parents were informed that Alianza Francesa will offer an After-School Activity 4th quarter if there is enough interest, and we are looking at the possibility of introducing it into the curriculum—again if there is enough interest)
15. Need larger space for when parents of both classes are invited (parents were informed that teachers can use the Library, the Cafeteria, the Gym, etc.)
16. Put up "SLOW" signs or speed bumps to discourage fast driving
17. Inform guards and staff to take license plate numbers or student name if driver is driving carelessly or speeding and administration will follow up on it
18. Put newsletter reminder to parents to drive carefully and to hurry when getting into or out of car; also remind people to be patient and polite
19. Suggest that parents put car seats on the right side of the back seat so school personnel can help buckle and unbuckle child without parent having to get out of car

20. Discussed the possibility of having two lanes of traffic, but agreement was that we don't want students walked in front of vehicles unless with parents

(Parents expressed appreciation for the Kindergarten teachers and the way they communicate with parents.)

GRADES 1 & 2 (14 parents present)

1. Look into how we are grading—Are we giving 4's and 5's too freely?
2. Students don't get enough individual attention
3. Concerns were noted with Grade 2 journaling
4. Concerns were noted with Grade 2 reading level
5. Concerns were noted with Grade 2 PE, although some thought it was better this year than last
6. Concerns were noted with Grade 2 Spanish Social Studies and Spanish
7. Describe A to Z levels on the website so parents understand what each level means
8. Some parents wanted their children to be challenged more—they were advised to talk with the teacher as she is trained in differentiation for differing abilities and levels
9. When asked why there were different reading levels among the students, Ms. Giles explained that that is normal. Not all children achieve readiness at the same time, and in Grade 2 there will always be different levels. We just have to make sure we are challenging and meeting each student at his/her own level.
10. Questions were raised about MAP (Measure of Academic Progress) that we began this year. Ms. Giles explained that the first test in December was for baseline data only. We will re-administer the MAP in late April/early May, and compare results with the first test to see how each child has progressed. Our scores will be normed with schools in the US. In another year or so the Northwest Education Association (NWEA) that provides the test will have norming information for international schools, but it doesn't exist now.
11. Grade 2 Art – Suggested that we do not use coloring book sheets as they are not really 'art'; suggested input from the secondary Art teacher; suggested having an Art Exhibit this year
12. Concerns were expressed over the admission of new students and the outside perception by some that we admit students below the level they should be. Ms. Giles explained that although that may have happened in the past, we now have an admission process in place that ensures we admit only those students who can succeed at Discovery and who will do well with our methodologies.
13. There was some discussion of report cards and some parents expressed that they wanted more information on the report cards
14. Suggested we give in-service to all elementary teachers on how to integrate computer instruction
15. Suggested scheduling of reading classes to allow for horizontal planning – placing the students according to their level and allowing movement between the levels
16. Parents expressed concern that Grade 2 had 16 students and no teacher assistant
17. Suggestion of adding an equestrian team

18. Parent asked how our teachers are evaluated. Ms. Giles explained the hiring practices and expectations of our accrediting agency, SACS, as well as the informal walk-through evaluations, formal clinical supervision, individual goal-setting, and peer evaluations.
19. Parents expressed interest in an after-school 'Learning Lab'
20. Parents expressed their displeasure with this year's SongFest and felt that we should change the format for future events
21. Parent expressed appreciation of the Music Department and felt we should push for more students to join

(Parents expressed that their children love the school and that, in general, the parents are happy with the school. When parent had a concern, she talked to the teacher and her fears were erased. There was general agreement that the homeroom teachers are very receptive to the parents.)

