

# PARENT ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT AGENDA

Date: 12/08/2020

Time: 5:00-8:15 p.m.

Facilitator: Leah Dumezich

## Committee Members

Eric Maciszak, Parent | Laura Newman, Parent(absent) |  
Stacy Vasilak, Parent | Lori Rose, Parent | Annette Snyder,  
Parent (absent) | Sheila Prutsman, Parent | Julie Martoccio,  
MS Guidance Counselor | Jill Petersen, Parent | Rebecca  
Alvarez, Parent | Jodi Barham, Parent | Afrika Powell, Parent  
| Antwan Pipkins, Parent (absent) | Zella Garron, Parent and  
GHS Teacher | Melissa Baez, Parent

## DISCUSSION

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Welcome

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Introductions with Mrs. Riise

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Overview of Strategic Plan with Mrs.  
Riise (copy provided to participants)

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Overview of previous Stakeholder  
Committee Meetings with Mrs. Riise

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Whole Group Discussion about  
communication

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January Topic: Communication

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Continued

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**Communication:** The group discussed overall communication in the district. Communication was broken down into specific groups as presented below. Participants identified areas of strengths and areas that need improvement or enhancement. Below is a brief summary of the areas discussed/raised by the parents.

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**Central Office:** Parents noted continued concerns with promptness of email responses. Responses have improved, but the parents want to see this improvement continued. Parents also noted that they would appreciate an “out of office” email response if someone is out on leave, ill, or on vacation so that they know they are not being ignored (this was for all communication throughout the school system not just the central office). The parents were happy with the support and acknowledge that Central Office staff show up

to club and sporting events and attend community events. Parents specifically complimented last year's Panther Pride Event that brought all schools together. There were concerns that the parents may be inundated with email and communications, and parents acknowledged that the videos sent may be too long. They like the videos and want the newsletters to continue to go out to families.

**Building Level Administrators:** Promptness of responses to parent emails and communications were addressed, and these issues encompass the need for the receipt of a response in a timely fashion. While the overall promptness of parent emails has improved, some parents are still having issues or know of others having those issues as well. Parents would like for us to continue to work on this matter. Also, parents would like to observe more positive interactions between administrators and students, such as celebrating student success with prizes or interacting during passing periods. Parents noted that they have been told by their children and other students that administrators "talk down to them". While it is acknowledged that the students do need to listen to the administrators, mutual respect should be displayed by both parties. Some of the parents indicated that they do not know the administrators of their child's school and would not even know who they were if they saw them. Because parents are not permitted into the school buildings this year due to COVID, they would like us to find creative ways for parents to get to know the building administrators. Parents stated that they would like to see more positive rewards and acknowledgement of both "in person" and "virtual learners" through pictures, newsletters, and Facebook. Parents like the "student of the month" initiatives. While students are not able to be recognized at a schoolwide assembly, they would like to see them recognized with a certificate and personal acknowledgement. Parents noted that they like the positive rewards that students receive for good behavior at school. Parents would like to see that teachers are supported with regards to student discipline as parents were concerned that teachers were not feeling supported by the administrators. Parents would like us to continue to work on creating a positive school climate that supports our teachers and administrators, as well as makes the school system inviting for all stakeholders. Finally, parents expressed concern regarding how students were informed about being quarantined as some were approached at lunch and it scared students because they did not know what was going on.

**Guidance, Counseling, Mental Health:** Parents noted that they appreciate the phone calls checking in on the virtual learners throughout the semester. Parents felt that the outreach from Middle School Guidance has been responsive and helpful. Some parents noted that there were some issues with responses to emails and communications. Parents would like to see faster response times from High School Guidance, more thorough explanations from Guidance about Pathways, options, and would like to feel more informed. Parents did express concerns with explanations to students and

parents about items, such as Graduation Pathways, scheduling and graduation requirements. Parents would like this area addressed. In addition, there were issues with some of the meetings with MS students as they were being informed about Graduation Pathways, especially for those students who participated by zoom. Parents were told that the guidance counselors would be meeting with each student in person after break to go over these areas.

**Food Service:** Parents complimented ALL of the staff and volunteers that came together to provide food to the community during the shutdown. They noted that cafeteria staff are very knowledgeable about specific food allergies and keep our kids safe with food. Parents would like to see more “allergy friendly” options for student food choices. While things have not been perfect, the parents understand that things will not be in light of the special precautions that must be taken due to the pandemic.

