

PTA

General Membership Meeting
February 17, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

PTA President David Fikstad called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

GUEST SPEAKER INGA DUBAY

Inga Dubay: Inga is a volunteer who teaches handwriting to Access 2nd and 3rd graders. Inga has been teaching at Access for 4 years. She is honored to work with our children and her grandchildren who attend Access.

Inga and her partner started their handwriting business in 1979. They published their first books in 1980. Their books were adopted by PPS in 1983, and now the books are used by homeschoolers all over the country. They have authored Write Now: The Complete Program for Better Handwriting, as well as books for each grade level. The books will be in the Principal's office. A brochure and handout were presented.

Inga is using the 4th grade handwriting book with the 2nd and 3rd graders. It has a science theme. Inga comes to Access once a week to work for 30 minutes each with the 2nd grade and 3rd grade. She works in cursive italic rather than other scripts. Inga demonstrated that the looped cursive is more difficult to read than cursive italic. Inga has the students start with one stroke italic (similar to print) and then builds to the script.

Inga and her partner have also published a calligraphy book. In addition to the cursive italic, Inga also teaches the 2nd and 3rd graders calligraphy. The classes have been using a 5 ml nib pen. Inga appreciates PTA funding the nibs. However, they tend to get mushy and hard to work with. Inga is making a plea for funding for a new and different type of pen. Art Media will sell her the new pens for \$2.36 each, for a total of \$59 for the class. The pens could be used for two classes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The January 20, 2011 minutes were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Amaya handed out the Treasurer's Report. The PTA has received \$550 in matching gifts this month. Amaya is still working on the Intel matching program to make sure we get credit for all matches.

Currently, the PTA has \$12,775.57 in the bank, with promised expenses out of \$8,400.

Amaya reported that Inga Dubay's request for the calligraphy pens is not currently a line-item in the PTA budget.

Q. Why can't the teachers take the expenses for the pens from their classroom budget of \$700?

A. Amaya does not have an answer. Amaya reported that Mrs. Haliburton has \$186 left in her budget from the \$700 allotment. Mrs. Haliburton spends the majority of her funds on field trips. Mrs. Clark also has spent money on field trips.

No motion was made to fund the cost of the pens.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Tou Meksavanh the interim Access principal attended the meeting to give a report. It is an honor and a pleasure to be here at Access. Tou worked as principal at Duniway School for 9 years. She believes that the involvement of the parents at Duniway made a tremendous difference in the excellence of the school. Tou saw that at Duniway, the PE and Music programs were supported by the Duniway Foundation. She feels the same way here at Access. The parents are her partners in working for our children. If Tou needs to take any leave, Dana Jacobs will fill in. Dana started the teacher evaluations so she will follow through with that job.

Coming back from retirement is fun. Tou feels very fresh and enthusiastic. Tou is going to be part of the School Improvement Plan. For the past two years, the focus district wide has been on writing. This will continue this year at Access with the focus on writing.

For the remaining 3 late opening days Staff professional development will focus on Gifted Learners and their social development needs, as well as writing. At Access, writing skills are not exceeding State benchmarks across the board. Tou's perception is that at Access, with the gifted children, they still need help with organization because they have so many great ideas that are flowing out. This writing focus and emphasis is going to carry over into all disciples (science, social studies).

Peer Mediation: Recently, twenty 6th-8th grade students attended a 2-day workshop learning how to be Peer Mediators. The Peer Mediators will be available to all students during recess. A counselor and Mrs. Montano will continue to work weekly with the Peer Mediation issues. This will empower the students to practice these positive social skills throughout their lives.

Tou is very happy that Access will provide the academic rigor that Access students need, as well as the social skills and development that the students need.

There will be an Information Night for potential new parents on Tuesday evening, March 1, 2011.

Tou does not have specific information about Access numbers for students and staff next year because there is not yet an approved budget. This is true for all PPS schools. The most recent forecast is for \$110 million less for PPS. This cut would be on top of the 400 teaching positions slated to be cut. However, PPS parents and voters have continuously stepped up and rescued the schools and Tou feels that with the Bond measure on the ballot there is hope.

Right now, there is no way to answer the question of whether there will be 1st Grade at Access next year. The District has different committees looking at different programs. Sue Ann Higgins is working to ensure that the staffing at Access does not change. At Access, the ratio has been 18 students to 1 FTE, and a counselor; compared to 23 students to 1 FTE at Duniway with no counselor. Access currently has 2 aides (=1 FTE) plus staff for a total of 15.5 FTE.

