

Dear TPCA Parents,

Recently TPCA sent out annual surveys to parents, students, and teachers. Thank you for your thoughtful responses. The information from the surveys, along with other internal measures will help the board and staff define priorities for next year. The survey included some positive, affirming responses and some great ideas for improvement. Some concerns and misperceptions were also noted. On behalf of the Board of Directors and Administration, the accountability committee would like to address some of the concerns and misperceptions to ensure members of the TPCA community have accurate information.

Concern #1: Younger grades don't have enough supplies because all the funding goes to building out the high school.

Building costs are mostly born by capital construction funds which are separate from general curriculum. General curriculum is purchased by the school each year and includes supplies for reading, math, handwriting, core knowledge novels, history, and any material that relates to approved curriculum. Copy paper, journals, student planners, lamination, and other materials used by teachers is also covered by an account in the TPCA general budget. On top of general curriculum, each K-5 classroom receives a \$125 classroom stipend. 4th and 5th grades each have a science fund over \$1000 to use towards additional science materials not covered by general curriculum. Our PTO and Education Foundation also give generously to support teachers through \$150 per class stipends, department gifts, and scholarships.

Concern #2: TPCA is spending all its money on the athletic fields and taking it away from the students and classrooms.

The athletic fields are funded through a bond. Only 1% of TPCA's budget goes towards the bond for athletic fields. That bond also includes work on the first and second floor of the campus. 69% of TPCA's budget went to instruction this school year. This percentage is higher than the district's percentage of instructional funding. Some for-profit charter schools in our region are at a scant 40% for instructional spending.

Concern #3: Class sizes in elementary are too big.

Our class sizes did increase; specifically at the elementary in the past 3 years. One of the benefits of having a parent-governed school is the ability to cap class sizes and set enrollment periods. This year the BOD voted to reduce class sizes for the 2015-16 school year. TPCA is fortunate to also have instructional aides for each Kindergarten class and one per grade level at 1st-5th. In addition, the elementary has two interventionists to support K-5; plus great involvement from parents! All these adults help to keep teacher to student ratios low to better support all students.

Concern #4: There are not enough elective offerings at the secondary level.

Elective offerings will continue to grow as the high school develops and expands. Here is a sampling of the elective offerings students have available to them at the high school level: Choir, Advanced Choir, Concert Band, Jazz Band, College and Life, World Geography, World Religions, Astronomy, Foundations of Art, 2D Art, 3D Art, Digital Art, Theater, Stagecraft, Object Oriented Programming, Publishing, Strength & Conditioning, AP Studio Art 3-D, (2015) AP Psychology, and AP Human Geography, and this doesn't even include our afterschool clubs and athletics! In addition

to these great electives, the high school offered 12 Advanced Placement (AP) math, science, English, or history courses in 2014-15 and will be offering 14 in 2015-16.

Concern #5: There are not enough language offerings at elementary level.

True, TPCA is lacking a second language program during the school day in the elementary. The board directed the curriculum committee to review options and develop a plan to implement a program in the elementary and expand opportunities at the secondary. This school year and last TPCA offered after school Spanish, French, and Latin for any interested students in the elementary. Next year, 6th grade and high school students will have the options of either French or Spanish. In 2016, Latin will be offered at the elementary level. On the high school side, AP Spanish will be available for eligible students.

Concern #6: Security is not what it could be.

Security is a top priority of the board and staff. A safe, secure building requires tools and structures but more importantly consistent awareness from all community members. This year, security doors were added to both campus entrances/offices. TPCA has extensive camera coverage of all 160,000 square feet of our campus (inside and out). TPCA uses the RAPTOR system to screen everyone who comes into the building. All administration and supervisory personnel carry radios. Each year, TPCA does 10 fire evacuation drills, 2 shelter-in-place (tornado) drills, and 3 lockdown and lockout drills.

Concern #7: Teacher turnover is huge at Twin Peaks

TPCA strives to retain highly qualified teaching staff. Teacher turnover is a fact of life for all schools, and the district average is around 20% turnover. At Twin Peaks our latest figure is 24% turnover. Some years it is lower than the district, but we have a lean staff, so our percentages can fluctuate quite a bit. There is room for improvement in teacher retention, and the board and administration continue to work together to recruit and retain high quality teachers. Some strategies in place or being developed include an increase to base salaries for teachers by 2%, development of a merit-based pay system, embedded professional development, an induction and mentor program, shared planning periods, strategic use of staff meetings and early release days for PD, and internal staff surveys. Some February 2015 staff responses we are very proud to include:

- 92% of teachers agree or strongly agree with the statement, "I enjoy working at TPCA."
- Almost 90% also feel that TPCA is "a good working environment."
- 100% of teachers said they enjoy/like the people with whom they work.

Concern #8: Charter schools can select the members of their student body.

