

PTA

General Membership Meeting
April 21, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

PTA President David Fikstad called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Jen Holcomb, Secretary, was unable to attend. Kim Grimme, Vice-President, chaired the meeting, and David Fikstad, President, took the minutes.

GUEST SPEAKER Sue Ann Higgins

Sue Ann Higgins is Director of Education Options and oversees 9 sections of programs for the Portland Public Schools comprising about 45 separate programs and including Access Academy. Prior to joining the district administration she was a middle and high school teacher and a small school principal at Roosevelt and Riverdale. She has taught or been an administrator at schools with a wide variety of characteristics, including highly-achieving and struggling populations.

She cautioned that much that much information that would be useful hinges on the budget and staff allocations, which will not be known until next week.

She affirmed that Access has very strong support from the school district and emphasized her personal commitment to the program.

She noted that several useful things emerged out of the recent Boundary Adjustment Committee:

- * It was an opportunity to increase awareness about the Access program.
- * The level of communication from Access parents to the district was encouraging. Although it can be overwhelming, it is much better if parents are strong advocates for their children.
- * Access will remain at the current location in the 2011-2012 school year.
- * ~~The expectation is that Access will be moved after 2011-2012 school year, since the growth expectations for Sabin and the desired size of Access are not mutually compatible.~~
- * It is hard to predict whether Sabin's growth will meet expectations, but preliminary numbers look promising.

Sue Ann also mentioned that she believes a strong case can be made to grow Access beyond its current size, perhaps to around 250 students. It could offer a better program, particularly in the middle years. Access also benefits from the fact that it draws from across the district, so the impact of increasing the size of Access is spread over many schools. (Members of the audience also noted that it draws from home-school, private school, and out-of-district populations.)

She recognizes that Access and the district have a long history of changed minds and unmet expectations. A history that she does not wish to repeat. Therefore, if she promises anything, we can expect that she is willing to stake her house and family on it. Some things we know with a fair degree of certainty include:

- * That Access will be at Sabin for the 2011-2012 school year, regardless of the bond and levy election outcome.
- * The school district has made fairly public statements that Sabin will grow and Access will have a new location.
- * By this time next year, we should have clarity regarding Access location for future years, including an answer to the question of "if" Access will be relocated in the following year.

Sue Ann recognizes that the decision to relocate will be a difficult one. People have grown their lives around this location. Any change may benefit some families and adversely impact others and decisions need to be made equitably.

She addressed the issue of locus of control for decisions regarding Access:

- * The PPS district will decide most things.

* For a facility change or program move, the district executive committee (superintendent, deputy superintendents, and heads of major divisions) make recommendations to the superintendent. The superintendent then needs approval from the school board.

o Note that virtually any use of a dormant property would require significant renovation.

* Questions of grade configuration will be decided by the program administrator in consultation with Sue Ann. Parental input is very important to this decision. The community has communicated very effectively regarding the reasons to have a first grade. The message is heard and understood. They must also take into account what other aspects of the program will be impacted by this decision.

* Parental input is important for any decisions. Members of the audience suggested that the model used by the BAC might be a useful one for organizing parental input. This includes both the small discussion group aspect and the structure, which required participants to list both the positive and negative attributes of any recommendation. It was suggested that this was handled in a reasonably respectful manner.

Sue Ann noted that after the bond election, we will know more about the facilities availability. She noted that either outcome for the election could be positive for an Access move. If passed, there will be additional resources, if it fails, there will be less competition for space from schools displaced by construction activities.

She is pushing for the district to commit to concrete timelines. She is sharing application data to emphasize the healthy demand for the program.

The question was raised regarding whether Access could grow much larger than 250, noting that Beaverton's SUMA school is ~500 students in middle school only.

Sue Ann does not believe our current application data support that level of demand.

The comment was made from the audience that the current application data are based on what many parents feel is inadequate communication/promotion of Access and a lack of stability in the program due to past PPS decisions. Sue Ann does not feel that pushing for an expansion much beyond 250 is the best approach at this time.

(A point was later made, lauding the transparency with which Sue Ann has operated so far, and requesting that data on demand for the program be shared with the community as well.)

The conversation was cut off due to time constraints, and Sue Ann said that she welcomes further communications with her directly (shiggens@pps.k12.or.us). She will be back to meet with the Access PTA in the fall with more information.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Amaya handed out the Treasurer's Report. The PTA currently has \$7,364 in promised expenses and \$13,174 in the bank. Amaya suggested that about \$2,000 be maintained as a reserve and \$3,500 be used to fund Science Laboratory supplies for Mr. Garcia's class. The list of science supplies he seeks is available in []. The total cost of the supplies is about \$7,000 so the remainder will need to be funded through other sources, such as the auction appeal.

Motion to create a new line-item in the 2010-2011 budget to fund \$3,500 for a science lab; seconded; passed with 1 abstention.

Judy Berck announced that Tektronix is also donating an oscilloscope to Mr. Garcia's classroom (\$4000 including educational materials). This is the first time Tektronix has donated to a classroom younger than college-age.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Tou Meksavanh reported on current activities at the school:

- Spirit week
- Oaks testing is ongoing, math completed for 2nd-5th Grade
Tou would like to commend and thank Mr. Dauch, Principal of Sabin, for allowing Access students to use the Sabin computer lab for Oaks testing.

- Tou, Mr. Garcia, and Ms. Johnson are participating in district-wide equity training.
- Training for staff during May's late-opening will be children with ABERGER'S syndrome and autism-spectrum disorders.
- A question has been raised on continuity of training support under changing administrations. Tou believes that there will be good continuity because the selection of training programs has been based on objective data, and also because Jerre [need full title] will continue to be Training Coordinator, even when the program administrator changes.
- Decisions on enrollment will not be made until after funding information is received on April 26th.

REPORTS

Site Council: No update as they have not yet met for this month.

Run for the Arts: Pledges are due April 25th.

Auction: Procurement far surpassed expectations. We need to be sure there are enough people attending to buy the items. The physical catalog of auction items will be printed by PPS for very minimal cost. We have been very successful with food and drink donations, though we will need people to bring appetizers.

Briefly went into the history of how the auction has evolved. Originally it was intended just to raise money for the Foundation in order to try to help offset some of the expected budget cuts this year. Based on talking with the teachers, it has been expanded to include a direct appeal to raise funds for something that was identified as critical need--additional computers for the laptop cart. The Create! art event has also been absorbed in the Auction, with part of the proceeds from art sales also supporting the Foundation.

It would be very helpful in planning if people buy tickets now.

?: What fraction of the ticket cost is deductible? That is not yet known, but the receipts will clearly indicate this once the answer is known.

Social Activity: David would also like to recognize and commend the way the Create! artists, the 6th Grade class, and the Auction organizers have worked together and been flexible to get all three events in a short time. Adult artists (or adults selling children's work) will be at the Auction on May 6th. Child artists will be selling art (and food) during the performances of Greek plays on May 10th. The Access choir will open the performance at 6:00.

Grant-cluster PTA Meeting: Most discussion revolved around bond and operating levy campaign. We also discussed Jefferson enrollment, which is promising. Everyone is excited that many people are willing to enroll in the new College Prep program as it is getting off the ground.

In order to prevent conflicts between major events, it has been suggested that the PTA's set next week's calendar at the next meeting. David will notify them regarding our usual Tuesday-night before the late-opening schedule, but if other events like the Auction or Create are to be on different days, please notify David before May 2nd, and we will try to block out those dates.

Review of the Minutes

The minutes for February 17, 2011 and March 17, 2011 were reviewed and approved for inclusion in the record.

NEW BUSINESS

New Community Service Co-Chairs: After many years of hard work and remarkable successes in creating the Community Service program from scratch, Judy Berck will be stepping down from her position as head of the program. The new co-chairs will be Gigi Cooper and Cameron Thomas, who have volunteer experience with the Oregon Food Bank and the Children's Book Bank. Many thanks to Judy and to Gigi and Cameron for taking this on.

Library Request: Delayed until next meeting, when cost is known.

Back-Field Rehabilitation: Jonathan Dubay is interested in seeing what can be done about the mud in the back field. Please contact him if you would like to help or if you have any information or suggestions.

Bond/Levy Campaign Activities: David plans to sign Access up for a night to do phone-banking. David Wynde, when he visited, suggested that this was the most critical campaign activity. The passage of these requires only that a majority of votes be in favor, so increasing turn-out by supporters in this special election is very important.

Science-Supply Library: This year for Science Night, we borrowed equipment and ideas from Alameda Elementary School. Inspired by this collaboration, Access, Sabin and Alameda are interested in starting a Science Supply Library for the Northeast. Please contact David if you would like to help, or if you are aware of grants that would be available to help fund such an endeavor. Katherine Schneider will check into Grants.

?: Is there a grant committee for Access. Katherine Schneider, Selvi Williams, and Pamela Kusak might be described as a de facto grant group.

?: Michael Kubler has volunteered to create a Greek ship for the 6th Grade plays. Is there an existing method to contract other schools to find out if anyone has props available or relevant experience?

Tou: There is a listserv that might help. Michael will provide the relevant details to Tou.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

NOMINATIONS: Nominating committee still only has one member, so we critically need people to volunteer either for this committee, or, probably preferable, to volunteer for the positions that will be vacated.

David announced that Michael Kubler is willing to be nominated for President.

We still desperately need a Treasurer and a Vice-President. Amaya will train and support the new Treasurer next year.

Calligraphy Supplies: Tou indicated that the school has purchased the calligraphy pens that Inga Dubay had requested in the February meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- Next "Tea for Tou" will be on Wednesday April 27th, after we receive information on staff funding levels.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30