

Subject: Fwd: Enrichment discussions & the PTA
From: Eric Bush <bushe@mokena159.org>
Date: 9/7/2023, 1:36 PM
To: Lisa Zielinski <zielinskil@mokena159.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kelli MacMillan** <macmillank@mokena159.org>
Date: Thu, Sep 7, 2023 at 7:20 AM
Subject: Re: Enrichment discussions & the PTA
To: Mark Cohen <cohenm@mokena159.org>
CC: Eric Bush <bushe@mokena159.org>

Dr Cohen,

I look forward to having productive conversations about what we can do and when, to service these kids.

I think the point to this is how the top performing kids are able to grow themselves (or not). How did we challenge and service those kids already exceeding expectations on IAR, for example? Obviously now this is an even bigger population of students, which is great BUT also concerning in that way. The “demonstrable growth” was in the number of students in that group, not actual achievement growth amongst the top tier, correct? How are our top performing students growing academically without planned, structured and measured differentiation or enrichment groupings? Seeing students succeed in LW210 is not a testament to us proving rigor and challenge to our top performing students. There is an opportunity cost we are not acknowledging. Where would they be if we were challenging all students like we should be?

I’m excited the PTA is opening new doors to parent conversations and involvement. I’m also always fully supportive of parents advocating for their students, in any regard.

I hope we approach this with an open mind and can-do attitude. We should not have any students not getting what they need academically. I know parents want enrichment based on conversations I’ve been having for 3 years. Our district has been leading parents on for years (before your time), and it’s not a good look. I am a proponent of expanding our offerings, as soon as we can get it right. We should not have any students that are not getting the rigor we tout. We have an obligation to provide challenge and growth for all students and our top performing group is where the hole lies. Our problem becomes worse as we grow that population of kids exceeding expectations we need to have programming in place to accommodate them.

My suggestion would be, we start having conversations about when and what we can implement something for ELA and Math for all grades (albeit some might not make sense in the end). We can begin planning what steps need to be taken now and until then to ensure we deliver. Things cannot be at a stand still just because we have a new ELA curriculum being rolled out. Things should never

stand still, we should always be planning the next steps now. These kids have already been put on the back burner long enough and multiple years out is just too long.

Looking forward to talking more on this. Maybe we can start a BOE committee? I would volunteer to chair that and do whatever else I can to help move this along. It's been too long and the people of Mokena deserve comparable offerings our neighboring districts have been delivering for years. New Lenox, Frankfort, Summit Hill, Orland etc all have well established programs and Mokena should be no different, it is not better in that way. Why are you so opposed?

Reminder also, if this is a resource or bandwidth challenge, please lay out what you need for the BOE to understand. It is our role as the BOE to ensure we have an education program that motivates and challenges each individual student, and our top achieving students are an important sector we need to address.

Thanks,
Kelli MacMillan

On Sep 6, 2023, at 10:34 PM, Mark Cohen <cohenm@mokena159.org> wrote:

Dear Board Members,

On August 25th, Lori Meehan, a second grade teacher received the following email from a parent:

----- Forwarded message -----

From:

Date: Fri, Aug 25, 2023 at 1:54 PM

Subject: MPTA

To: Lori Meehan <meehanl@mokena159.org>

Hi Mrs. Meehan,

Hope you are doing well! I wanted to reach out to you since you were very instrumental in helping us see that full grade acceleration was a good fit for XXXX. He really thrived in 3rd grade last year, Mrs. Rueth and the kids accepted him with open arms. I'm not sure if you signed up for the MPTA this year but they have a new board and many new members. I'm thinking of joining the enrichment programs subcommittee the MPTA is putting together. I remember you mentioned teaching the high achieving kids at Mokena when they previously had a program. Would you or any other teachers you know be interested in joining? It would be great to work with teachers like you to help get enrichment programs going in the district and in the hands of teachers to help these kiddos thrive.

The first meeting is September 12th at 7pm at MES

Thanks!

This email was brought to my attention just today. It mentions the PTA forming an enrichment subcommittee. On the same date the email was sent a member of the D159 parent council posted a similar message to Facebook about an enrichment subcommittee of the PTA. (The posting and one of the responses is attached.) Lori Meehan expressed concern about the invitation to discuss curriculum in this format. The PTA has worked really hard to get teachers to join and attend meetings, but I am afraid that these types of discussions will keep them from attending. I reached out to Maire from the PTA and she stated that this was not a subcommittee that had been discussed. Here is her response:

Thanks for sharing, I am glad this person is encouraging teachers to join the PTA, but there is definitely some miscommunication. I will address the committees at the first member meeting and will clear it up.

Thanks for the heads-up.

Maire

Given that the email and posts about the PTA are almost 2 weeks old it may no longer be an issue, but I wanted to make sure you were informed.

Social media posts such as the third one attached to this email reflect that there are parents who may approach the District inquiring about an enrichment program in the future. I am sending this email to you so that you are not surprised.

I stand by my past statements that our singular focus in K-5 should be the implementation of the new ELA curriculum with fidelity. Any discussion about changing the curriculum for groups of students is premature until we have assessment data that indicates that needs are not being met. Once assessment data is in we can begin to have a discussion about how we address any needs we see.

The 6-8 ELA teachers will be reviewing their curriculum this year and we will bring their recommendations to the board in the near future. Given the unbelievable growth that was seen this year using CER for writing across the curriculum I do not expect a recommendation for any changes, but they will study what is out there and let us know what their needs are. I will illustrate for you what I mean by this growth.

