

ACCESS Academy PTA

Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, February 21, 2017, at 7 p.m. in the library, Rose City Park School, 2334 NE 57th Avenue, Portland, Oregon

Attendance: 10 people signed the attendance list, all of whom were members for 2016–17. 6 members constitute a quorum for a General Membership Meeting.

Meeting called to order by President Jennifer Ellis at 7:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 01/24/2017 General Membership Meeting, which were available for review, were accepted.

Principal's Announcements – David Wood

Admissions

Application materials for 2017-18 are now online, active, and applications are already coming in. Mr. Wood handed out paper copies for review but is encouraging applicants to use online version, which can be accessed using the following link: <http://bit.ly/ppsaccessapp>). (The actual application packet is at the following link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_Y2Ka1vfqn5a1FrdUhIOG0xbDg . The copies that Mr. Wood distributed included an additional page, headed "ACCESS Academy Admission Eligibility Rubric, 2017-18," that does not appear in the online version.) He encouraged parents to give feedback on this new form. The feedback received so far indicates the need to feature more prominently the basics of the program on the website and to make it easier for those unfamiliar with ACCESS to understand it.

The next to last page of the application (ACCESS Academy Application Information) describes the two criteria for eligibility for admission; the last page (ACCESS ACADEMY LOTTERY PROCEDURES) describes the lottery procedures that will apply to those determined to be eligible.

Applicants' eligibility will continue to be determined by and at ACCESS, specifically by the school's Admission Committee (teachers, Administrator, Counselor, and Learning Center staff). Starting this year, the committee will team with Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) from the PPS TAG Department. Together the team will determine whether or not each applicant meets both Criterion 1 (meets the 99%-ile requirement) and Criterion 2 (has a demonstrated need for an alternative program). In considering Criterion 2, the team will have detailed information from the new application which is designed to identify specific characteristics that highly gifted students may have. Feedback received so far has indicated that some characteristics may seem more pitched to boys' behavior. ACCESS recognizes that the list is imperfect and that, in fact, each child is unique. Mr. Wood acknowledges that the new application is a work in progress.

PPS's Enrollment and Transfer Department will run an ACCESS-specific lottery for each grade if more applicants are deemed eligible than there are spaces open at that grade. Because 53% of ACCESS students are boys (compared with 50% districtwide), lottery numbers for girls will be weighted to improve their chances of being accepted at ACCESS. In addition, the rising 4th & 7th grades will have gender-specific slots this year. (This is designed to compensate for the almost 2:1 ratio of boys to girls currently in those grades.)

After lottery numbers are assigned, first preference will be given to those with financial need (filling up to 44% of available slots), followed by preference for siblings of co-enrolled students. It is possible that gender and financial need imbalances may re-appear later, despite these efforts.

Family Information Sessions

So far, three Family Information Sessions ("open houses") have been scheduled. Results from tests for non-2nd graders will still be coming in through the second week of March, so a fourth session is needed and will be scheduled.

Mr. Wood remarked that, in previous years, representation at open houses included few families of color, and that visitors have noticed that. Last year, a parent of color (who chose not to send her child to ACCESS) met with Mr. Wood last year to discuss her disappointment that more people of color weren't present at last year's open houses.

In answer to a parent's question, Mr. Wood confirmed that there is in the works an affinity group for African-American students and families at ACCESS.

Budget

PPS has not yet released its staffing budget for 2017-18, but at a districtwide principals' meeting earlier this month Mr. Wood was given the "big picture": Due to an \$18-million shortfall, PPS will call for a 3% reduction in staff funding across the district. PPS now plans to announce on March 2 the budgeted full time employee (FTE) allowances for ACCESS and other schools.

ACCESS currently gets an allowance of .6 FTE for advanced math from the district; we have 10 sections for 6 classes of math. Because specialized staff situations are not subject to the same 3% reduction, that allowance won't be cut directly. ACCESS will likely experience a cut of .55 FTE. This happens to be about the amount that Foundation funded this year. The implication is that ACCESS can hold even with this year's staffing level if the Foundation raises double what it raised at last year's Auction.

The school's program for next year will be based on the staffing allowance that is given. Thus the school cannot commit to new programs until PPS releases its staffing budget. Reasons why this belt-tightening is necessary haven't been well-publicized by PPS or the state. In response to a parent's request that Mr. Wood publish or otherwise publicize the explanation he has received of the reasons for PPS' budget shortfall, Mr. Wood stated that he would like to share with the community more of the information he gleaned from a slide show presented at the Principals' meeting.