**School Board:** Parents acknowledged the time that the school board commits to supporting GPS. The parents, however, feel that sometimes the Board appears to not be considering all viewpoints. They would like to see the school board open to others that are not like-minded and hear potentially opposing viewpoints. Some parents were not aware of the community work done by several of the past and current Board members until other parents pointed it out. It was suggested that the Board somehow provide information about the Board members in the form of a bio that describes who each board member is and how they have contributed to the community.

**Teachers:** The parents believe that the teachers at GPS create impactful memories for their children. They attend outside games or events for students in their classes, and overall believe that Griffith attracts teachers that are committed to developing relationships with their children. While some parents noted that teachers communicate well and respond to parent emails or phone calls in a timely fashion, others noted that it has not been consistent across the board and in all buildings. At times, parents feel like responses are delayed from teachers. Some parents felt that teachers were not consistent with communicating times and options for parent-teacher conferences at the middle/high school while other parents had a smooth process with parent-teacher conferences and no issues. When a parent emails or messages a teacher, they would like a response within 24 hours or a notification that he/she was out of the building that day. Parents did note that if they contact a teacher, they would like the response to be returned to them and not their child. Parents acknowledged the extra effort of teachers and other staff members who reached out to them when their child was quarantined. Parents would like to see creative ways for students to feel acknowledged during this difficult time (i.e., student of the month). They want us to be sure to include virtual learners that are working hard as well. Some parents

did note that teachers need to be held accountable. Others felt that teachers were doing what they could and doing a great job in light of the circumstances with which they are presented. Parents of virtual learners would like to see their child included as much as possible, such as during collaborative, group work time and throughout the lesson. Parents also understand how difficult this is while fostering two learning platforms. A student password sheet was a suggestion noted in order to make it easier for parents to help their children with getting on sites and apps from home. Parents expressed concern about high quality teachers leaving and that students would be negatively impacted if they do. They want to help us find ways to keep all staff even during this financial hardship.

**Transportation:** Parents believe that transportation has greatly improved since the beginning of the school year. It was noted that bus stops are a little further than they once were. It was noted that the car pick -up line at Wadsworth is still a timely process for parents, but it was understood why as there are more parents picking up and dropping off than in past years.

**Technology:** Parents complimented our technology team and noted that problems were resolved in a timely manner. Parents would like to see ongoing Schoology training and appreciate the resources that are made available to them. Parents also understand that resources are available online and not all parents are utilizing what resources we have. Again, parents questioned whether there was a way for parents to be provided with their students' passwords so when they are learning remotely they can help their child log into Schoology and other apps if the child forgets that information.

**Special Education, High Ability, EL, Title:** Parents complimented the Exceptional Learning Staff as a whole. A parent noted that staff turnover adversely impacts students receiving special education support. The parents would like more information as to how they can help fund or support the Panther Adult Program (PAP). It was suggested that the PAP program get more exposure or publicity; however, they also understand that this is a pandemic and the program has restrictions at this time.

**Athletics:** Parents complimented both Mr. Dimos and Miss DeLeon on their communication. Parents stated that they have been "fantastic". Parents would like sign up information to be provided to parents in a more timely manner so they can plan for attendance, payment, and participation. Some felt that their children missed out due to late notice.

Other suggestions and statements noted during the meeting:

-Both Officer Sekula and Officer Ghrist do a fantastic job supporting our students. **We could not agree more!!!!**

-Grade level standards need to be explained and provided to parents before leaving for the Summer and before returning in the Fall. This will allow parents to help students more if they understand what is required. We will post standards and our curriculum maps on our website. I will post the IDOE link on Schoology. **As the grade level exemplars are developed, we will provide them to parents and have those discussions.**

-Teachers should make “how to” videos when presenting a new/difficult math concept for parents so that they have a better understanding of how to help support their child in their academics at home. In fact, most parents do not know the “new” math and cannot help their child. **We will suggest this to classroom teachers.**

-Homework should not be work that requires hand over hand assistance from parents. **Agreed. Homework should be something that students can typically complete independently.**

-Students need remediation, especially in the elementary grades. Questions were asked about ways to provide tutoring. Math was a specific area noted several times. **Amendments have been made to the Title 1 grant to provide specific math remediation for students in grade 3-5. Additionally, a competitive grant was awarded and students in grades K-5 that have been identified as students needing remediation will also be offered tutoring. Stay tuned for information that will be going out to parents very soon!!!**

