

ACCESS Academy PTA

Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, April 18, 2018, at 7 p.m. in the Library, Rose City Park School, 2334 NE 57th Avenue, Portland, Oregon

Attendance: 15 people signed the attendance list, 14 of whom 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.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the General Membership Meeting of 21 March 2018 were reviewed and approved without change.

Principal's Announcements and Updates

The Principal had no update to provide on the school's relocation. The District will be providing moving boxes for teachers but won't do so until May. This is because there is a desire to ensure that classrooms retain their integrity as learning spaces for as long as students are coming to school.

The District is in the middle of making staffing assignments for the next school year, so there is no solid information yet. Some ACCESS staff have interviewed for positions elsewhere, but the Principal has no final word on staff that might be leaving. Currently, the only openings at ACCESS are in the Learning Center (Christy LeeWehage is going to work full-time in another building, and Ann Marie Szok will be teaching visual arts at ACCESS — visual arts will replace music at ACCESS); the Principal has conducted some interviews, along with Lauren Page, a Special Education Academic Programs Administrator at PPS.

A parent asked about the grade 1-2 class teaching position. The Principal explained that this position is not yet open and that she is waiting for PPS Human Resources to open it.

Another parent asked what would be done for other teachers who leave ACCESS. The answer was that other ACCESS teachers who are beyond their probationary period (first 2 years of employment) can apply for such positions. The Principal thought that she would hear about moves by existing teachers within 1-2 weeks.

The Principal explained that the decision to shift from music to visual arts was based on feedback from staff, students, and families. There had been a feeling that many students were not able to participate in the music program and that many may welcome the calming, alternative of art class. Jason Fitch, the music teacher is being unassigned from ACCESS. Half of his position had been funded by the arts tax and the other half by the ACCESS Foundation. The goal now is to provide visual arts for elementary and middle school, and begin building up electives for middle school.

A parent asked about the school choir given that JaneAnne Peterson, the parent coordinator, will be stepping down from that role. The Principal said that JaneAnne is trying to identify a replacement.

A parent asked whether, in replacing the Learning Center staff, the school was looking for someone with experience with twice-exceptional students. The Principal explained that they were holding candidates for the Learning Center to very high standards. As a result, the position might not be filled in the first round. Another parent worried about the risk that an inadequate candidate might be assigned to the position. The Principal said that she would work actively to avoid that outcome.

Deirdre Banning-Shaughnessy, one of the secretaries, is resigning at the end of the school year in order to attend graduate school.

Financial Matters

This Year's Budget

Treasurer Sally Maltman reviewed a financial report with updates through 4/15/2018. The following highlights were discussed:

- **Fundraising.** The PTA has raised over \$17,000 compared to the budgeted expectation of \$20,000. Funds are still expected from a few dine-outs, and the yearbook is a fundraiser. Fundraising will likely miss its target, coming in maybe around \$19,000. The PTA had about \$35,000 in its checking as of a few days ago.
- **Expenses (general).** So far, only about \$3,000 of \$12,000 budgeted has been spent here. But there are lots of end-of-year expenses that will be incurred soon.
- **Teacher Classroom Expenses.** Teachers are starting to spend more: expenditures have reached about \$4,000, which is slightly less than half of the amount budgeted. Additional requests for \$500 were made this week, after this report came out.

In response to a question, Sally explained why the PTA has such a large balance in the bank. A surplus had been accumulated over several years of underspending. The PTA is now being more proactive about spending. Last year, there was a decision to set aside about \$10,000 of the existing balance as "seed money" for a new building. (There had been thoughts to hold those funds for a long-term space. The PTA could revisit that decision if it seems that there will be no long-term space for some time.) In addition, the PTA voted to start each year with \$8,000 set aside to cover expenses before fall fundraising can produce revenue. In addition to that \$18,000, the amounts budgeted under earmarks are funds that have been committed but that have not yet been spent.

A parent asked whether the PTA anticipated a surplus this year that would be sufficiently large to allow another "grant" program as was done this year. Sally said that this will depend how things look at the end of the school year.

Next Year's Budget

The Executive Committee is working on a draft budget to present at the next general meeting. Passing a temporary budget at that meeting will enable the PTA to operate over the summer. A final budget for the next school year will be approved in the fall.

Sally has been putting together some ideas for next year's budget and will review two of them here.

The first topic regards grants for community events. These would not necessarily be PTA-organized events but rather the PTA providing financial support for events organized by others to promote community.

An example might be a pool party (e.g., at Wilson Pool). This could cost around \$500. Sally wondered what kind of magnitude the PTA should consider. A parent suggested that past attendance at the summer picnics might provide a reasonable upper limit on the number that might attend such an event. In addition, there could be smaller events (e.g., popsicles in the park).