GRADE 3-4 (8 parents present)

1. Parents requested that we give them a weekend at least between requesting something and deadline
2. Try not to make last-minute changes—extra practices or rehearsals or cancelled practices make transportation difficult
3. Let parents know when there is a class activity they can attend
4. Different ideas were expressed for providing transportation following after-school activities, such as: charge extra for the bus; allow students to ride for a fee even if they don't ride on the regular routes; have students stay and do homework until the regular bus returns to take them home
5. Put Methodologies on webpage and in newsletter
6. Journaling—why aren't spelling and grammar corrected? Ms. Giles explained that in journaling we want the student's ideas to flow freely without being censored. Those things are addressed in other activities
7. Asked that we clean up the dirt pile by the containers
8. Some suggestions were expressed for PE—Have students run on the field rather than in the parking lot; stress continued fitness; make sure our students are prepared before competing; set up our own invitational tournament
9. Opinions were expressed about the cafeteria—some felt it was too expensive and that we should be providing more healthy food, suggested putting candy at the back not the front, or only selling after school; however, other parents appreciated that they can tell the cafeteria staff what their children are allowed to buy, and another expressed that the less healthy foods sell better; suggestion to stop using Styrofoam since Discovery has gone green this year

(Homeroom teacher was acknowledged for providing individualized lessons to differentiate for student needs. Appreciation was expressed for the way homeroom teacher develops Emotional Intelligence, e.g. in helping students resolve conflicts and work together)

GRADE 5 (1 parent present)

1. Very happy with the school; feels child is getting a good education here
2. Would like to see more sports, as well as more Music, Dance, and Arts

GRADE 6 (6 parents present)

1. Parents expressed that they would like to see students held to a higher standard on their presentations—e.g. sloppy writing and overall quality of work
2. Review literature that the students are reading and buy new books if necessary
3. In Spanish Social Studies students are stressed with covering the curriculum AND learning the National Anthem
4. Open our doors to families and friends to show how we teach at Discovery
5. Parent expressed concern that the Science books are dated 1994
6. Introduce instruments in Music class; sing more in Music class
7. Schedule PE throughout whole year instead of just one semester
8. Offer English language lessons for parents
9. Comments on Spanish classes: Concerned that in Spanish children are doing a literal translation rather than a meaningful translation; make sure that teachers identify and challenge each student and motivate students; Spanish teachers didn't send home any communication during curfew and H1N1 days out of school ; material is too easy and grading is too easy; Spanish speaking families want more intensive instruction
10. Specials classes need to be improved—Specials teachers have to set the tone and raise expectations of the students
11. Advertise our Art class more—have an Art Exhibition
12. Concern was expressed over the students learning the National Anthem. One parent who had an older child said that he had a very good experience with the Anthem last year and did well on the exam. Ms. Giles said that the students may 'freak out' about the anthem—parents should make sure they don't 'freak out' themselves! Ms. Julia said that Discovery differentiates the anthem exam for foreign and local students and that we teach the Anthem with a Discovery School focus—having students recite, understand, tying it into history, etc.)

(In general, parents expressed that they are happy with the school, the amount of homework, and the supervision of students. Parents were advised to consult with the teachers any time they have concerns or special requests for their child. One parent commented that not everything is a complaint, and that Discovery is definitely better than the last school they attended. New parent stated that her child is happy and that he is treated equally and with respect, that the curriculum is good, and that anything negative she has heard is minor compared with other schools.)

GRADE 7 (2 parents present)

1. Concern was expressed that students are not receiving things like “arte practica” yet we are showing it on transcripts. Ms. Giles explained that we have three people on staff to ensure that we are complying with the Honduran Ministry of Education requirements. Since we are an international school, adaptations have been made to meet the needs of our student body.
2. Concern was expressed about the level of Math instruction. Ms. Giles explained that in the High School we have hired an extra Math teacher and split the classes so we can offer courses at the levels the students need.
3. Parent expressed appreciation for the true learning that we provide for our students, as opposed to the memorization that other schools provide
4. Parent expressed opinion that small class sizes aren’t an advantage in the secondary school and asked what school was doing to make sure each class had 15 students. Ms. Giles explained the admission process that ensures any student admitted meets our admission requirements, can succeed at Discovery, and will be a positive influence in the school. Ms. Giles also said that she would not admit just ‘any student’ in order to fill the classes.

