

ACCESS Academy PTA

Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, January 17, 2018, at 7 p.m. in the Library, Rose City Park School, 2334 NE 57th Avenue, Portland, Oregon

Attendance: 14 people signed the attendance list, of whom 11 (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 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the General Membership Meeting of 13 December 2017 were reviewed and then approved without change.

Financial Matters

Treasurer Sally Maltman reviewed a financial report with updates through 1/16/2018. The following are highlights that were discussed:

- **Section B — Fundraisers**
 - There was an uptick in donations to the Give! Campaign, and it has now reached its budgeted target of \$9,500.
 - Overall fundraising for the school year to date is at \$15,000 compared to budgeted target of \$20,000. Funds are still expected from scrip, dine-outs, and some matching contributions.
- **Section E — Teacher Classroom Expenses**

There was not much spending over the holiday break. Dr. Garcia has submitted expenses for various purchases, and these will come from his classroom budget.
- **Section F — Earmarks and One-Time Expenses**
 - Before the break, six families requested for assistance from the Helping Hands program. The PTA distributed \$1,000 in gift cards for use over the break.
 - With regard to PTA grants, Lisa reported that she had asked Mr. Lanners about his item (a microscope). He has placed an order and is awaiting delivery. He is looking forward to receiving it and is glad that the PTA had funds to pay for it.

Sally raised a question regarding teacher classroom expenses for Thom Johnson, a new teacher at the school. Because teachers are allocated \$500 per FTE, and because his contract is for 0.75 FTE, he was allocated \$375. Mr. Johnson recently clarified that his being paid an addition 0.25 FTE from funds freed up by another teacher taking a leave. Sally made a motion to amend the budget to increase to \$500 the amount available to Thom Johnson under teacher classroom expenses. The motion was seconded by Gayle Killam and approved without opposition.

Principal's Announcements and Updates

The Principal was attending a meeting of the TAG Advisory Council (TAGAC) and did not attend the PTA meeting.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee is a special committee of the PTA. Its purpose is to identify (nominate) a slate of candidates to serve as officers for the following school year. (When PTA elections are held, there can be nominations of candidates in addition to those identified by the Nominating Committee.) According to the Standing Rules, the general membership is to elect a Nominating Committee at the January meeting. The Nominating Committee is expected to deliver its report (a slate of candidates) by the end of April.

There was some discussion of officer candidates in general. A parent suggested that the PTA (through the Nominating Committee) endeavor to identify a diverse slate of candidates. Another parent suggested that, after the committee is elected, its purpose and membership be identified in the Atomic Flyer for a few weeks, a posting be put on Facebook, and parents be encouraged generally to reach out to committee if they are interested.

Lisa Karplus moved that the following persons be elected to this year's Nominating Committee: Catherine Beckett, Judy Berck, and Jane Chaddick. (These three have contacts in the middle school, lower elementary grades, and upper elementary grades, respectively.)

Catherine recommended that the motion make clear that the committee would remain open. Lisa revised her motion to be for the election of those three named persons with the understanding that the general membership may elect additional members at the February meeting. The motion was seconded by Sue Fisher and approved without objection.

Run for the Arts Update

Run for the Arts funds are paying for an improvisational comedy troupe to come to work with middle school students. Other teachers also report working with artists who can be funded with these monies. Sally reported that ACCESS Run for the Arts raised \$9,000–10,000 this year and that there remains about \$30,000 overall that can be spent.

Special Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Committee chair Lina Reiss led the discussion.

Guidelines for 8th-Grade Trips.

The committee approved a draft of guidelines for 8th-grade trips. The committee would like feedback on the guidelines from the PTA general membership (e.g., are they appropriate). By following these guidelines, future classes will be able to organize trips in a manner that is sensitive to families and that supports participation by twice-exceptional students. A link to the draft guidelines will be included in these minutes and will be shared on the 8th-grade Facebook page

The following is a link to the draft guidelines:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zdA_jb8beUBNZcGYI7v4_S_dw250i_5CJdgLi1ZhmwM. Those with feedback can send mail to Ireiss@mikeandlina.net.

Courageous Conversation Program.

The Courageous Conversation program will be held in the school auditorium on February 6th and 7th from 6pm to 8pm. Joyce Chow is arranging to get a Civic Use of Buildings permit (CUB). There will be childcare for those attending.

Having participated in the program in the past, Joyce gave some information to the meeting. She said that the PPS Office of Equity and Partnerships has a facilitator come to these sessions. The sessions discuss and present tools for talking about race and community agreements on how to do that. There are usually some thought exercises for the group. The sessions are generally and provide a good way to have a facilitator to engage in these conversations.