In 21-22 only 6% of 7th grade students achieved a level 5 (exceeds expectations) on the ELA portion of the IAR assessment. This same group in 8th grade last year had 19% of students achieve a level 5 in ELA. This data shows demonstrable growth among our top students; the amount of students achieving a level 5 tripled. These students did not have an enriched or separate experience for their ELA curriculum. The CER efforts made for all students pushed them over the top.

At the opposite end of the achievement spectrum, in 21-22 the 7th grade group had 28% of students that were at level 1 or 2 on the IAR. With the rigorous writing that was expected of them

last year, the percentage of students at these lowest levels of achievement dropped to just 10%. Our students with IEP's, our low income students, and our ELL students all saw tremendous gains. What worked for raising the scores of our highest achieving students also worked for those who had been low achieving. The bottom line is this- High quality, rigorous instruction is good for all students. It was not necessary to create different groups of students in order to make this change happen.

I look forward to the time when we can discuss this further and pull more data for the Board to look at. I hope that we can follow this year's freshman class at Lincoln-Way, the same group of students I just referenced, to get data on high school readiness for us to use as a barometer of our success.

Thank you and have a good night!

Mark

--

Dr. Mark A. Cohen
Superintendent
Mokena School District 159
(708) 342-4900



— IMG_0849.jpeg —



Linda's post

**Michele Coleman**

I would like to know since when does PTA have any authority of making subcommittees.

1w Like Reply

**Michele Coleman**

Why is the PTA offering the opportunity to set up subcommittees for issues that have to deal with curriculum or students education. It is not within their realm of power to get involved with the school in that capacity. They facilitate fundraising for the school and social events.

1w Like Reply


2

**Maire Faddah**

[Michele Coleman](#) thank you again for you feedback. I recommend exploring ALL that the PTA CAN do for schools





for schools.

1w Like Reply



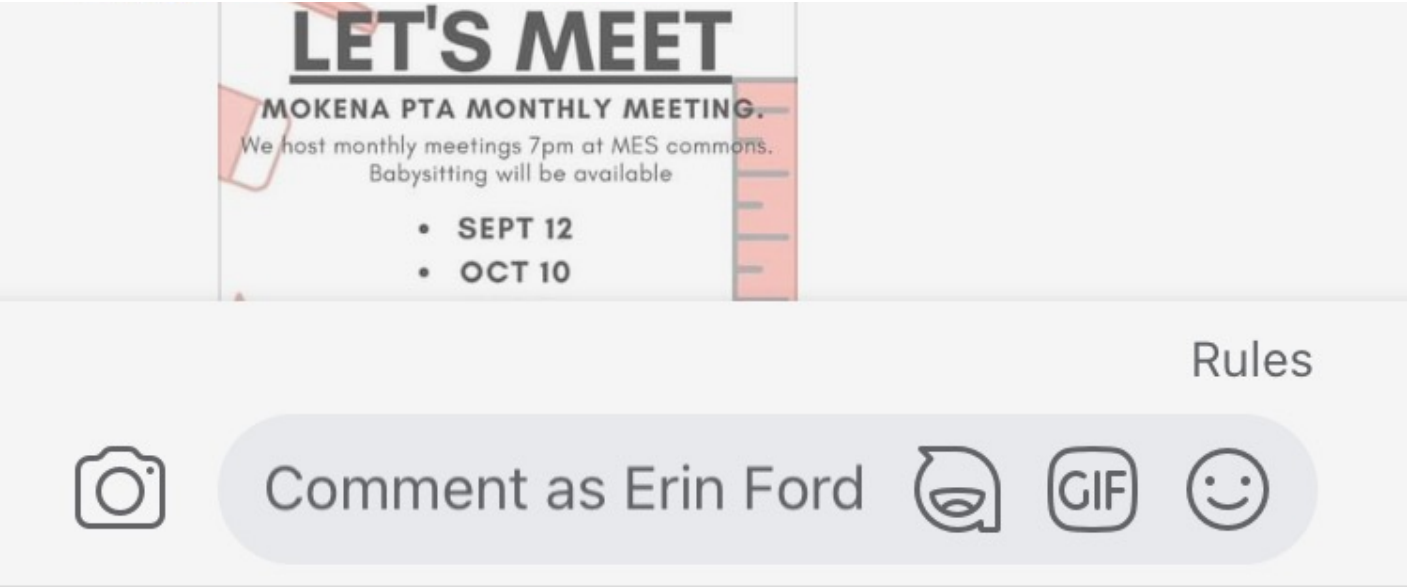
Maire Faddah

Rules

 Comment as Erin Ford   

—IMG_0848.jpeg—





— Screensho.jpg —

1:41

**District 159 Parent Council**

Angela Swenson · 40m ·

Hi Mokena Moms! A group of local parents would like to see more academic enrichment options and advanced curriculum at D159. We would like our district to be competitive with other area districts on its offerings to advanced learners. If you are interested in knowing more about our proposed request, please pm me!



Like



Comment



Send

**Joy Emily and 4 others****All comments** **Joy Emily**

This is a great idea!

32m

Like

Reply

**Lisa Lique-Nieves**



Lindsay Elizabeth

1m Like Reply

I'm interested!

What a great idea!!



This is a great idea!

Awesome idea!

Rules



Write a commen...



Attachments:

IMG_0849.jpeg	180 KB
IMG_0848.jpeg	224 KB
Screensho.jpg	340 KB
pcspr23_IL- 560991590020000_District_Performance_Level_Summary_Spring_Grade_8_ELA (3).pdf	107 KB
pcspr22_IL- 560991590020000_District_Performance_Level_Summary_Spring_Grade_7_ELA (1).pdf	107 KB