PPS has stated that it will not make a budget announcement until late April or early May. However, the election is not until May 17, so even with the budget announcement there will still be questions until the measure is passed. Thus, there may not be a real answer until after May 17.

Access will stay here next year. The boundary change has not been determined but will not affect next year. If the student to teacher ratio must increase, Tou hopes that it does not negatively impact the students.

SITE COUNCIL

Pamela Kislak reported that the final draft of the School Improvement Plan is being finalized. Writing is a focus. Access kids outperform state benchmarks but are not always "exceeding" for writing. The goal is to increase the percentage of students in the "exceeds" category. The teachers have added the goal of understanding the social and emotional needs of highly gifted kids to their professional development. This was added by the teachers voluntarily and will be in addition to the goal of improving writing skills.

NEW BUSINESS

"Vision For Access" Poll:

Michael Kubler was unable to attend the meeting so David Fikstad reported on the Vision for Access Poll. Michael created the Vision for Access Poll and put it on Big Tent. All Access parents, students, and staff are encouraged to go on-line and complete the poll. The results of the poll will be passed on to Tou. The idea for the poll came up when Sue Ann Higgins, inquired, "what is the vision for Access".

Formation of committee on Access location and strategic goals:

Because Michael Kubler could not attend the meeting, David Fikstad reported. Michael very much wants to work with the district on getting an answer to where Access will be in the future. Michael feels that being controversial has not worked in the past. David is more cynical about the outcome. So far, the meetings have not produced anything concrete. There is no time-line. It appears the time-line keeps getting pushed to the future. PPS has implied that the boundary decision and budget decisions work against a time-line (we don't know the money or the boundaries so can't tell you where you will be moved). The more cynical view, held by the Sabin Neighborhood Community Association, is that the district is waiting to Sabin middle school so it is not compelled to answer the time-line question. David believes that ultimately we will have to exert pressure on the process and demand a time-line for how this decision is going to be made by a set date.

Access Foundation:

Current fundraising at Access: PTA Give Campaign; Run for the Arts (raised approximately \$8,000); Chinook Book (raised approximately \$300), CREATE (raised approximately \$300), Scrip (raised \$500 so far).

Recently, a group of Access parents decided to revive the Access Foundation. Generally, PTA funds are used to support programs, while Foundation funds are used for personnel. Sasha is looking at the logistics of bringing the Access Foundation back. Selvi Williams is looking into grants. Pamela Kislak is going to be the interim treasurer. There will be free and full elections for next year.

In accordance with Portland Public School Board policy one-third of funds raised (after the first \$10,000) through local school foundations are given to the Portland Schools Foundation for the purpose of providing equity in funding for schools in the district that do not have the benefit of a strong foundation.

Access Auction:

Pamela Kislak is a spokesperson for the recently formed Auction Committee. The other committee members are Judy Berck, Becky Tyler, Maxine Dexter (Chair), and Val Atchison. The Committee has been working hard to create an auction. Details firmed so far: Date: May 6; Location: Madeline School Hall [**Editor's Note: the location for the Auction has been moved to the Oaks Park Dance Hall**]; Items: over 30 donations already; Ticket Price \$25 for appetizers, beer, wine. Silent Auction only for this year. The 8th Graders will make a film of all the kids in the school. There will be a special appeal.

There is no specific goal for the funds raised by the Auction. One FTE costs \$80,000.

The CREATE Event will be the Tuesday following the Auction. It was very hard to find a place to book for the Auction at this late date. Gail Jeidy is involved with CREATE and has been contacted about this issue.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Selection of Nominating Committee (2 more members needed). Kim believes that if people are asked to step up to serve in a board position, we may not need a nominating committee if we are finding it difficult to find people willing to serve on this committee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The 4th and 5th Grade Classes are inviting an author to spend half a day at Access. This author will work with the 1st through 5th grade students. This will cost \$750 and a request was made for PTA to fund this event. Run for the Arts funds cannot be used because those funds are restricted. The general consensus at the meeting is that \$750 seems very high for a half day author visit. No motion was made to the PTA to fund the author visit.

Tini, the Librarian, would like \$50 to buy patches for a library incentive program. Motion made, seconded, and passed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35