The committee wants to encourage parents to come. Committee members will come early to set up; others are encouraged to help. No one need sign up in advance to attend, but those requesting childcare should RSVP.

A parent wondered whether it would be appropriate for 8th-grade students to attend these sessions. Joyce said that she had these sessions done only with parents but that she could ask the facilitators. She reminded the group that the sessions are designed to help parents talk with their children; she reflected that, at past sessions, some parents have found it difficult to speak freely about race, and they might be even more reluctant with children present.

President Jennifer Ellis recommended that we start with an adult session and consider following up with middle schoolers afterwards if it seems appropriate. Another parent said that it would be good to expose middle school students; the PTA could fund additional sessions for them. Joyce agreed that everyone can benefit from this kind of program because we all need tools to be able to speak up in an effective way: engaging, not opposing.

A parent was uncertain how the event would be structured. Is it a workshop or a presentation? How many people typically come? Joyce said that attendance is typically not high — maybe up to ten parents. It would be great to have more, although having a full auditorium would definitely be a different experience. Joyce observed that the sessions are not very formal.

A parent asked: What happens after the session? Will parents know how to talk to their children? Should the parent community go on to facilitate their own conversations? Are there other goals? Joyce said that a key tenet is to expect and accept non-closure. The goal of the sessions is more to open up conversations in situations in which they're not happening. She has seen many outcomes from the training. It depends on who steps up

in the community. Lina encouraged Joyce to write short summary for inclusion in the Atomic Flyer.

Other Diversity Issues.

Lina said that the committee is looking at diversity issues other than race. The committee may organize a panel of ACCESS alumni in high school who could come back and talk about how things might be different and better in the ACCESS middle school (e.g., with regard to transgender issues). A parent observed that the current 8th graders tend to deal better with gender issues than with those around race, socioeconomic status, and twice-exceptionalism. A student said that, while many of the 8th graders are very comfortable with gender issues, others are willing to push the boundaries of acceptable speech. The student agreed that things are rougher with respect to race, socioeconomic status, and twice-exceptionalism.

A parent suggested that 8th graders could go through the Courageous Conversations program on their class trip before going on to high school. Another parent wondered whether parents should let the 8th graders do their own trip planning.

Lina said that the committee is developing a community list of reading material (for children) on diversity issues. The committee may send it out by way of the Atomic Flyer and may also reach out to teachers. The ACCESS website will be updated with information about the DEI committee, its mission, etc.

Visiting Other PTAs.

A previous ACCESS PTA meeting discussed the possibility of the committee visiting PTA meetings at other schools to provide outreach for ACCESS. Lina asked about the status of this. President Jennifer Ellis said that this was in process. It is hoped that this can be resolved in time for the upcoming admissions cycle.

Lina thought that there should send be at least one parent from an underrepresented minority at each admissions open house. Jen said that the teachers will be much more involved in the open houses this year. There will be more teacher-led discussions. There will still be a place for parent volunteers as well.

A parent observed that, at the admissions open houses, there never seems to be any schedule or design to how tours are done. Perhaps parents could help add some organization to the process. Jen said that the Principal is still developing the organization of the open houses — it will likely be different than it was under the previous Principal. There was some discussion of the fact that, while the open houses will be at the Rose City Park School, new students wouldn't attend ACCESS in that building.

Inclusive Events.

President Jennifer Ellis reported that she is working with Heidi Owen on the organization of a bowling dine-out on Saturday, February 24th. The event will feature two hours of bowling (11am to 1pm) that will be free to the PTA. The PTA will collect suggested donations at the door. Heidi is working to determine whether the PTA could buy pizza and then sell it at a

reduced amount. Jen will work with Heidi and Mr. Harkness to develop publicity material, which would explain to families that the event can be attended without cost.

ACCESS Location Update

The school district has scheduled a community meeting for January 24th from 6:30pm to 8pm (probably in the gym or the cafeteria). There will be representatives from the PPS offices on transportation, facilities, and childcare. President Jennifer Ellis had inquired with PPS about bus routes, and it seems likely that no information about bus routes will be given at the meeting — the district will instead wait it has more concrete enrollment information. She will ask PPS if they can run preliminary routes based on the school's current enrollment.

There was some discussion of the Pioneer Special School Program, which is currently located at the future ACCESS site and whether representatives from that program might attend the community meeting.

A parent asked whether the meeting would start at 6:30pm, since previous community meetings, especially those at which food is provided, tended to start late. President Jennifer Ellis said that pizza would be provided and that she would try to clarify details of timing. She thought it unlikely that the meeting would start late.

