

PTA General Meeting January 13,2016

7pm call to order, welcome, introductions

Presentation from Grant High School Principal, Carol Campbell. Ms. Campbell is in her 3rd year as principal at Grant, and her 32nd year in education (she was formerly a biology teacher, including at Grant for 9 years). She has 3 children who went to Grant. This is her 3rd year speaking at our PTA meetings about Grant. Grant had their big open house recently, and has 2 more coming up. Forecasting is coming up in February and March when incoming freshman will pick their classes for next year. Last year out of 37 8th grade students from ACCESS about 1/3 went to Grant, 1/3 went to other neighborhood schools, and 1/3 went to private schools. ACCESS has historically fed to Grant, so our students can choose to go there or to their neighborhood schools.

Ms. Campbell gave us a brief update on the modernization process. They recently had the master plan approved from the architects, and now details (the schematic design) are being worked on. The first schematic design meeting was last week, and those meetings are open to the public for observation. She notes that a new gym will be built, the old gym will be built into an arts building, and the auditorium will be remodeled. There will be a courtyard and new landscaping. The basements will be connected (there are 9 and they aren't connected now). It will be 3 stories, and will have a new STEM lab and CTE facilities. Grant will be offering a healthcare pathway for students with the new remodel. The cafeteria will be brought up to the main floor. It isn't currently being utilized well, as about 70 kids currently use the cafeteria in the basement and it is mostly kids getting free and reduced lunch, so it is an equity issue. Grant has 10 acres to work with, which is small compared to suburban schools. There are several planning committees for the whole process, including for transportation. There is a possibility that Grant might borrow Jefferson's auditorium during the remodel process as the Marshall Auditorium is too small for Grant's needs. The new Grant auditorium will seat 1,200. Grant has separate choir and band rooms, which will be difficult at Marshall as they only have one shared room. That works for Franklin, which unlike Grant has part time choir and band instructors. PPS created a culinary arts facility for Franklin in the Marshall building, and Grant will us that for their life-skills classes. There will be Grant open-houses at Marshall next year.

Ms. Campbell was asked to address the issue of the ACCESS at Grant program, and if it would be possible for ACCESS kids to remain as a cohort, with a few classes together, a common counselor, etc. She said "I'm going to be honest with you. I don't see that happening". She explained that they require all 9th graders to enter the freshman communities with common classes, and that their schedules are already full with the required 9th grade classes. She notes that with the current Writer's Workshop classes that all 9th grade students are required to take, the average OAKS scores went up 10%, which is unheard of. 9th grade students have 4 required common academic classes, and a required "Fit to learn" class which is combined PE and health (although it can be postponed to after 9th grade). Out of 8 classes, 4 are the required freshman community classes, (English, Writer's workshop, Modern World History, and biology) one is math, one is fit to learn, one is a language, and that only leaves space for one elective. She feels that they have really strong electives and wants freshman to have space to take an elective. Freshman communities also get teaching about careers. She feels that they do accommodate all kids' needs within this framework. She noted that the Grant magazine has won awards, and that there is now a freshman Grant magazine class.

An ACCESS parent who is on the TAGAC committee noted that Grant parents commented/complained on the district wide TAG survey about students being forced to repeat classes that they have already had in middle school and about not being allowed to take advanced and AP classes, and she asked if that was still the case at Grant. Carol Campbell stated that if a child has a high school credit on their transcript from middle school, they will not be forced to repeat that class. With regards to acceleration, students are allowed to accelerate if there is space in the advanced classes and if the class they are hoping to skip is not a required freshman community class. There may not be enough space in AP classes for 9th and 10th grade students to be able to take those, and Ms. Campbell stated that sophomores don't do well on AP exams, so she isn't in favor of sophomores being able to take AP classes, although there are some examples of that happening. If former ACCESS want to take an AP class as a sophomore, they can talk to their counselor about that being an option. She also said that sometimes families want to put their kids in AP and advanced classes not because they really need the advanced classes, but because they want to keep their children from being in classes with others who are not like them, and that she wants to avoid that type of elitism. All seniors are in a dual-credit English class right now, so they get community college credit for English in their senior year, even special-ed students. She believes in heterogeneous mixing of students in classes, and stated that this is important because that is what the real world looks like. She doesn't believe in separating students by ability and stated that "you can create an environment that looks like that"(as an adult), but most people are in settings where people are mixed together. She feels that every student can do well and that the kids should not be separated out by ability. Another parent asked how acceleration would work with humanities classes, and she stated that all students must take 9th grade English and Writer's Workshop. They can take additional English if they want, but they must also take the freshman community classes. Another parent asked about the Constitution team class, and at Grant it is for only seniors. The parent noted that at Lincoln the constitution class is mostly sophomores, as they take it before IB classes begin junior year.

Carol Campbell noted that by junior and senior year students can take a very diverse schedule. There are many options to take "dual credit" classes, which give students both high school and college credit.

