

ACCESS Academy PTA

Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, November 15, 2017, at 7 p.m. in the library, Rose City Park School, 2334 NE 57th Avenue, Portland, Oregon

Attendance: 13 people signed the attendance list, of whom 10 (including the President) were members for 2017–18. 6 voting members constitute a quorum for a General Membership Meeting.

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

Special Presentation

Preceding the meeting, there was a brief presentation by Kelly McCloskey, a representative from the Special-Education PTA of Portland (SEPTAP). Notes on this presentation appear in an addendum.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the General Membership Meeting of 18 October 2017 were reviewed and were approved with an addendum: the meeting took place in the school library, not the school auditorium

Financial Matters

Treasurer Sally Maltman reviewed a financial report with updates through 11/14/2017. The following are highlights that were discussed:

- The PTA now has 104 members (one who joined at the meeting!). President Jennifer Ellis noted that the PTA had 109–110 last year.
- The apple sale netted \$1,366 (more than was budgeted).
- The dine-out at Queen of Sheba raised \$200, and the earlier one at Laurelwood earned \$900.
- Contributions via the Give! Campaign are up to \$7,400. Contributions have slowed down a little, but they will likely increase somewhat in December.
- Scrip shows net income of \$1,127, but the latest order still needs to be paid for, so the actual net amount will be less.
- Some funds have been spent for the advocacy line item.
- Teachers are starting to spend the funds allocated for classroom expense (about \$2,000 of \$10,000 budgeted).
- Regarding the 8th-grade trip, the PTA Executive Committee received guidance from the Oregon PTA and the PTA's insurer that acting as a "bank" for the trip incurs liability. As a result, the PTA will no longer serve in this role and has disbursed funds to a parent who is managing finances for the trip.
- For PTA grants approved at a previous meeting (coming to \$3,500), \$1,000 has been spent. Some grant recipients were able to use their funds right away.
- As of yesterday, the PTA had about \$36,000 in assets, including cash in the bank and scrip on hand.

In response to a parent's question, Sally confirmed that the PTA does have a PayPal account.

Sue Fisher, who coordinates the Box Tops for Education fundraising program reminded the group that collection of Box Tops produces income of about \$400 that comes in two installments during the year. She asked whether it should be divided between the PTA and the Foundation and, if so, should there be a budget line for that. President Jennifer Ellis said that, in the past, these funds were sometimes used for other things (e.g., playground equipment); it did not always go to PTA. She suggested that we might agree that the first installment (in the fall) goes to the PTA and that the second (in the spring) goes to the Foundation.

A motion was made and seconded: 'a new budget line item be added under Section B (Fundraisers) called, "Box Tops for Education," the first entry to be \$150 budgeted income for fiscal year 2017–18.' The motion was approved without objection, amending the budget.

Principal's Announcements and Updates

The Principal was ill and unable to attend the meeting.

Special Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The committee held its first meeting on Friday, November 3. Lina Reiss, the committee chair, summarized the meeting's minutes.

The meeting was attended by 5–6 people, including PTA President Jennifer Ellis (who is an ex officio member of all committees). The meeting began by going over committee rules and reviewing the limitations on the PTA and its committees (as communicated by Jen).

Committee goals were developed:

1. Diversity: increase racial and ethnic diversity at ACCESS.
2. Equity: provide financial equity in opportunity and participation.
3. Inclusion: promote a climate of inclusion for students of diverse race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender (including LGBTQ+), learning ability (including twice-exceptional), and physical ability.

The committee discussed guidelines for this year's 8th-grade trip and future trips. They plan to develop a document outlining best practices for organizing school trips, encouraging students to consider financial issues, families with twice-exceptional children, etc. These factors could influence choice of location, whether to stay overnight, etc.

The committee developed a one-time optional scholarship request form that would be sent out to all families via take-home flyer, email, and social media. It will allow families to disclose financial need while at the same time protecting privacy. The PTA is moving forward with the production and distribution of these forms.

Jen explained that the goal was to help families in need when families are asked repeatedly for money from teachers, etc. In the future, the form will be included in the back-to-school packet, and will ask whether families need financial assistance, food boxes, clothing, etc. Completed forms would go to the school counselor, who could then track and touch base with those families.

Jen worked on this plan with Mr. Harkness, the school counselor. Once the forms have been translated into various languages, they will be sent home with students (probably this week). Teachers should notify Mr. Harkness when they will be requesting funds from families, and he can then reach out proactively to offer scholarships and other support that the PTA and others have set aside for this purpose.

Foundation President Kristi Byfield reported that, for the annual auction, the Foundation has chosen venues that are reasonably priced for families. In the past, the Foundation has directed to the school secretary those families who need support to attend the auction; Kristi asked whether it should now direct them to the PTA. Jen suggested that Kristi ask Mr. Harkness to reach out to families when the time comes.

