

PTA Council Meeting Minutes
November 18th, 2014 7 p.m.

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Literary and Fine Arts School
2424 Lake Street
Evanston, IL 60201

Attending:

Kristin James (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Steve Jones (Lincoln), Jenny Blickenstaff (Washington/Nichols), Jodie Ford (King Arts/ETHS), Miriam Barnett (King Arts), Rebecca Langan (King Arts), Natasha Dennison (King Arts), Candance Chow (D65 Board/Kingsley/Haven), Meagan Novara (Washington), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Thawivann Spalding (Orrington/Haven/ETHS), Molly Pope (Lincolnwood), Akari Yamada (Lincolnwood), Jennifer Moran (Leadership Evanston/ECF), Decresha Williams (Chute), Stephanie Clemson (Dewey/Nichols), Patrice Quehl (Evanston Police Department).

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Kristin welcomed everyone to the meeting, and all attendees introduced themselves.

2. Approval of Minutes from October Meeting

- Elliot Frolichstein-Appel took minutes at the October meeting in Jenny Blickenstaff's absence. Thanks to Elliot for filling in. Miriam Barnett made a motion to approve the October meeting minutes as presented by Secretary Jenny Blickenstaff, Steve Jones seconded. The October minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Treasurer's Report

- Treasurer Steve Jones presented the November budget report. The current bank balance is \$1,011.12. Thanks to all schools for paying their annual PTA Council dues.
- Currently, 3 schools (Bessie Rhodes, Lincolnwood and Lincoln) have contributed to help defray the cost of the Navigating Diversity series. For schools that haven't contributed, please consider asking your PTA executive board if they would be willing to help support this important series.
- Miriam Barnett moved to approve the November budget report as presented by Treasurer Steve Jones, Molly Pope seconded. The November budget report was unanimously approved.

4. **ESL Outreach – Thawivann Spalding**

- Thawivann is a D65 parent who is currently acting as a liaison between the district and the ESL community. Many of the ESL families (other than the bilingual families, who work with Manual Aleman), are Northwestern graduate students/faculty, who are from a variety of countries around the world.
- She is working to (1) have an ESL representative in each school (currently, only Orrington has a representative) and (2) get a list of ESL families in each school, and is asking PTAs to help in this effort.
- She hosts gatherings for the ESL families 3 times each year. This year, there was a gathering in October, and events are planned for January (Ecology Center – sharing holiday traditions) and May (Noah’s Playground).
- Her main role is to answer questions from the ESL families about practical matters, the school, the Evanston community and the US. She helps them learn how to navigate basic everyday activities in this country.
- The last 2 years she has done weekly reading clubs for interested family members.
- If you know of ESL families in your school, you can forward their names/contact information to Thawivann. She can be reached at (312) 636-4980 or tlsada@sbcglobal.net. If you are a PTA President and can help her get a list of ESL families from your school, she would appreciate it.
- Candance Chow mentioned that the District has a “Newcomers’ Program,” which might be a way to connect with some additional ESL families.

5. **D65 School Board Announcements and Strategic Planning Update – Candance Chow**

- Candance is serving on the school board as liaison to the strategic planning process. They are engaged in a very robust and intentional process to bring us together as a community. Stay informed about the status of the process at <http://strategicplanningd65.weebly.com>.
- They are developing a 3-year plan (as opposed to 5 years, as they’ve done in the past), so there can be concrete, actionable priorities.
- The goal of the planning process is that it is inclusive, transparent and engaging, and uses informed decision-making that is data-driven and research-based. They are focused on making the plan succinct, easily understood and action-oriented.
- Dr. Goren’s First 100 Days report can be found on the District website at <http://strategicplanningd65.weebly.com/background.html>. Candance encouraged everyone to check it out.
- Strategic planning committees are organized around 5 general areas: (1) High Quality Teaching and Learning, (2) Thriving Workforce, (3) Safe and Supportive School Climate, (4) Family and Community Engagement and (5) Financial Sustainability.
- Right now, these working groups are meeting, and are about to finish their 2nd of 4 meetings. A total of 65 people are on the working committees, with an additional 50 on the external advisory committee.
- Timeline: Goals and strategies are being developed now through the end of December. Action steps/metrics will be developed in January/February, and will go out for public comment. The plan is to have the D65 Board vote on the final plan on March 23, 2015.
- Kristin and Candance have talked with Dr. Goren about having a PTA “leadership”

specific focus group. December 2 has been proposed. Please let Kristin know if you have leaders in your school community that would be interested in attending a forum like this. It is unclear how much overlap there would be with previous forums, but there was discussion about having something slightly more focused on parent/community-engagement issues.

- Candance mentioned that anyone with feedback on this process can send it to input@district65.net.