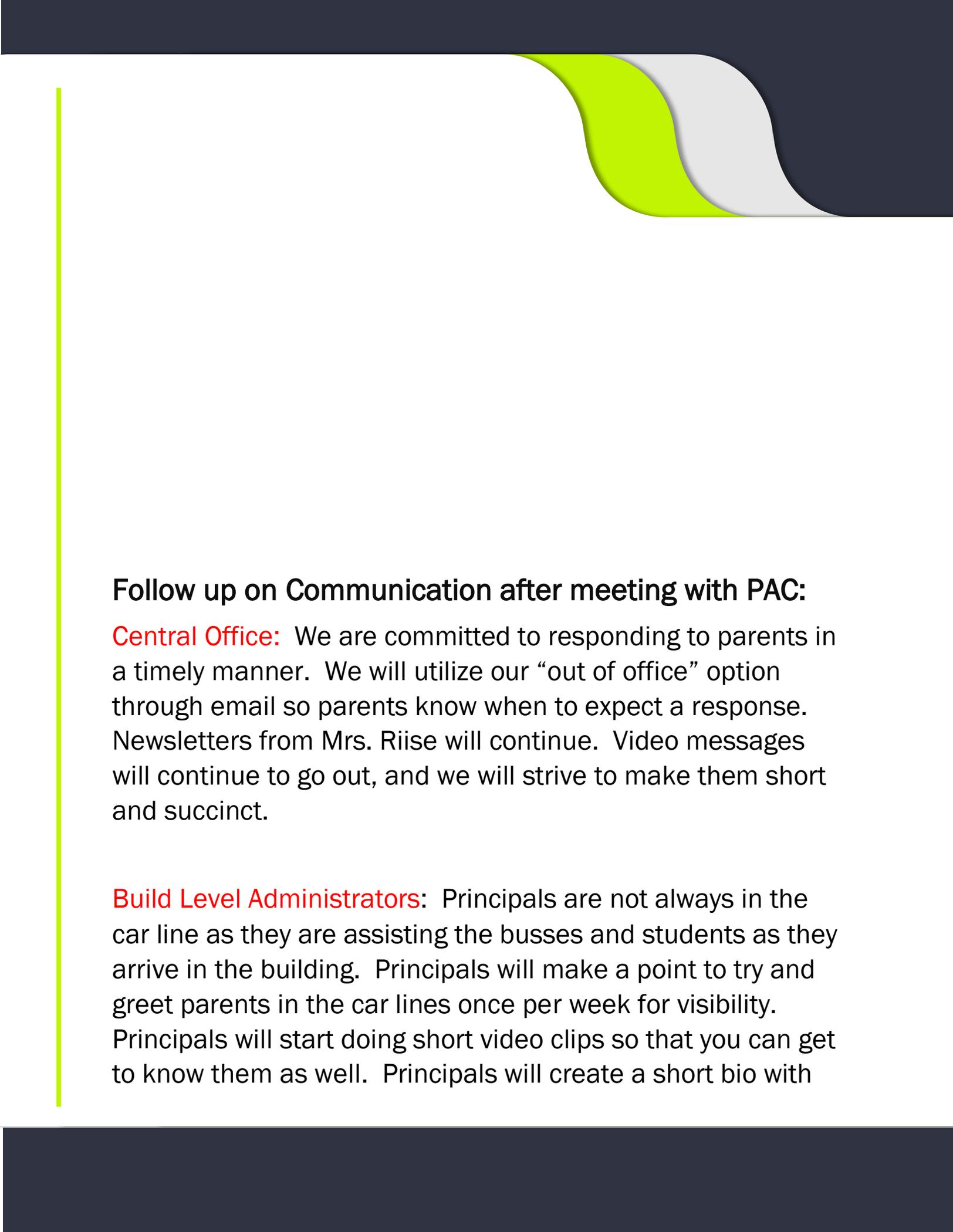
-Attendance needs to be accurate to reflect quarantine, virtual, etc. Parents expressed concerns about students being marked absent automatically on day 1 of quarantine and being told that was protocol. **This is a very time -consuming process as the state requires us to identify “in person”, “virtual”, “in quarantine”, “regular sick”. The secretaries need to manually override a great deal of the specific attendance issues and matters. Please allow two weeks for corrections to be made.**

-Counseling videos in reference to graduation requirements and Pathways would be very helpful. **We are working on those now for you, as well as we have purchased Graduation Pathways pamphlets for students and parents!! We will get those out to parents and students in the coming weeks.**

-Power cord replacements for student IPADS were discussed. **Students are given one charger for them to keep. If a new charger is needed, parents can purchase any charger for the IPAD. It does not need to be from APPLE. These can be purchased at 5 Below typically.**

-Quick 3 -minute videos to get to know building principals and staff would be appreciated. **Look for these when we return second semester.**

-How do we inform the teacher that students need to get off of zoom to pick up lunches for virtual learners? **Please send a message to the teacher letting them know that student will be off of zoom for X amount of minutes once per week at X time to pick up breakfast/lunches for that week. Student will be responsible for completing any assignment or tasks that is missed during that time, but student will not be marked absent for the 15 minutes needed.**



## **Follow up on Communication after meeting with PAC:**

**Central Office:** We are committed to responding to parents in a timely manner. We will utilize our “out of office” option through email so parents know when to expect a response. Newsletters from Mrs. Riise will continue. Video messages will continue to go out, and we will strive to make them short and succinct.