A parent expressed concern about delays in getting the forms out, given that Thanksgiving is coming soon. Jen said that they were working on getting the form translated. The parent suggested that the form(s) could be attached to Principal's Friday newsletter.

A parent recalled that families with means are invited to buy auction ticket for teachers and wondered whether families that cannot afford the auction could be supported similarly. Perhaps there could be a way to sponsor parents to attend the auction and children the skate party.

Lina said that PTA equity funds are a resource. They could be used for financial equity or for diversity equity. The PTA will try to organize "Courageous Conversation" program (a protocol for promoting interracial dialogue) for the January general meeting.

The committee had a brief discussion with the Principal, who indicated that the ACCESS website could be updated with material that focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion and encourages underrepresented families. A goal would be to correct misperceptions of ACCESS, which is currently seen by many as privileged and not racially diverse. The committee is considering another long-term question: how to improve admissions with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Jen said that it was a good meeting. She said that she had reminded the committee that there were things outside PTA control and beyond the scope of the PTA and its committees.

With respect to promoting more awareness of ACCESS, there was some discussion of whether ACCESS parents can go to other schools to reach out. A parent suggested that those parents who are attorneys could look at the actual rules governing "advertising" (or recruiting) to understand better the actual limitations.

Directory Status

Directory Coordinator Phoebe Shen introduced herself as a new parent with a son in the 3rd grade. She helped to get this year's online directory set up with MySchoolAnywhere and said that she thinks that the PTA could use the the tools provided more effectively.

Phoebe showed video that identified the various features of the MySchoolAnywhere program. She then discussed how parents could use it to send mails to one class, for volunteer sign-ups, etc. One can even set up a "store" with PayPal, etc.

Secretary Lisa Karplus asked whether these additional features come at an extra cost. Phoebe said, no, we have already paid for all of it but we're using only the directory module. They even offer the PTA a free web page if the PTA wants one. Phoebe thought that the sign-ups and the store would likely provide the most value for the PTA.

A parent suggested posting a link to the informational video on Facebook, in the Atomic Flyer, and in these minutes, so that everyone can learn about the additional features. (The link is <https://myschoolanywhere.wistia.com/medias/8j0i3c343l> .)

Another parent asked how many families were in the directory. Phoebe believes that it includes almost everyone, but the school hasn't provided her with the information that would allow her to say for certain. She did check at one point and found that only a handful missing; 220 families confirmed. Phoebe has reached out to missing families or has asked the school to reach out to them.

Another parent wondered why it was the PTA has had difficulty maintaining the directory consistently. President Jennifer Ellis explained that the previous Principal had provided all the information to MySchoolAnywhere, but things were a little bumpy after that, and the subscription ended. Later, it transpired that the process used by the previous Principal wasn't completely proper. After that, it was thought that PTA would have to go to the effort of getting permission from each family. But Jen learned at a recent PTA training, that the forms completed by parents (with PPS) allow the PTA to get parents' directory information unless they opt out. Phoebe said that it had been easy to inherit information on existing families; the challenge was with new families. She is working with the school so that, next year, new parents have to opt out of the directory, rather than opting in, as they were asked to do this year.

Lisa wondered whether these sign-ups could overlap with or replace signupgenius.com. Phoebe said that it could be a helpful replacement; it could be much easier to use.

ACCESS Campaign Update

There was a PPS Board meeting on October 24th. It focused on the opening of middle schools at Tubman and Roseway Heights, but it did not set boundaries. There was another meeting on November 14th that confirmed the opening of Tubman and set new school boundaries. The Board also decided that the Rose City Park building will re-open as a K-5 school with a Vietnamese option.

The PPS Superintendent confirmed that he is still looking for permanent or bridge location for ACCESS. It will likely involve moving another school, and he will want to work out the consequences of that before make the decision public. It may be another week before we hear.

A parent said that we need to go to the Board meeting on November 28th because that is when they will be deciding on an ACCESS location. She observed that many PPS families are worried that their school is going to be moved or eliminated because of ACCESS. The ACCESS community therefore should be sensitive to the larger community.

Another parent advised that, when the new location is made public, parents should avoid “popping in” and disrupting the school there now. Any tours or walkthroughs should be afterhours when no one else is there. Secretary Lisa Karplus suggested that we could leverage the fact that we have successfully collocated with other programs; that might assure the community at any other program with which ACCESS might be collocated.

Announcements

Dine-Out Coordinator Heidi Owen said that no dine-outs are planned yet for January and February. She said that her old school had a fundraiser at Grand Central Bowl. The alley contributed the lanes so that school could sell tickets to bowl and keep all the proceeds. She allowed that the environment could easily lead to sensory overload and it therefore might not be ideal for the ACCESS community. Heidi has contacted the alley and confirmed that they are still doing these fundraisers (usually in the morning or early afternoon on a Saturday). She asked for input.

A parent asked about food. Heidi said that the alley does sell food, but it is not cheap. Someone said that we could work with Mr. Harkness to reach out to parents in need. It might end up as more of a community event than a fundraiser.