Another parent asked whether there were questions we want to be sure to ask. Jen explained that she had already given PPS a list of questions selected from those she had been hearing from (childcare, transportation, science lab, etc.).

Secretary Lisa Karplus asked if it would be advantageous to have graphical materials that were created for campaign. Jen said that we could bring them but she was not sure how helpful it would be (PPS likely has the necessary information).

[Note. The community meeting was later postponed to 21 February at 7:00pm.]

Collaboration Between PTA and ACCESS Foundation

The discussion here focused on how the PTA could collaborate with the ACCESS Foundation to make the April auction successful as a community event (as well as a fundraiser). The discussion was prefaced with an observation that the ACCESS is one of the most inclusive auction events for a PPS school.

Discussion focused on the students' skate party as it is important to many of the students and also there are real per-person costs to the Foundation. It was suggested that the PTA could provide funds to sponsor (with "scholarships") students from families getting Helping Hands support (and others). There is also a desire to encourage as many parents as possible to attend the auction dinner. Because it is potluck, there is no incremental cost if more parents attend.

For the skate party to be successful, adult volunteers are required — one adult for every ten children. Last year, there were 280–300 children (requiring 28–30 adult volunteers).

The more children that attend, the more parent volunteers are required. No one is required to volunteer, but the event works only if everyone helps out in some way.

A parent asked how much must be paid for each child, and suggested that the PTA contribute funds sufficient to make the skate party ACCESS-only event; this might help children with anxiety or sensory issues. Foundation President Kristi Byfield said that the skating rink will not make it a private event because Saturday evenings generate a lot of revenue. To cover 352 tickets would cost around \$5,000. We could ask for \$25 per student “pay as you can.” Kristi’s main concern about opening up tickets was that she can do so only to the extent that there are parent volunteers.

A parent asked about the possibility of everyone volunteering to do a 30-minute shift. Kristi agreed to consider it but remarked that it is getting late in the planning process. If we allow people to come at the last minute, it makes planning very hard. A parent suggested that we might use PTA funds to pay adults (e.g., siblings aged 18 and up) to supervise children at the rink.

Scrip Procedures

President Jennifer Ellis reported that the PTA is reviewing procedures for distributing scrip to those who have ordered it. Currently, scrip gets distributed to students in the morning to put into their backpacks to take home. There was an incident in December in which one family’s scrip didn’t make it home. It is currently being investigated. (This is the first time that this has happened with the current scrip coordinator.) Because scrip is a significant fundraiser for the PTA (about \$2,000 annually), the PTA would like to identify ways to keep the program successful. It might be possible to identify another volunteer assistant who could help distribute scrip in the afternoons (closer to dismissal time). In response to a question from a parent, Jen said that mailing the scrip would not be secure and would cost the PTA money. There was some discussion of a possible addition to the scrip forms that would allow parents to opt out of having scrip sent home with the students.

New Business

Kristi Byfield gave an update on school supplies for next year. There have been conversations on the best approach. The preference is for an approach in which the school buys in bulk and parents contribute supporting funds. The Principal is supportive, but it is not definite yet. It is hoped that there will be a “suggested donation.” Returning families would pay in spring, while new families would be asked in the fall. President Jennifer Ellis suggested that, in future years, the PTA could explore ways to support the school in this area.

Announcements

- Monday, January 22nd, is the dine-out at Salvador Molly’s. 20% of gross from 4pm to 9pm will be donated to the school.
- Tuesday, January 30th, is Game Night at the school from 6pm to 8pm.
- Tuesday and Wednesday, February 6th and 7th, will be the Courageous Conversations program.
- Thursday, February 15th, there will be a middle school dance after school.

- A parent asked about times — 3:15pm to 5:00pm? What happens to students who ride the buses, or who parents can't get to the school by 5:00pm? Can we extend the dance to 5:30pm?
- Jen said that it should be OK if there are sufficient chaperones. We can encourage parents to pick up students by 5:15pm. It is not clear whether we could expect teachers or other staff to be there.
- Someone suggested asking Mr. Kreuz about getting into the gym in period 6 for decorating.
- **Note. The dance was later postponed to Friday, February 16th, at 6:30pm.**
- Saturday, February 24th, is the bowling dine-out at Grand Central Bowling Lounge SE 8th Avenue and Morrison Street. It runs from 11am to 1pm.

A parent asked about whether the PTA had a role at the schools upcoming "spirit week." President Jennifer Ellis said no; it is run by 8th grade leadership and Mr. Harkness.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes compiled by Gil Neiger, Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gil Neiger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.