A parent asked how support for Special Education (SpED) will be affected by this budget news. Mr. Wood replied that, "Here is a tiny bit of good news: SpED got out ahead." Next year, there will be an increase in ACCESS' school psychologist staffing, from 1 to 2 days per week. The school will retain 2 fulltime para-educators (and Mr. Wood has requested more). At ACCESS, the psychologists mostly do testing and evaluation; in the future they will be able to devote more attention to counseling and special needs.

PPS' recently implemented a requirement that each school have a second secretary, a fulltime counselor, and a fulltime librarian. It is possible that this rule may be relaxed to allow principals to reduce these positions, and increase others, as needed.

A parent asked whether the expected cuts conflict with the new state mandate for more time for physical education (PE). Mr. Wood confirmed that this was true. By fall 2017, PPS must comply with a 2007 state law that requires more PE time -- at least 150 minutes per week for students in K-5; 225 minutes/week for Grades 6-8. The Association of Oregon School Boards has begun pushing back on the implementation of these requirements, recognizing that many schools lack the space and staff necessary to provide 30 or 45 minutes of PE per day.

Mr. Wood said that ACCESS would certainly not be able to meet the requirement next year and suggested that it is likely that no school in PPS will be able to do so. In order to comply, ACCESS would need a second gym, to hire additional staff and, perhaps, add a period to (or extend) the school day.

Location

Although no memo has been issued yet, it was stated orally at the most recent meeting of PPS' Teaching and Learning Committee that ACCESS will remain at Rose City Park for the 2017-18 academic year.

Schedule Changes Due to Snow Days

PPS may yet reclaim April 7 as an instruction day (it is currently a planning day). That change will require negotiations with the teachers' union, which are underway. Districtwide, PPS expects to meet state minimums for instruction hours per year except, perhaps, for 12th graders.

The decision of whether to continue classes or final examinations after an originally designated graduation day will be made on a school-by-school basis. ACCESS will continue through June 14, though commencement will be June 9, as previously scheduled.

With regard to spending money raised by Run for the Arts, Mr. Wood wants the arts programs to be presented to teachers so they can initiate arts events or programs that can be coordinated with their curriculum. About ½ of the funds are committed so far, and the school would like to spend at least another third. Proposals for middle schoolers have included dancing! Other suggestions are invited – it is best if these are made directly to teachers, although parents should feel free to copy Mr. Wood.

Treasurer's Report – Treasurer Colin Cunningham

The PTA had almost \$36,000 in the bank at end of January. Teachers have spent almost 20% of the funds the PTA allocated to them. Mr. Wood told the teachers at a recent staff meeting that the funds are available. The PTA has additional budget allocations for Science and Music, and can allocate more for PE supplies. Mr. Wood agrees to speak with Mr. Kreuz to find out whether he has the supplies he needs.

To date, the PTA has raised \$12,000 towards its \$19,000 aggregate fundraising goal for this school year.

Proposal for Teacher Workroom

A parent who regularly volunteers at the school has observed the lack of an organized and well-supplied teacher workroom. Volunteers feel that lack as well and often have to bring their own materials and work in hallways. Mr. Wood reflects that there are makeshift work areas, including the mezzanine above the Chinese classroom and next to the Technology room. For supplies he recommends all orders go first through Secretary Trish who can get great prices. A parent suggests the PTA could supply a “cube wall” or shelving to help organize new supplies in existing work areas.

Nominating Committee – President Jen Ellis

Sue Fisher and Deborah F have offered to serve on this year's PTA Officer Nominating Committee. On motion made, seconded, and unanimously approved Sue Fisher and Deborah F were elected to be the members of this year's Nominating Committee. The Standing Rules and the Unified Local Unit Bylaws require that the Nominating Committee have at least three members.

PTA President Jen Ellis directed the Nominating Committee to present its report and slate of candidates at the April 2017 General Membership meeting. She noted that Sally Maltman has offered to serve as Treasurer for 2017-18 and as “treasurer-in-training” for the remainder of this school year.

TAG Education Advocacy – Scholle McFarland

The PPS TAG Department will present its program and plan for a continuum of TAG services by March 1. A draft document has been reviewed by members of the Talented and Gifted Advisory Committee (TAGAC). It included a proposal to offer, in addition to ACCESS, SUMMA-like programs at five middle-school sites for 99%-ile students in three subjects -- math, science and language arts. This would give students who do not go to ACCESS opportunities to accelerate. The draft also included a proposal for “clustering.” No central support for, or mechanism to enforce, clustering exists yet, however. So far, no east side planning or boundary issues are being addressed in these proposals.

Scholle noted that a SpED advisory council -- comparable to TAGAC -- is being developed districtwide to advise the PPS board on school policy. The organizer, though not an ACCESS parent, has twice-exceptional (2E) kids and understands that SpED and TAG students face many of the same challenges. Those interested in participating should

contact the district's SpED department. Mr. Wood pointed out that Anne Marie Szok's Learning Center families might be especially interested.

