



PALISADES

CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

FACULTY REPORT

Board of Trustees Meeting

Tuesday, September, 26, 2017

PE teacher Amanda Campbell asked that the following letter be shared with the Board on her behalf:

Dear Board Members,

Ever since I started teaching at Pali in 2013, our Physical Education Department has been made up of a solid group of hard-working teachers who collaborate effectively, continually look for ways to improve their teaching, and created meaningful PLC goals each year. Along the way, as you may know, we have developed a draft system which allows students to have a choice in which P.E. class they want to take each semester, with the goal of creating intrinsic motivation for students. I have been proud to be a part of this department and school as a whole since my first day here.

However, our department faces one particular challenge every semester. This is the issue of our teaching spaces being used for other events and therefore displacing our classes. First, I think its necessary for you to have an idea of how we operate. In the beginning of the year, we meet as a department and discuss what units we will all teach and which areas we will teach in, this is known as a pacing plan. Generally, we teach units that are four weeks long and then rotate areas and change units. The areas we use on a daily basis are the Big Gym, Small Gym, pool, blacktop, and football field. There is enough room for one class to be in one area at a time, except for the football field which can host two classes that split the space.

After we have established our pacing plan, we stick to it for the semester. Classes that also use those teaching areas during various periods include Dance (p.3,5 in small gym), swim team class (p.5 in pool), and marching band (p.6 on half of football field). So you can see we juggle a lot in the way of logistics in order just have an area to teach in. We work very hard to stay organized and create consistency for our students, which is essential for the best learning environment.

What has happened since I started working here in 2013, and I'm sure way before that, is various other events will be scheduled in our PE teaching areas throughout the semester. Some examples are filming, blood drive, long-term repairs such as the football field this semester, senior meetings, assemblies, and the list goes on. Usually each of these events will take up at least one teaching space, forcing that teacher to go somewhere else for that day. The issue is not necessarily being bumped for one day. The issue arrises when we are bumped repeatedly throughout the semester, and no one seems to care that we are left without a classroom. In addition, one teacher being bumped usually affects all other PE classes because the bumped class has to occupy another PE space, which forces that class to also not be able to operate. As you can see, it has a ripple effect, and finding another space that is usable for a class of 60 students is not an easy task.



PALISADES

CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

Everyone expects us to be "flexible" and just do something else that day, which would be fine if we didn't care about our students learning anything and were fine with "rolling out the balls." But unlike many other high school PE programs around, we take pride in our profession, plan our lessons ahead of time, and have things to accomplish each class. Not only do we have things to accomplish for our department, but we also have PLC goals which we work on in class as well.

My point here is that it frequently feels like we are being worked against instead of supported. It often feels as though P.E. classes are not as high of a priority as other subjects, when in fact, the physical activity and physical literacy our students are learning in PE benefits all of their other classes as well as their lives beyond school.

All of the teachers in our department are extremely adept at being flexible..that is not the problem. However when we are told and expected to "be flexible" a dozen times, what that translates to in my mind is that PE classes being displaced has become so commonplace that no one views it as a hardship for us. Some events are not avoidable, but the impact to our classes could be minimized; some events should be scheduled more carefully to avoid impacting us at all; and sometimes it's the last minute or lack of communication that is the problem.

I will say that the communication ahead of time has gotten much better over the years, but I think that the impact on our classes could still be minimized much more. Some things I think will help are:

1. Better communication and more careful planning from Leadership Students scheduling the Blood Drive and other events.
2. Making it a priority to repair PE facilities in the summer or outside of school hours when possible.
3. Involving the PE Dept Chair more.
4. For everyone to be informed that we are heavily impacted by several events all the time, so even though your event might only be on or two days, in the big picture it may have a bigger impact than you think.

I'd really like to minimize the frustration that comes with constantly having my classroom taken away after I have thoughtfully planned out my curriculum. In the month of September alone, we will have been displaced on four different days, not including not being able to use the football field at all since the beginning of school.

We take pride in the excellence of our PE program, and our students need your support and the school's support in order to get the most out of PE classes.

I have to thank Don and Rocky for being in communication with us about the football field and various events. I know Don is doing his best with what he inherited. As a school I think we need to do more to prioritize PE areas as classroom space instead of thinking of them as areas up for use anytime. If Math teachers were consistently displaced from their classrooms, I think the school would pay attention and make the necessary changes. We need to step up and do the same for the P.E. department.



PALISADES

CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am sorry I cannot be there to say this in person as I'd like to be. Please take these things I've said to heart. We are striving to do our best, we have met multiple times with administration, yet we have basically been told to deal with it. I believe you can help the school set it's priority to be the education of students in ALL subjects.

Thank you,
Amanda Campbell
Physical Education Teacher
Palisades Charter High School