TPCA does not want to and cannot have a selective enrollment process. Charter schools have autonomy in how they enroll students but not in who can enroll in the school. TPCA is proud of its diverse student population with students from all sorts of backgrounds and with all sorts of talents. Each student at Twin Peaks is an individual who brings something unique to our community. This diversity mirrors the real world, and TPCA is preparing students for success in the real world. TPCA has programs and supports in place to serve all students from remedial learning to gifted and talented. Please refer to the School and District contract under Governance and "Additional Documents".

Concern #9: There are too many discipline issues and too much bullying.

When surveyed, our students (95%) agreed with the statement, “their class is a good place to learn”. Of course, this does not mean that TPCA will never have student misbehavior or aggression. However, TPCA is well-below the regional average. In terms of referrals to the office: TPCA averages .06 referrals per day, the state average is 7 referrals per day, and the average for the nation is much higher. *Source: SWIS- School Wide Information Systems.* TPCA takes bullying and discipline issues very seriously, and anything that goes against the character pillars is fully addressed. Character pillars are integrated into daily curriculum and emphasized throughout the learning process. It is one of the principles on which the school is founded; and, the effects of these lessons show. Developing great character takes a full, supported approach that includes parents. TPCA encourages parents/guardians to ask students about the pillars, what they mean, how students can exemplify them, and examples they may have witnessed personifying a TPCA pillar.

Concer #10: The dress code is no longer enforced.

Parents play a huge role in enforcing dress code. We ask that parents take an active role to ensure that their students are wearing appropriate school attire. In this way, parents allow teachers to use their energies for instruction. Staff remind students about dress code through morning announcements, PAWs or other incentives for following dress code, and monthly assemblies. If a child comes to school out of dress code, there are a series of consequences ranging from verbal reprimands to parent contact to loss of privileges.

Concern #11: We don't like the High School Library!

The high school library is a work in progress! The high school library will be a tech-laden resource and will not look like the school libraries of a few years ago. There will not be as many books as a traditional library. The library will have Chromebooks and other digital devices for students to check out for downloading digital libraries. There will be community meeting areas where students and classes can congregate to learn and discuss.

Concern #12: We don't offer enough to our GT students.

TPCA's educational program is challenging and rigorous. The Core Knowledge curriculum is well-designed for gifted and talented (GT) students. This level of rich content supports advanced and GT students well in the classroom through teacher differentiated practices. However, TPCA also has GT programming which is separate from the general classroom. At the elementary level, TPCA has STAR (Students and Teachers Achieving Results) time for GT students every day. At the secondary level, TPCA offers a full battery of honors and AP classes. A great benefit of being a K-12 institution with advanced courses is that our students can take advanced coursework without leaving the building. TPCA is proud to announce our students took 1st place in a recent Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) competition against schools that *specialize* in STEM! TPCA's recent parent survey revealed 98% of parents agreed with the statement, “TPCA fosters children's learning and achievement.” Is there room for improvement? Yes, and our teachers will continue to reflect, revise, and implement practices to support this very special population of students.

Concern # 13: I am the only parent who is doing any volunteer hours and what happened to the parent contract?

TPCA actively tries to engage parents at all levels. Volunteerism is a big part of who we are and how we produce model citizens. As part of our parent contract, parents are required to volunteer at least 20 hours a year at TPCA. This year a new volunteer hour recording website was put in place to better track volunteer hours, and the PTO is restructuring to increase parent engagement throughout the K-12.

There are many ways to accrue 20 hours of volunteer hours. Visit your child's classroom, attend the state of the school presentation, attend PTO meetings, attend committee meetings, attend board meetings, help out with running club or fencing club or theater....Can't make it to school? Some tasks can be done at home. For example making chair bags for books, organizing Thursday folders, making food, organizing materials for an art project. Another option for parents is for every \$10 they spend on their child's classroom or school, they earn 1 volunteer hour. Donate \$200 and you're done! But we would really rather see you instead of your wallet. If parents have ideas on how to improve our volunteering process, we welcome their input!

On behalf of the board and administration, the accountability committee thanks you for taking the time to complete the survey. We hope some of the explanations to your survey responses listed here clarify processes, practices, and events happening at TPCA. We welcome parent input and questions. Please feel free to contact any of the following for further inquiries or clarifications:

Admissions: (K-8) Marilyn Putrah or (9-12) Tracy Volan

Instruction, Curriculum, & Teacher Supervision: Teal Maxwell, BJ Buchmann, or Danielle Feeney

Facilities, Security, & Discipline: Doug Bean

School Governance & Budgeting: Kathy DeMatteo

Special Education: Rebecca Parks

Intervention and Gifted and Talented: Carol Gerke

Volunteering: Beverly Weinberg

If you have read this to the end, contact Beverly Weinberg to earn 1 hour of volunteer time!!