

PTA Council Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2014, 7 p.m.

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21
Chute Middle School
1400 Oakton Street
Evanston, IL 60202

Attending:

Kristin James (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Karen Danzak-Lyons (EPL), Jill Schacter (EPL/ETHS), Michele Hayes (Chute), Elliot Frolichstein-Appel (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Rebecca Langan (FAN/King Arts), Steve Jones (Lincoln), Loretta Hamilton (Lincolnwood), Ami DiMarco (Rhodes), Mark Severin (Nichols), Liz Webster (?), Suzanne Daley (Washington/Chute), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Anne Hutchinson (Willard), Miriam Barnett (King Arts), Diane Lequar (Foundation 65), Christyne Dzwierzynski (Foundation 65), Claire Caragher (Ted Fund), Melissa Messinger (D65 Communications Coordinator), Richard Rykhus (D65 School Board),

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

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Kristin James welcomed everyone to the meeting, and all attendees introduced themselves. Members of the Chute PTA welcomed the group to Chute, noted that the library renovations over the summer were funded by PTA, while the new entrance and replacement of the bars were capital improvements funded by D65. Chute is 72% low income, and with King Arts is one of eight schools getting ipads for all students as part of the Digital Promise pilot. Chute is also a pilot Community School staffed by YOU.

2. Approval of Minutes from September Meeting

- Elliot Frolichstein-Appel made a motion to approve the September meeting minutes as presented by Secretary Jenny Blickenstaff, Miriam Barnett seconded. The September minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Treasurer's Report/Budget Approval

- Treasurer Steve Jones reported little activity in the last month, but noted that in what activity there was, he had spent half of the council's annual budget, largely on expenses for the Navigating Real Life Diversity program. It was noted that due to overwhelming demand for the first session Oct 7, the second session will be offered twice, once on the originally scheduled date of Nov 4 and again on Nov 11. Some of these expenses will be recouped by directed donations for the program from schools and other

organizations. In addition, several schools have yet to pay their annual council dues, and they are reminded to please do so as soon as possible.

4. D65 School Board – Richard Rykhus

- D65 board vice president Richard Rykhus joined the meeting and offered an update on three areas on which the board is focusing.
- The D65 strategic planning process announced last month started today (Oct 21) and will continue through March. 300 people were nominated (or volunteered) for 65 positions in five working committees: high quality teaching and learning, thriving workforce, safe and supportive school climate, family and community engagement, and financial stability. Each committee includes a parent, a principal, a teacher, an administrator, a board member, a community member and a subject matter expert. At least five focus groups will be offered for parents and the community, with others for other stakeholder groups. Dr. Goren is supportive of a focus group for PTA leaders. Focus groups will be limited to 40 participants to ensure they are functional. The overall strategic plan is intended to cover a three year period rather than the more typical five.
- The board adopted a change in the district's suspension policy at last night's meeting. The change is intended to limit lost instructional time by ensuring that families of all students facing suspensions are offered Alternative to Suspension. The intent is to formalize these offers, to limit principal discretion in making the offers, and to track reasons why the ATS may be declined by families to understand why and how different groups face out of school suspensions at different rates. This policy has been the practice since the spring and in the time before it was formalized, the district has seen an 80% decrease in lost instructional time. Before it was implemented in practice, every subgroup in D65 had suspension rates lower than state averages except for students with IEPs.
- The board and administration have considered referenda for both operating and capital costs, but decided to wait until the strategic plan was in place. In addition, uncertainty relating to SB16 and pension reform, the annual uncertainty of the consumer price index increasing tax caps, and the need to have a capital plan aligned with overall strategy all mean a referendum in the April 2015 election is very unlikely.

5. Transportation Forum – Oct 15

- The forum on bus transportation issues held October 15 drew a different crowd than the usual PTA suspects and was very well attended. Bus vendor Positive Connections will be publishing a formal apology for its many recent missteps. It will be hiring a number of additional drivers, installing GPS systems so parents and D65 staff can track bus location, and reviewing route design to increase efficiency. They will be adding a system whereby D65 can designate "hot" days (like testing dates, or field trips), when even less slack will be permitted, and standby drivers will be brought in proactively. Next summer D65 and the vendor will try to engage parents earlier in August, bus signage will be clarified, and new parents will be informed that there are no buses for middle schools other than the Walker-Chute route. CFO Mary Brown is preparing a

FAQ document on bus transportation.