One parent said \$1,000 sounds might be a good amount to budget. President Jennifer Ellis thought that \$500 might be more realistic; she reflected that it is already difficult to find volunteers for PTA-related events.

Sally reflected that there has been sentiment to organize parties to which anyone can come freely, with no suggested donations. A parent wondered whether it might be easier to get volunteers if asking for money was not part of the job. Jen agreed that the amount to be budgeted may depend more on whether we're talking informal "popsicle parties" as opposed to a big pool party. Another parent thought that having a pot of money from which parents could be reimbursed might encourage a lot of volunteers to host various events. That parent didn't think that having a suggested donation for big events would be hard to implement; one would simply need volunteers to collect the donations.

The general feeling seemed to be to plan for \$500 for smaller quadrant-specific events and not to worry about a big pool party.

Sally's other item regarded the selling of scrip to raise funds. This typically earns about \$2,000 per year. To this point, this has been mainly in the form of physical gift cards for local grocers. The problem has been distributing those cards. They have been sent home with students, but one family this year lost a significant amount of money when gift cards went missing before they could be brought home.

As a result, the PTA is considering alternatives to physical gift cards. There are scrip providers can sell online, but doing so will remove the option to use scrip at our local grocers. If we shift to such a system, PTA income may be reduced as fewer people may participate. The membership was invited to weigh in on whether to continue with the current program.

A parent wondered whether a volunteer could distribute the gift cards at school-bus stops, and asked which local outlets would be lost with a new system. (Sally speculated that perhaps 75% of scrip is currently spent at local grocers.) The answer was Fred Meyer, New Seasons, and Safeway. (Fred Meyer and Safeway are part of national chains, but the online scrip providers do not cover them.)

The general feeling was that there was some openness to moving to a new system, but there was also interest in exploration of a new delivery system for current system of physical gift cards. A parent suggested sending out a survey to those families that currently purchase scrip.

Nominating Committee

This year's Nominating Committee comprised Catherine Beckett (PTA Vice President), Judy Berck, and Jane Chaddick. Catherine delivered the committee's report, which was to nominate the following slate of officer candidates for next school year:

- President: Kurt Kemmerer
- Vice President: Tanya Awabdy and Kinnari Shah
- Secretary: Kathy Martin and Phoebe Shen
- Treasurer: Sally Maltman

Secretary Lisa Karplus agreed to reach out to any candidates who are not yet PTA members to remind them that they must be PTA members to run for office.

Special Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

Committee Chair Lina Reiss said that the committee had hoped to have a draft of guidelines for school trips including 8th-grade trips, but it was not quite ready. The committee gathered lots of feedback and other information. Lina shared major points.

The first big 8th-grade trip was last year. Students had been hoping to go to Washington, DC but went instead to Santa Catalina Island. There were adult chaperones; no school staff participated. The students went to great efforts to involve and support all students. Only one student was unable to go, and that was in part because the family had declined to inform others that they needed financial support.

Lina explained that there are two ways to structure trips like these -- as school-sponsored field trips or as off-campus "travel/study" trips. Travel/study trips are not school-sponsored and cannot be organized during class time. This year's trip falls in the second category.

To give background, a parent of an 8th grader reflected on what seems to have happened this year and the unexpected challenges this year's 8th graders have faced in pulling together a trip. This year's class initially planned to go to Catalina like last year. Voting among themselves, they determined that they wanted their trip to be as inclusive as possible and that they would not be able to accommodate all classmates for such a distant, expensive trip.

One problem they faced was that parents were not involved until late in the planning process: teachers assumed parents were working with the students, while many parents

assumed teachers were doing this and that the school was somehow involved in sponsoring the trip. The students were working independently without information or guidance that they, in retrospect, needed.

The Principal learned about the trip sometime during the fall, after students had been holding discussions about the trip during Leadership Class. She informed the student organizing group that they could use regular teacher/class time or school resources (such as school email lists) to organize the trip only if it were an “official” PPS field trip, run according to PPS administrative rules. At that point, it was too late in the year for the group to re-organize under PPS’s field trip rules. As a result, the group was left with the option of organizing the trip as an independent, “private” travel trip. It recruited some parents to fill crucial roles.

When ACCESS PTA learned from its insurance carrier and the Oregon State PTA that it could not hold funds, or be otherwise involved with the trip, without risking liability, it turned those funds over to a checking account which an 8th grade parent opened on behalf of the class trip.

Little information could be found about how last year’s trip was managed in terms of contracts, liability, or efforts at inclusion. Apparently, last year’s trip “flew under the radar” when it came to standard practices.

