Proposal for Parent Teacher Conference (PTC)

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As procedures across Stuyvesant become automated, PTC stands out as a chaotic exception. In the pursuit of a more efficient and enjoyable experience, this proposal looks to reform the procedures for PTC.

Abstract:

The current system, in essence, relies upon student organizations such as ARISTA to facilitate the parent teacher interactions. The main bottleneck is inherent to the way parents are organized for their meeting.

When parents register their names on a sheet of paper, they have two options: they wait the variable length of time, potentially wasting the opportunity to meet with other teachers. or they leave for a different teacher, potentially (and usually) missing their original appointment. Both options waste valuable time.

The website proposed will alleviate many of the flaws described, streamlining the process and making information more accessible for the parents.

With the teacher sign-up queues online, parents will be able to make informed decisions about when specific teachers will be able to meet with them. They will also be able to receive reminders to email about their upcoming meeting, decreasing the inefficiency of signups.

Past this main feature, the use of a website offers the option of other benefits detailed in this proposal.

Hardware:

User access will be centered around electronic devices with connection to wifi. This is a significant but not unattainable transition from previous years. Much of the student body carries smartphones capable of connecting to the internet. For those who don't, the library has a number of laptops and ipads that can be used to supplement student resources. Mrs. McGregor has expressed interest in advancing this proposal and is willing to lend out these devices to the student body if the following conditions are met:

    a) The library staff are notified at least a week in advance by the administration

    b) A member of the faculty or administration is assigned the responsibility of scanning out the devices to students,

Under the assumption that the conditions are met, we have access to 29 laptops and 34 ipads, almost a third of the required number for the ~156 teachers <1> (This notation indicates that there is a related question in the "Details to address" portion of the proposal). Note that the laptops need to stay relatively close to their hotspot, the cart, and so they would best be used as login terminals for incoming parents. All other devices, student and ipad alike, will rely on the school wifi to connect to the website <2>.

Many parents have smartphones that will allow them to take advantage of this system. However, if a parent lacks access, they will still be able to benefit from the new organization. The identification system will make registering with teacher queues more efficient <3>. Additionally, because the

teacher-room associations are online, the administration has the choice not to spend money on printing them. Many parents will be able to find the correct locations on their phones, or be able to ask student volunteers for directions if needed.

As a final note before the system is described, I believe that the website should be hosted on a school server <4>. I believe this can become a useful resource for many years to come, but the legitimacy that comes from hosting the site on school servers is the only way to make that happen. Because this proposal differs from many decades of routine, it is important to make clear that the administration backs the website and is using it.

System:

When a parent enters the building, they will immediately be directed to a terminal manned by a student volunteer. The website will display a welcome, then ask for the parent to input their name, their child(ren)'s name(s), and if they wish to receive notifications, an email. Once completed, the parent will then be assigned an identification number for the night.

The parent, now given their number and the website address, opens the website to look for their child's teachers. As an example, imagine the parent wishes to visit two teachers. A search of those teachers will provide the room number the teacher is stationed at, as well as the number of parents already registered to talk. In our example, the teachers are stationed on the same floor, but one is available while the other has two parents already waiting. Whereas the old system would require the parent to guess at where to go, the website now offers the parent the ability to choose the available teacher.

When parents arrive at the teacher they wish to speak to, the student stationed there will ask for their identification number. This replaces the old system of rewriting the same information at for every teacher, and as a result saves time <3>. Students, on behalf of the teachers, will be able to prompt the parent for additional wanted details, such as the child's period number, if the teacher wishes for it. This information will be saved in the database, and given to the teacher at the end of PTC.

When a parent is signed up for a teacher, if they are not immediately granted an audience, they are placed on the online queue. The queue will show a tentative estimate of when the next few meetings will occur, but they are ultimately estimates. The queue only ever moves forward if the previous parent finishes speaking to the teacher. The next parent in line will have exactly one minute to arrive at the room, if they are not there already, before they are kicked off the queue. If a parent opts into notifications by providing their email at registration, they will receive an automated email reminding them 5 minutes ahead of their meeting, and during the one minute grace period if they fail to show up on time.

Student volunteers will patrol the hallways, helping those without access find teacher locations. We could also set up specific terminals on each floor dedicated for parent access. To be clear, the website will not require a login to access the information.

In the long term, this website is designed to be a hands-off, automated system. Each semester, the website will be reactivated and a list of teacher-room associations will be fed in. The website will deal with the parent registrations for two days, and by the end have a list of which parents visited which teachers. After this information is printed and distributed to the appropriate teachers, the database will wipe itself and the website will take itself offline. As a final note, I will create man pages for the project so that future teachers or students can add features overlooked in this first iteration.

Backup:

Because this is the first year implementing the website, it would be irresponsible to attempt this without planning for a catastrophic failure of some sort. In this instance, however, the backup plan is relatively straightforward: If the website breaks down, we revert back to the old system of signing on paper. For this reason, the risks of attempting this proposal are quite low; the worst possible outcome will result in the status quo. I still believe it useful to hand out the parent sign-in sheets to student volunteers as a redundancy, but I do not expect them to be used.

To decrease the likelihood of such a catastrophic failure, I would like to run tests of the site as we get closer to PTC. These will be scheduled with you, and the results reported.

Details to address:

1. How are teachers assigned to rooms for PTC? Is there an electronic version of this that can be used to generate the website?
2. We need a way to confirm access for these devices after school. One solution could be to turn off wifi for the school day, guaranteeing access during PTC. Would this work?
3. Does the DOE or school require signatures from parents? If not, we could have the website generate a printout of all the parents who attended.
4. Will the website be hosted on the school servers or the computer science servers? Will I have access to the servers, or will I have to submit changes through a proxy (teacher, administrator)?