**Build Level Administrators:** Principals are not always in the car line as they are assisting the busses and students as they arrive in the building. Principals will make a point to try and greet parents in the car lines once per week for visibility. Principals will start doing short video clips so that you can get to know them as well. Principals will create a short bio with

picture to be posted on Schoology and posted on the GPS website. The principals do feel that they support their teachers with student discipline. The district continues to receive training specific to positive intervention training. Our school counseling team meets bi-weekly with me to discuss potential supports that students in need or will benefit from while in the classroom. Mr. Kepchar provides training to our building staff at the Middle/High School. We will all work collectively to highlight the positive rewards that students are receiving by posting pictures and clips on Schoology and Facebook PTC pages. We all acknowledge that this has been a difficult year for teachers, administrators, students, and parents alike. We all agree that our student needs are at the forefront and remind ourselves daily that is why we are here. We are committed to fostering a positive work environment for teachers, and we believe this fosters a positive learning environment for our students. We will do a better job of highlighting some of our positive activities for GPS teachers that take place by posting pictures and clips on Schoology and PTC pages. We have added additional eLearning days this school year as we acknowledge that the workload has increased due to managing “in person” and “virtual learning” platforms. We sincerely appreciate the PTC for the lunches and ongoing support of our teachers. The teachers appreciate the parent support and have stepped into true “hero mode” this year.

**Guidance/Counseling/Mental Health:** Our K-12 guidance department will continue to reach out to our virtual learning

families to make sure they have what they need. The expectation is to return a parent message or email within 24 hours of receiving it. Guidance Counselors become bombarded with parent calls or emails during scheduling and testing times. Please know that our counselors respond as fast as they can. If they are providing services or testing to a student, that becomes the top priority of that day. We will remind our team to utilize the “out of office” option on their emails so parents are informed of a potential delayed response time. We will create videos and distribute more information in the coming months to provide more information and resources to our parents and students.

**Food Service:** Our food service director will research more allergy friendly options for the next school year.

**School Board:** I spoke with our school board president. We have two new board members coming on in January. She will facilitate getting a picture and bio that can be posted on Schoology and on the GPS website. The school board is committed and encouraged by the participation and honest discussions of the PAC group, as well as their ongoing input and feedback to all stakeholders.

**Teachers:** We will continue to encourage prompt responses to parents. The admin team believes that the majority of teachers are communicating in a timely manner with parents.

At times, teachers are out due to illness, family leave, or other emergencies that may come up. Our teachers are continuously improving their Schoology procedures and trying to provide the best opportunities for ALL learners during this difficult time. ALL stakeholders acknowledge that this is not the best of circumstances. A great deal of patience from teachers, parents, and students has been demonstrated. The ongoing support of our teachers has been greatly appreciated. We will all do our best to fine tune parent teacher conference opportunities and communication. Teachers will be made aware of your continuous feedback.

**Transportation:** Thank you for the positive feedback. Our drivers are AMAZING!!! We appreciate them and the relationships they build with our students each day!! The car line is time consuming at Wadsworth. We would love to have more road!! Our little ones are getting faster each day with recognizing their name and number being called. We hope to get a little faster as the year progresses!! Thank you for your patience!!

**Technology:** Our technology team is TOPS!!! Please continue to reach out if an issue arises!! On our GPS website, several links, videos, and troubleshooting ideas are posted to support you. Shout out to Niki Sarver and Robby Dragomer as they continually provide timely Schoology/Power School information, ongoing assistance with these two platforms,

and prompt service not only with our parents, students, and teachers but our admin team as well!

**Special Education/High Ability/ EL/ Title:** I acknowledge that we had a few staff changes at Wadsworth in the area of Special Education. We hope that the most recent change will have a positive impact on our students!! I will start working with our PAP team to generate ideas on how to get more information to the community on how they can support this awesome program!!

**Athletics:** Thank you for the compliments!! We believe we have a great team mentality!! We will work to make announcements in a timely manner to best serve our Griffith families so no child is left out of program or opportunity because he/she did not receive the notice in time.