GRADE 8 (8 parents present)

1. Parent felt the survey was too long
2. Parents expressed that the school needs to make sure both Grade 8 Science classes are receiving the same quality of instruction
3. Science Fair: Some parents felt too much time and credit were given to the Science Fair projects; others felt it should be more competitive and that we should ‘step up’ the level of the Science Fair. Suggestions made: make participation voluntary, especially for high school; have students do their projects with materials commonly found at home; have one project per grade; school could choose 3 or 4 relevant topics (global climate change, sustainable agriculture, etc.) and let the students decide which one they wanted to work on—could be a mixed age group of students on one project; have students do the work at school)
4. Parent expressed that the elementary is good but the secondary needs to be better. Ms. Giles explained the changes that have been made over the past 18 months , including the semester exams, the Advanced Placement program, the selective admission process, the longevity of teachers, the changes in the Math program, the sports additions, and purchase of new materials (getting teachers what they need). Parent meeting – AP Meeting—university course; university text, (Art, Spanish, 2 English classes, Human Geography and/or Environmental Science; Admissions process; Why we use 60% as the point of failure in a class; longevity of teachers; math divisions; long-term friends; sports at bigger schools; Shakespeare (getting teachers what they need)
5. Career Day—good; do it again!
6. Parents discussed the sports offerings. While some parents felt we don’t offer enough, another parent expressed that at the bigger schools not all students get to play as they choose the best players for their teams. If we are going to compete, our students should be prepared.

7. Parent expressed concern that we are not truly bilingual and that our students are not prepared to speak Spanish if they transfer to another country; want deeper study of Spanish
8. All teacher notes home should have proper spelling, grammar, accents
9. Parent said that Discovery students are wholesome
10. PE—Elementary students should be learning sports basics from Grade 2—learn basics, do conditioning, expose students to all sports

(In general, parents feel that the overall education provided at Discovery is good and we need to do a better job of promoting ourselves, and that meetings like this are helpful.)

GRADES 9 AND 10 (5 parents present)

1. Semester exams—Suggestions made by parents: no other assignments or new material should be given during review days and exams; review throughout semester; teach students how to retain information; grade should count more than 15% to make student take it more seriously; make all students stay the full 2 hours so students don't rush through when others start handing in tests; day after exam students didn't attend, even teachers weren't in classroom last semester)
2. PE should be scheduled throughout the whole school year
3. Writing guidelines—Suggestion made by parents were to tighten up expectations throughout secondary
4. Could we offer an English proficiency certification (through TOEFL, Cambridge, MAP?)—an international exam to validate English skills?
5. Science equipment—do we have adequate microscope?
6. Parents expressed need for our students to participate regularly in Community Service projects
7. Parents expressed appreciation for the Math classes that we offer and the measures we took to ensure that each student received instruction at the appropriate level; one parent expressed that Geometry is going too slowly

(In general, parents recognize that the High School has made significant improvements and is doing a better job of preparing students for university life. Special appreciation was mentioned for the English, Science, Social Studies, and Math teachers.)

GRADES 11 AND 12 (8 parents present)

1. Parents expressed that they have seen great improvements in the organization and the quality of teaching in the High School
2. Parents would like to see more Community Service involvement in High School and suggested parents could help
3. Parents also said they feel we can do more to 'go green', and that we waste a lot of paper going home to parents and the cafeteria's use of styrofoam
4. Parents acknowledged that the Math program has improved greatly

(In general, parents recognize and appreciate the improvements that have been made and are being made in the secondary program. They expressed appreciation for the Counselor and Principal and said that while they would like the Head of School to be more visible, they acknowledged that that is more common for the Counselor and Principal.)

SUMMARY: Totally, 81 parents attended the Parent Meetings that were held by Debra Giles, as Head of School, and Ninoska Glynn, as President of the Board and very able translator. While there is always room for improvement in every school, the following strengths and suggestions were most frequently mentioned:

1. Elementary Homeroom Teachers are very receptive and responsive to parents
2. The Secondary Program has improved a great deal and just needs to be sure and advertise its successes
3. Students at Discovery enjoy coming to school. They are getting a good education and opportunities to develop their Emotional Intelligence (EQ)
4. We should have these parent meetings more often—once after the Winter Break
5. Specials Teachers need to do a better job of communicating with the parents about their programs
6. We need to monitor communication and make sure we are reaching all parents with relevant information