A parent said that ACCESS had a summer meet-up there 4–5 years ago; it worked out well. A couple of years ago, one of the classes had meet-ups there for social time; they also went to the SuperPlay bowling alleys in Beaverton bowling alley. It was calmer and there was less sensory overload. The parent felt that dine-outs don't have to be centrally located; there are lots of families on the west side. Someone pointed out that there will be a future dine-out at Salvador Molly's in SW Portland.

President Jennifer Ellis reported that Vice President Catherine Beckett encourages all families to check the school lost and found. Catherine would like some help going through the lost-and-found items, reaching out to families, and organizing donations of unclaimed items.

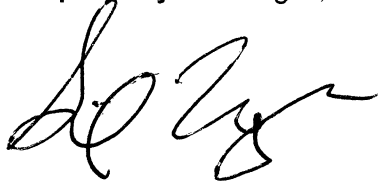
Deborah said that she is celebrating being done with comfort kits. She did not put generic kits in buckets for families who did not provide comfort kits. Parents can still offer to volunteer (on a per-class basis) to make generic comfort kits for kids who do not have

them. Someone should step up to do comfort kits next year. Deborah will still do buckets, but that's all.

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

Minutes compiled by Gil Neiger, Secretary

APPROVED
12/13/2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Gil Neiger', written in a cursive style.

NOTES from presentation made by speaker Kelly McCloskey, at the General Membership meeting of ACCESS Academy PTA, held Wednesday, November 15, 2017

Jennifer Ellis, ACCESS Academy PTA President, introduced the evening's guest speaker, KELLY McCLOSKEY. She is Secretary of the Special Education Parent Teacher Association of Portland (SEPTAP). Kelly also serves on PPS' Special Education Advisory Council. SEPTAP meets every other month for its business meeting and alternating months for parent support. Kelly offered flyers announcing SEPTAP's next meeting, to be held November 29, 2017. [See list of regional SEPTAs at <http://spectrumsmagazine.com/local-resources/education/special-education-parent-teacher-associations/>.]

All are welcome at meetings. SEPTAP does outreach to strengthen special education support at specific schools, hosts a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/septap/about/>), and offers one-on-one support in person, by phone or otherwise.

SEPTAP is a local unit of the Oregon PTA. Created last year, when it met twice, SEPTAP is here to serve kids but also parents and families who need support to achieve inclusion in, and access to, the free and appropriate public school education to which all are entitled. It is not connected with a particular school; rather, SEPTAP exists to support the special education needs of kids throughout the Portland area. Finding meeting locations can be a problem, and establishing a funding base is challenging. [So far this year ACCESS Academy PTA has supported SEPTAP with a donation of \$100.]

SEPTAP aims to serve students with "special needs" which it broadly defines as children covered under Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) plans – or not – even those outside of Portland's city limits. Special needs include needs for wheelchair access, hearing and vision disabilities, autism, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyslexia, and "invisible" disabilities. HIPAA rules say we can't always know or ask about the details or extent of individuals' disabilities, and privacy considerations mean some who seek help from SEPTAP do so confidentially. SEPTAP can connect families with many resources.

The organization's major areas of activity to date:

1. Advocacy around the "Franklin incident." SpEd classrooms in the new high school building were made separate from the rest of the school, served by a separate entrance, and with hallways too narrow for two wheelchairs to pass. SEPTAP hopes to be able to participate in effective building planning in the future.
2. Advocacy to restore SpEd services. Privatized Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy services in PPS have been restricted to two hours per week, and SpEd teachers services were recently reduced, resulting in much less interaction between kids and teachers.

3. Increasing support for those with dyslexia. SpEd teachers need special training to recognize dyslexia, and to teach those who have it. Dyslexia can be thought of as one of the “invisible” disabilities, one that goes unacknowledged and unaddressed. Currently, students cannot qualify for an IEP or 504 plan based on dyslexia alone. It can cost \$5,000 to \$10,000 per child to properly diagnose dyslexia.
4. Supporting families affected by autism spectrum disorders.
5. Helping other (non-disabled) students become more aware of and sensitive to disabilities.
6. Helping kids across the spectrum of disabilities learn what’s going on with them so that they can advocate for themselves.

A parent asked how Special Education programs vary from school to school. Kelly answered that SEPTAP is creating a Google Form by which it plans to survey SpEd teachers district-wide, asking them for feedback about what services they offer and what they need to better serve kids.

A parent asked about support for families affected by ADHD. Kelly noted that while ADHD alone does not qualify a student for a 504 plan, social problems that arise from it can be encompassed by 504 plans. SEPTAP supports families affected by ADHD, and Kelly invited the parent to come talk to the group about their experience.

A parent asked whether PPS is working with SEPTAP. Kelly answered that the Special Education director of PPS has not yet attended a SEPTAP meeting. The organization's president represents SEPTAP on the Oregon PTA.

Notes compiled by Lisa Karplus, Secretary