The PTA’s DEI committee drafted some equity recommendations for use by future organizers of school field trips or independent trips.

The 8th-grader’s parent emphasized that, “13-year-olds need help even if they are independent. They need school support as well.” She wondered what might be the best way for current 7th graders to learn from this class’ experiences, about working within the rules and ensure inclusivity. She observed that, this year, volunteer parents and students have had to really scramble to try to make sure no one is left out. For example, 3 weeks short of the scheduled departure date of April 27, the group found they still needed to raise \$2800 but were unable to notify all parents through the school; parents had to create their own email lists and students had to work with them outside of school hours to do last-minute fundraising to ensure all could come on the trip.

She emphasized that current 7th graders will want to get an early start planning their trip next year. She asked that the Principal clarify all applicable rules to help ensure equity.

The Principal responded that new District directives for Off-Campus (formerly called Travel/Study) trips are being drafted for next school year, and will run about 2 to 3 pages long. Planners should consult these early on, along with the administrative directives applicable to Field Trips (comprising 12 to 13 pages), when considering what type of trip to plan.

The Principal explained that when this year’s trip came to her attention she wondered who was responsible for it. When she learned that PPS’s risk management policies hadn’t been

followed, and no teachers had volunteered to lead the trip or go along, she realized it wasn't a school-sponsored field trip. Teachers reported to her that they hadn't planned last year's trip either yet some school time had been used. She explained that she had to "back off" any involvement by the school — not permit school class time or school resources to be used to support this non-school (privately-organized) trip. She met with students and shared with them the current administrative directives.

The parent of the 8th grader requested that, next year, the Leadership class be used to plan a trip according to the new rules, and that the school facilitate communication wherever possible to help students reach their goals of equity and inclusivity.

Co-Secretary Lisa Karplus clarified the role of the PTA's DEI committee in this year's 8th-grade trip (the PTA is not otherwise involved). The committee, with Lina Reiss as its chair, exists to recommend what policies and procedures ACCESS PTA should adopt to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. For the 8th-grade trip, the DEI committee, in the role of a consultant to the trip's planners, has been drafting guidelines. Versions of these guidelines have been made available for review at General Membership meetings. The committee does not set "rules," and trip planners have the option of following or disregarding the guidelines.

Building Location Update

President Jennifer Ellis said there were no new changes to announce.

She reported that the ACCESS Advisory Committee (AAC), comprising ACCESS staff, parents and PPS staff, has brought to the District's attention all the issues that have been voiced by the community so far. At the most recent meeting, ACCESS pushed back hard against a number of assumptions the PPS representatives had brought to the table, and otherwise sought to continue to educate key players about the program's needs. It will be at least 2 more weeks before the District makes any location announcement. Stephanie Cameron, PPS Director of Communications (who attended the April Principal's Coffee) was out sick all last week; she plans to release a communication by this Friday.

The District has begun taking steps to "market" ACCESS. It has begun to place new content on the PPS ACCESS website, and on the main (initial) PPS webpage there is now a rotating photo banner up top with a link to apply to ACCESS. PPS announced today that the application window for ACCESS will remain open for at least 2 weeks past the date when ACCESS's new location is announced.

This is today's message from the Campaign: hard as it is, the ACCESS community should continue to be cautious about making statements to those outside the community. The reason is that it is time for PPS to fully own the problems and solutions generated by any ideas (and not leave ACCESS to be blamed for decisions over which the school has never had control). Yvonne Curtis (PPS Deputy Superintendent of Instruction and School Communities) sent out email today stating that she is the "decision owner" for the Superintendent. When PPS makes its decision, that decision will be final.

Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week

Treasurer Sally Maltman and Co-Secretary Lisa Karplus volunteered to help with Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week, being held this year from Monday, May 7 through Friday, May 11. Each day features a special tribute:

- Monday: Notes & Cards Day. At a table set up outside the office all week, families can create thank you notes or cards; or they can bring them from home.
- Tuesday: Potluck lunch. ACCESS's regularly scheduled (and much appreciated) event.
- Wednesday: Special Coffee Day. Special coffee will be brought in for teachers/staff.
- Thursday: Bring-A-Flower to School Day. Flowers will go into vases in classrooms and staff areas.
- Friday: Scrip Gift Card Distribution Day. Families' donations (both pooled and directed to individuals through the Scrip program) will be handed out in the form of gift cards.

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Minutes compiled by Gil Neiger and Lisa Karplus, Secretaries

approved 5/16/18

Handwritten signatures of Gil Neiger and Lisa Karplus. The signature on the left is 'Gil Neiger' and the signature on the right is 'Lisa Karplus'.