6. **Public Service Challenge – Jennifer Moran, Leadership Evanston/Evanston Community Foundation**

- The Public Service Challenge is a non-partisan one-day workshop for people interested in campaigning and running for office in Evanston.
- The workshop will be held on December 6 from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the JEH Teachers Center. Workshop cost is \$30.
- The workshop brings together a variety of experts to share their knowledge on the local election process and topics including nominating petitions, organizing campaign committees, legal requirements for public office, fundraising, election laws, city and school district budgets.
- If you know of anyone interested in running, please make sure they know about this valuable training session. Filing deadline for the spring school board election is December 22.
- Please help to get the word out in your school communities.

7. **Upcoming FAN (Family Action Network) Programming**

12/8/14	“Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do” with Claude Steele	7 p.m.	ETHS
12/10/14	Follow-up Workshops: “Identity as a Bridge Between Us” (registration required)	9:30-11:30 a.m. and 7-8:30 p.m.	Evanston Public Library

- Dr. Steele’s book *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*, has also been chosen as the most recent “One Book One Northwestern” selection. Come and hear Dr. Steele talk about his groundbreaking findings on stereotypes and identity.

8. **D65/D202 Calendar Committee**

- The parent representatives to the Calendar Committee are Miriam Barnett, Patricia Stankovic and Rhonda Present. Their first meeting is Thursday, November 20, with a joint meeting with D202 in December. If you are aware of any calendar issues, please forward them to Miriam Barnett at miriam.barnett@yahoo.com.

9. Sharing Circles/Restorative Justice Project – Patrice Quehl, Evanston Police Department (counselor with youth services), Susan Kolian (D65)

- Restorative Justice is a philosophy that an offense is not considered a crime against the state, but rather an injury against a person/community. So offenses are looked at as injuries, and restorative justice is very relationship-based, with a focus on restoring relationships. There is heavy emphasis on community involvement, so anyone affected by the injury is involved. Not all restorative justice programs involve circles.
- The restorative justice philosophy has now spread to many schools throughout the country and internationally, which incorporate concepts like peer juries, peace rooms, sharing circles, etc.
- At the police department, they have trained community volunteers who participate in the reparations process. They meet with the offender and the injured to decide what must be done to repair the injury.
- Goals of restorative justice: building community and safety through developing relationships, building competency by improving pro-social skills and looking at root causes, and accountability for oneself and to others. In schools, they are focused on building community, encouraging safety, and developing pro-social skills.
- The Sharing Circles program began at Washington – over 20 classrooms now do weekly circles. Dewey and Lincoln also have weekly circles. Next semester, Oakton and Orrington plan to begin.
- Teachers are receiving this program very well. The first 10-week cycle is ending soon, and they are looking forward to additional feedback.
- In addition to Sharing Circles, Special Topic Circles are another type of circle they have been experimenting with. These may be focused around specific topics at issue in a particular classroom. Peace Circles address interpersonal conflict between 2 students or student/teacher. These are facilitated by trained staff, and are being done at Dewey right now.
- Dewey teacher Pat Cleveland has been using circles in her classes for 17 years.
- There is a protocol established early on that the circle is a protected, safe place for students to share. Children get comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with one another in a safe place. “The circle is a place where students can slow down and be who they are.”
- The group then conducted a Sharing Circle – the “talking stick” was passed around the circle and all shared their thoughts about the program.
- If you have a parent who is interested in volunteering, please contact Patrice Quehl at pquehl@cityofevanston.org. If you know that you have a teacher(s) interested in your school, they can contact Susan Kolian at kolians@district65.net.
- Next training is in January – next 10-week circle cycle starts at the end of January.
- Patrice is also willing to do a presentation about Sharing Circles in your school to help educate parents about the circles and to recruit additional volunteers. The program is limited by the number of volunteers they have, so the more, the better!

9. Navigating Real Life Diversity with our Kids – Heather Sweeney

- First series of sessions facilitated by Biz Lindsay-Ryan wrapped up on November 11. The next two sessions will be facilitated by Dr. Gilo Kwesi Logan, and will take place

on February 18 and March 18. If you have any feedback from the first sessions or ideas for areas to address in future sessions, please send them to Heather Sweeney at hsweeney1107@sbcglobal.net.

Upcoming Events:

12/6/14	Public Service Challenge Workshop	8 a.m. – 2 p.m.	JEH
12/10/14	ETHS: Course Selection & Planning	7 p.m.	ETHS
1/30/15	Foundation 65 Fundraiser	7 p.m.	Smiley Brothers

Next PTA Council Meetings:

- January 20, 2015
- February 17, 2015
- March 17, 2015
- April 21, 2015
- May 19, 2015

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.