Emergency Preparedness – Deborah F

Storage Container

ACCESS has been selected for a pilot demonstration project to set up an on-site container of emergency supplies. PPS facilities/operations/emergency staff are finalizing paperwork and timelines, which they will forward soon to ACCESS.

One district requirement is that the PTA purchase, and remain responsible for, the container; PPS doesn't want to get stuck with maintaining or moving it. If and when ACCESS relocates, it will be necessary also to relocate the container; the paperwork will reflect this requirement. The PTA budget has already allocated \$3,500 for the container.

The Oregon legislature will be presented with a proposal to provide emergency containers for all Oregon schools. Given the current budget climate, this will be an uphill battle. Benson High School is the only other Portland school so far that has a container. Deborah will consult with PPS representatives to come up with best practices and procedures for ACCESS.

Comfort Kits

Wrap-up work is still needed. Deborah has turned her energies toward the school's emergency container (above), so she is seeking someone to assume responsibility to coordinate what remains to be done to complete all comfort kits.

Teachers want ALL kids to have comfort notes, which they feel is even more important than adding fidgets for everyone. During the upcoming Principal's Coffee and PTA meeting parents will be invited to write notes for kids who still need them.

Bus Representatives and Contact Lists

Some buses have designated representatives; volunteers for buses 316 and 319 are still needed. Deborah is talking to bus companies to find out what supplies they already have on board. The PTA has compiled ridership information for each bus route on a shared view-only Google document. A link to this document will go out in this week's Atomic Flyer. Families are invited to direct questions and requests for changes to access.pta.pres@gmail.com.

A parent asked whether guidance would be given along with the bus lists. The answer is that Mr. Wood may send out some guidelines (e.g., to not scoop up kids from bus stops unless given direction/permission by phone).

Mercy Corps Presentations

Representatives from Mercy Corps are scheduled to visit a number of schools throughout the city to present models for preparing local neighborhood emergency teams for response to earthquakes and other disasters. President Jen Ellis will get the list of upcoming dates and sites and post them to the ACCESS community.

Family Forward Workshop Information – President Jen Ellis

On February 12 Jen attended a two-hour workshop presented by Family Forward Oregon that addressed the question, “How do we make our schools feel welcoming and safe?” Andrea Paluso heads their Forward Together program, dedicated to helping schools be welcoming to all students, particularly in the current climate.

Jen offered the school the printed materials that she obtained, including packets of discussion materials for elementary classrooms and eye-catching posters that state, “We all belong here. We will defend each other.” Mr. Wood recognized that these materials are consistent with school board and school policy, and he will make them available to interested teachers.

Auction – Kristi Byfield

The auction this year has a goal to raise twice what was raised last year. This will be possible if everyone who can participate does so. The date is April 29; the theme is Disco. Signups are open now (<http://signup.com/go/DX9AQX>) for volunteers in many different roles, from setup to record-keeping to photography; especially needed are volunteers to serve as chaperones at the kids’ concurrent skating party. Everyone is encouraged to sign up to bring food to share at <http://signup.com/go/gQitutP>.

Grandparents, alumni, and friends of the school are encouraged to attend this year’s auction. A formal invitation is in the works. Catherine Beckett reports that those in search of special outfits to wear can find GoGo boots on sale now for 50% off at Hollywood Vintage.

All classrooms are creating art projects for donation and many themed baskets are also being created.

Volunteers are also needed to make procurement phone calls (to secure new items and to follow up on existing leads). Volunteers can to make calls – many or just a few – from the comfort of their own homes. Contact Kristi B or Sue Fisher for details.

Other Fundraising

Box Tops for Education

The deadline for this program is next week. There is a competition between classes for a pizza party prize. About \$380 was earned last semester for the principal’s discretionary fund.

ACCESS Girl Scouts – Cookies!

Girl Scout moms JaneAnne Peterson and Scholle Mc Farland remind us that ACCESS’ Girl Scout troop members are still selling cookies from booths all over town.

Laps for Life


6th grader Dylan Beckett has organized a fundraiser for April 23 (the day after Earth Day) to raise awareness about climate change. Called “Laps for Life,” the event takes place

Columbia Pool, 3:00-5:00 p.m. Parent Catherine Beckett confirms that the event is directed at the ACCESS community, with alumni and friends of the school also encouraged to participate. Proceeds will benefit 350PDX, an award-winning climate change educational and local action organization.

Next Meeting

The next General Membership meeting will take place Tuesday, March 21, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. Special guest speaker Jeff Sosne of The Children's Program will address how parents can get their (gifted) kids, who may be used to succeeding with minimal effort, to work hard.

Minutes compiled by Lisa Karplus, Secretary

 Approved
03/21/2017