She was asked to speak more about the cohort (freshman community) system. It was asked if it was in all PPS high schools, or just at Grant. She stated that it was at some high schools but not all. The intent is to help students with the transition to a large high school. The 3 teachers for each community work together on curriculum planning, and each team has a special ed instructor and a counselor. There are 6 freshman communities this year. The communities are balanced for gender and special ed and are heterogeneous. She stated that it would be difficult to put ACCESS students in the same community because of scheduling, and that it also goes against what they are trying to achieve by intentionally not having an honors community. She noted that Grant has a 90% graduation rate so what they are doing is working. She added that they have a lot of TAG students that didn't come from ACCESS, and they don't do anything different (make special accommodations) for them either. "High school is a different place" (than middle school), and she feels that incoming students will all feel challenged and that they don't need additional advanced classes. She stated "I don't need to sell Grant to you, because it's closed" (i.e., they don't have room for transfers because it is full). They are trying to have a high school that matches the demographics of Portland, and she stated that if your child comes home without homework, it is still rigorous enough. There are also lot of kids at Grant at kids who are gifted,

but she doesn't want to separate them from everyone else because someday they will be out in the world doing something and will not be separated in "that cohort". Ms. Campbell stated that at her meeting with Mr. Wood he mentioned that there are studies that show that gifted children who are not challenged in school are at risk for depression and anxiety; but that there are other children at Grant who have depression and anxiety too and they have a full time social worker who is available to all students and our children can seek help from them if they have anxiety. She stated that she is happy to have ACCESS kids at Grant. She said that Sunnyside and DaVinci are also alternative schools and the kids from there come to Grant and they don't get special accommodations either. A couple parents clarified the difference between focus option schools and an alternative school like ACCESS, which Ms. Campbell acknowledged.

An ACCESS parent who has a son in 11th grade at Grant commented that his first year was disastrous, but that it gets better each year as he has choices and he is now quite happy. Carol Campbell responded that she thinks there are also probably former ACCESS students who had better 9th grade years at Grant.

A parent commented that one confusing thing as an ACCESS parent is that ACCESS is supposed to be a 1-12 program, and it sounds like there really isn't support for that at Grant. Ms. Campbell replied that there was not an ACCESS at Grant program when she arrived (ACCESS did feed to Grant then, but there were no ACCESS specific classes or services). She noted that David Wood cited studies that show that advanced students do better when grouped as a cohort, but that she has yet to see average or below average students benefit from being separated by themselves. She stated that it doesn't make sense to have an honors or advanced track for ACCESS students, because they (Grant) are about having rigorous classes for all students. She stated that our issue is really more with the district that with Grant, because there isn't an ACCESS high school program, and we will run into the same issues at any of the high schools. She continued that maybe there would be high schools that would be a better fit, like one with an IB program, but that she doesn't know.

It was asked if electives are in general all open to freshman, and she stated that photography ran out of space, but that for the most part electives are open to freshman, and that they have a wide variety of great electives, and that Grant really values students having these options.

Principal Announcements and updates did not occur this evening, as David Wood had a family commitment.

Treasurer's Report- Abbie Rankin. Abbie reviewed the current budget, and noted that the recent fundraisers are mostly on target. We are close to our GIVE goal. The earthquake preparedness budget was increased to \$300 according to our vote at the last meeting. There is a big dine- out at Laurelhurst Pub next week that she hopes we support.

Old business. There will be a student leadership class next term and we will need parent volunteers to help with the yearbook, as the 8th grade leadership class students who will be working on that.

Abbie Rankin is starting work on an 8th grade trip and graduation events with David Fikstad, Renee Carter, and Mairi Kidd. The 8th graders will be doing fundraisers when the leadership classes start.

Most of the 8th grade students will be in the leadership classes, but possibly not all, but all can help with planning graduation events, the yearbook, and fundraisers. Renee is working to secure volunteers (8th graders and their parents) for the Shamrock Run as a fundraiser for 8th grade events. We must have 30 committed volunteers in order to be accepted into the position. Friday February 12th will likely be a “parents night out” fundraiser by the 8th graders, where younger students can come for a fun supervised evening while parents have an evening for themselves.

DBRAC conversation- A parent who watched meeting noted that there was a fair amount of discussion about ACCESS at the last meeting and that there was concern that ACCESS not be left out. At an earlier meeting Carol Smith was very clear that if the district really does move a lot of schools to K-5 it will not be until 2017, but boundary changes will still likely begin next year. Any move to Tubman, Kellogg, Smith, etc. couldn't happen until 2017 because the buildings need to be worked on. Humbolt might potentially be available. A few schools are so over-enrolled that something has to happen for next year, with Chapman being an example. There is a DBRAC meeting tomorrow night. The agenda states that there will be an initial recommendation that would come from that meeting, but now it sounds like it will be a simpler list of guidelines that will go to staff, and not a more specific set of recommendations.

Elona Landau, a parent of a former ACCESS student who is currently at Grant, is a yoga teacher who is starting workshops for parents about talking to kids about sexuality. She is going to be running 2 series of 3 week workshops starting in February, and she brought some flyers about that.

We earned \$450 on the book fair, which is similar to last year.

New business and announcements- none.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm