

PTA Meeting 11/12/14

7pm call to order, introductions.

Grant Principal, Carol Campbell. Carol became Grant principal last year, was previously Benson principal and prior to that she was an advanced science teacher at Benson. Her own children also attended Grant. She was asked to address what it looks like to be an ACCESS student at Grant and what the experience is for gifted/advanced students at Grant in general. Ms. Campbell received some questions in advance, which included questions about curriculum and course offerings. She notes that they added several new classes this year, especially in CTE (career and technical education, or what would previously been called vocational classes), as they were lacking in CTE classes. In Freshman math they added “algebra and innovations” which is business math and algebra combined. She notes that ACCESS kids would probably not be taking that class as they would be in more advanced classes. They also added a dual credit geology class, AP studio art (which is a CTE class), writing for the arts (a play writing/ screenwriting class, also a CTE class), audio production, and other classes. They expanded the robotics class, which is taught by a woman who is a former mechanical engineer. She noted that many of her students at Benson who were in vocational programs went on to higher education, and weren't necessarily limiting themselves to the vocational training (i.e., students in the robotics programs might go on to be engineers, etc.)

There are also dual credit classes taught by high school instructors who are certified by PCC or PSU, for which students can receive both high school and college credit. Credits from these classes are accepted by any public Oregon college, and may or may not be accepted by other colleges out of state. She was asked if other PPS schools have dual credit programs, and they all do, although not necessarily in the same subjects or the same number.

Carol was then asked to speak to the bigger picture of what the experience is for ACCESS students who go to Grant. It was noted that only 10-12 from ACCESS went to Grant last year, which is a fairly small cohort given that we are supposed to feed to Grant. Carol responded that there is not an actual cohort of ACCESS student who travel together at Grant. The counselor at Grant did try to place a few 9th grade ACCESS students in chemistry together. ACCESS students may end up in some of the same classes because they may be taking similar classes, but because of different interests, most of their classes would be separate. The freshman communities are randomly done so they would not be put in the same freshman communities intentionally. This year there are 5 communities with 82 or so kids in each. Two of the freshman classes are English and Writers Workshop. She noted that the number of Grant students meeting OAKS expectations went up after they instituted the Writers Workshop. Freshman English and Modern World History are mandatory, and all 9th graders have to take them. There is more flexibility in the 10th grade. Almost all 10th graders are in sophomore English, and 10th graders can't take AP English unless they are approved and there are seats available. She noted that this is because in the past sophomores taking AP English have often not been able to pass the AP test. There are no honors freshman or sophomore English classes.

An ACCESS student asked if students can take more than one world language at a time, and the answer is yes. Grant has Japanese, French, and Spanish. There are no 1st or 2nd year Japanese classes available this year because they couldn't find an additional teacher, so the one Japanese teacher they have this year is teaching advanced Japanese to students from the immersion program. They will try again next year to hire a second Japanese teacher.

A parent asked about supports available to students on the autism spectrum. There is a specialist who

works specifically with kids with autism, and all kids in the SPED program have a support person assigned to them. Grant tries to provide them with a “protective net” to help the transition from middle school to high school.

The different freshman communities have different activities they do as a group- as an example one of the communities had a career fair together. Students also have the same counselor all four years.

A parent asked about differentiation within the classes. Carol Campbell said that it depends on the teacher, and that like at any school some teachers are better at differentiation than others. They try to emphasize that for gifted kids differentiation doesn't mean just more work. She notes that it is hard for kids who are lower achieving too, and they also need differentiation. She asks that parents be patient if their student comes home and says that a class is boring, and that the student should stick with the class and realize that they don't know everything; there will be something that they don't know. If the boredom persists, however, they want to do something to challenge the student, and the Grant staff will look into that. She wants ACCESS students to be challenged, but says that they won't be challenged every day, in every class, and added that high school gets more challenging each year. She notes that they don't want kids to have many hours of homework at home so that they have time for extracurricular activities and family life.

A parent asks what the most advanced math classes are at Grant, and what the options are for students who have exhausted the options at Grant. Calculus CD and PSU statistics are the most advanced classes at Grant, which means that the typical ACCESS student who finished advanced algebra at ACCESS would run out of math at Grant their senior year. She responded that there aren't options in place for those students, and given that there would be only a few students who needed that they aren't likely to develop anything, but they would be free to enroll in a math class at a local college while still at Grant and their schedule does allow the flexibility to do that.

Carol Campbell notes that kids need well-rounded lives and extracurriculars to get into a good college, and that it's not just about academics. She wants them to join sports and clubs too.

A parent asked about the move to Marshall for 2 years while Grant is renovated. Marshall will be open in January for a tour before Franklin moves in in the spring, so we are welcome to go see it. It is a newer more modern building than Grant currently is, so it actually will be nice. Grant will be at Marshall from Sept. 2017-June 2019. They don't know yet how the district will handle transportation for Grant kids to Marshall (TriMet vs. other). Many people ask about transportation and that will be decided by the district likely this year. There is a Max station right across the street from Marshall. A parent asked if being at Marshall would affect course offerings, and Carol felt that it wouldn't at all, except that Marshall has some maker space that might actually be an asset, and the cafeteria at Marshall is far nicer than Grant's. PPS will start working with an architect next year about the Grant remodel.

Carol also listed ways that parents can communicate with her, including Facebook and Twitter. She posts Grant news there (the soccer team is playing in the state championship, a teacher won an award, etc.) Grant also has a student magazine which is polished and a challenging experience for students interested in journalism. The journal does investigative reporting, and won an award from Columbia University. She notes that there is no shadowing available, because they get too many requests, but that a prospective student could visit and would get a tour with a student leader.

Principal's report. The first site council meeting occurred, but they don't have much clarity yet about next year. David has asked the district that ACCESS be allowed to continue with its growth plan and

grow to 362 students and occupy all but 6 classrooms next year. This year Beverly Cleary occupies 9 classrooms, so this does create some tension. The DEBRAC board started last week and is supposed to address both long term issues and also short term issues, and ACCESS is included in the list of “tier 1” schools with more urgent needs. Crowding at B.C. is also in this list, so again there is some tension there. The tier 1 issues are supposed to be resolved by Feb 15th. David notes that there may be a time when it would be helpful for us to participate and be more vocal in the boundary review process, and he will let us know.

David asked Kelly Cutler, who is on the site council, to address the site council meeting. She was also at the PPS meeting at Grant and notes that PPS is going to do 2 big surveys about the current climate at PPS and families' wishes. The site council is committed to continue with the growth of ACCESS and explore issues for high school.

Heather Kent notes that unfortunately Pam Knowles wasn't able to attend this meeting as planned, but may have a listening session scheduled for next week. David Wood notes that Judy Brennan would be the other important person to communicate with on the board level about concerns related to ACCESS.

The PPS SACET committee recently made 6 recommendations, the most widely known of which is to restrict transfers. There was also a suggestion to change how students are sent to focus option programs in an effort to increase under-served minority and low income students in those programs. David notes that ACCESS is not a focus option program, but is a district-wide alternative program, and so technically this doesn't apply to ACCESS. However, the motivation of the board may affect ACCESS and as an alternative program we might have to adhere to these new changes. This might result in a change to the sibling preference program, and there may be more explicit guidelines about geographic diversity for ACCESS students, for example with fixed numerical targets.

A parent asked if ACCESS could become a 1-12 program in its own program, and David answered that that is still an option. He has asked Pam Knowles to attend a future meeting, possibly in January, to address some of these issues.

David asks that we look for a survey coming out tomorrow from our new after-school coordinator, Dana Ticker. He would like after school programs be more intentional, high quality, and programs that best meet the needs of the majority of the kids. He would like to provide more science and leadership opportunities.

At conferences David got feedback that people wanted to hear more about the new changes in testing and common core standards. He will have people come in to talk about this closer to the time that the testing occurs in the spring. He wants to address how CCS apply to our students, and notes that backing up assertions with evidence, explaining things more than one way, etc., are all important skills. We will also be able to see examples to some of the new questions our students will get on the new tests.

He asks that we pay attention to weather news, and to check early morning emails on days that weather is bad.

A parent asked Mr. Wood about the difference between AP and IB programs. IB is an interdisciplinary course of study which involves 6 different subject area, and the exam includes multiple subjects plus work samples and more. The overall grade and assessment comes from a variety of examinations and examples, and not just one exam as in AP. The syllabi are international, and students are expected to

be global and multicultural in perspective. It is not as widely recognized in this country as AP, but is becoming more so. Lincoln and Cleveland offer the full IB program, and Madison is offering some classes and exploring doing the full program. Students in an IB school can choose to do the IB program or not. David would like us to look at what IB programs do as we examine our vision for ACCESS. What would be special about an IB diploma when applying to college? In terms of credit, there is no advantage over AP. Highly selective colleges, however, recognize the rigor of the IB program and appreciate it,

Old business:

October minutes were approved.

Standing rules were approved with no changes from last year.

New business

Sarah notes that more parents and teachers need to volunteer for the Parent/Staff talent show for it to occur. She suggests that money raised that night be used to purchase new audio equipment, as ours is in pretty bad shape. She asks for a parent who is an expert in sound equipment who could help with this when money does become available. Last year's talent show used the equipment of a family who is no longer here, and it no longer available. A motion was made that the proceeds after expenses for the talent show be used to purchase audio equipment, and it passed.

David Fikstad provides a date for the book fair, which will be December 13th, likely from 10-2.

Shauna notes that there is one more scrip order before the holidays. We are also almost done with moving to a new script provider so that cards can be reloaded at home (in your jammies, if you wish) and money will still go to the school

Treasurer's report Our new treasurer, Abbie Rankin, showed copies of the budget overhead. Fund-raising income thus far is mostly from apples, t-shirts, and Chinook Books, and we have raised \$6,328 gross from those, of which about \$1,500 is profit not including the Chinook Books. From the GIVE campaign we have \$3,770 so far, with a target of \$10,000, so we are still hoping for more families to donate to the GIVE campaign. We have \$864 from employee matches. We have given out about \$2,500 to teachers so far.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.