6. Evanston Public Library – Karan Danczak-Lyons and Jill Schacter

- EPL has a goal that every child should start school ready to learn. It has 20 hr/wk in the current budget earmarked to interface with D65. Looking to collaborate on programs and curriculum, with school staff, parents, PTAs. Please share ideas, complaints, and suggestions to keep kids ready at grade level, and to keep EPL as a safe space to discuss differences and issues. Librarians know a lot about kids' literacy, offers The Loft for teens, has a regular newsletter reaching 22,000 people. EPL collaborating with PTA Council on the Navigating Real Life Diversity series.

7. Ted Fund – Claire Caragher

- Claire Caragher is the sister of the late D65 teacher Ted Muller, after which the Ted Fund was named, and president of the fund's board. Founded in 1997, the fund now supports 100 kids per year with a three year commitment to camp scholarships starting in third grade, with proven results in stemming summer learning loss. The Ted Fund encourages everyone to attend its upcoming benefit on October 25 at 27 Live.

8. Foundation 65 – Diane Lequar and Christyne Dzwierzynski

- Diane and Christyne described the mission and program interests of Foundation 65 and invited everyone to the upcoming Trick or Treat Trot on October 26. Most recently had author Jean Neri working with kids on graphic novels, was at Chute today. Its Summer Reading Program targets all D65 rising second graders who had reading support at school, some 153 kids, to stem summer reading loss. New Arts Integration in Math and Science program piloted at King Arts. Foundation 65 offers 5-7 responsive grants of \$3,000 each year, applications are due February 2. They awarded a total of \$245,000 for programs last year. Diane and Christyne can present at PTA meetings. Looking for support of January 30 benefit at Smiley Brothers.

9. FAN Programming – Rebecca Langan

- Rebecca updated the group on upcoming FAN programming. Following Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot's Sept 30 presentation, ETHS superintendent Eric Witherspoon and principal Marcus Campbell were hosted by FAN at the Erickson Institute where Dr. Lawrence-Lightfoot was keynote speaker. FAN wants to partner with schools and is seeking more parent education liasons in Evanston.

10. Navigating Real Life Diversity

- Kristin James noted that the Oct 7 program was extremely well attended. Due to heavy demand, the second program on real life scenarios planned for Nov 4 will be repeated Nov 11. PTA Council is seeking additional financial support to ensure child care and other costs can be fully covered.

11. Evanston In School Music Association

- EISMA has published its concert schedule for each participating school on eismaconcerts.org for Maxwell Street Klezmer Band. Everyone is invited to its annual benefit at Prairie Moon on Nov 16.

12. Public Service Challenge

- Evanston Community Foundation is once again hosting the Public Service Challenge on December 6, from 8:00-2:00 at JEH. This workshop is for prospective school board candidates for D65 or D202 boards and their prospective key campaign volunteers. It is co-sponsored by ECF, PTA Council, ETHS Parents Engaged, League of Women Voters Evanston, Latino Resources, and the Evanston Chamber of Commerce. More info at evanstonforever.org.

13. D65 – Communications – New website roll-out

- Melissa Messinger described the new website platform being adopted by D65. The vendor is schoolwires.com, and the site is still in development. Existing Weebly sites will remain intact, and much of the existing information will be ported to the new platform.
- Principals are designating webmasters in each school and working to identify the top eight links to use as “quick links.” The calendar has an iCal feed, will have a Google calendar feed, will allow event registration. Webmaster training will be held in November.
- Launch date is targeted as Dec 20, limited to interested people for beta testing before full launch in January. PTAs are expected to have access to a section of each school site. D65 is looking for consistency across schools as to how PTAs are involved.

Upcoming Events:

10/29/14	Conversations on Curriculum with D65 Leadership	7 p.m.	JEH
11/4/14 & 11/11/14	Navigating Real Life Diversity With Our Kids – Biz Lindsay-Ryan and Gilo Logan	6:30-8:30 p.m.	Evanston Public Library
10/29/14	Conversations on Curriculum with D65 Leadership	7 p.m.	JEH

Next PTA Council Meetings:

11/18/14	King Arts	Sharing Circles/Restorative Justice Project	Patrice Quehl, Evanston Police Department
1/20/15	TBA		
2/17/15	TBA		
3/17/15	TBA		
4/21/15	TBA		
5/19/15	TBA		

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.