

PTA Council Meeting Minutes
September 16th, 2014, 7 p.m.

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21
Nichols Middle School
800 Greenleaf Street
Evanston, IL 60201

Attending:

Kristin James (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Elliot Frolichstein-Appel (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Jenny Blickenstaff (Washington/Nichols), Cicely Fleming (Chute), Andrea Kuebbeler (Chute/ETHS), John Curnyn (Dawes), Lara Trubowitz (Dewey), Beth Goldberg (King Arts), Rebecca Langan (King Arts), Yancey Hughes (Lincoln/Nichols), Steve Jones (Lincoln), Tamar Selch (Lincoln/Nichols), Loretta Hamilton (Lincolnwood), Molly Pope (Lincolnwood), Amy Moses (Nichols), Mark Severin (Nichols), Hillary Coustan (Rhodes), Vicky Vye (Rhodes), Suzanne Daley (Washington/Chute), Katie Smith (Washington), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Anne Hutchinson (Willard), Pam Tingley (Family Action Network), Melissa Messinger (D65 Communications Coordinator), Omar Brown (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 Nichols executive board welcomed the group to Nichols and highlighted some of the recent improvements to the Nichols library.

2. Approval of Minutes from May Meeting

- Wendy Woodward King made a motion to approve the May meeting minutes as presented by Secretary Jenny Blickenstaff, Elliot Frolichstein-Appel seconded. The May minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Treasurer's Report/Budget Approval

- Treasurer Wendy Woodward King distributed the proposed budget for FY 2014-2015. The draft budget was distributed via the listserv earlier in the summer. Budget shows budgeted income of \$3,109.08 (dues plus existing balance). Budgeted expenses are shown as \$3,105.00. Wendy made a motion to approve the proposed budget, Mark Severin seconded. The budget for FY 2014-2015 was unanimously approved.
- Wendy was happy to report that we have our tax exempt status reinstated as of today. She also reported that the PTA Council books were audited in July, and the audit report was circulated via the PTA Council listserv at that time.

- Wendy will not be continuing as PTA Council treasurer. Kristin thanked Wendy for her service to the PTA Council and presented her with a small token of the Council's appreciation.

4. PTA Council Leadership Election 2014-2015

- A Nominating Committee consisting of Elliot Frolichstein-Appel, Miriam Barnett and Karen Larkin Young was appointed at the May meeting. Elliot presented the proposed slate of officers for the current fiscal year on behalf of the Nominating Committee. The list was also circulated to the listserv over the summer. The officer nominees are:
 - Kristin James – President
 - Jenny Blickenstaff - Secretary
 - Steve Jones - Treasurer
- Elliot moved to elect the aforementioned slate of officers. Officers were unanimously elected by those present at the meeting.

5. D65 School Board – Omar Brown

- Omar Brown joined the meeting. He is the newly appointed member to the D65 Board. He introduced himself, gave a brief bio, and said he is looking forward to working with the Board and the D65 administration over the coming months. He then left the meeting to attend the Senate Bill 16 discussion with Dr. Goren and Sen. Biss at JEH.

6. D65 Strategic Planning Update – Melissa Messinger

- D65 is entering into a new strategic planning process, and Ms. Messinger joined the meeting to encourage district families and community members to get involved. She outlined 2 ways to be involved:
 - **Working Committees.** The District is looking for people to serve on 1 of 5 working committees: (1) high quality teaching and learning, (2) family and community engagement, (3) financial sustainability, (4) safe and supportive school climate and (5) thriving workforce. Each committee will have 10-12 members to be selected through an open nomination process. Applications are available at www.district65.net, and may be submitted to any District school office or sent via e-mail to input@district65.net *no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, September 26*. Each committee will meet 4 times over the next 2 months. Each meeting will be scheduled for 2 hours, and will take place in the late afternoon/early evening.
 - **Mission Statement.** Alternatively, the District is looking for input/feedback on the draft mission statement: *“Through the collective efforts of students, educators, family, and community, we will inspire and prepare each student to achieve academically, grow personally, and contribute positively to our global society by providing an engaging and enriching educational experience in a creative and*

collaborative environment.” Feedback can be submitted to input@district65.net, and there are feedback cards @ D65 schools. ***All feedback should be submitted by Friday, September 26 at 5 p.m.***

- In case your school communities are interested, the Senate Bill 16 forum that was taking place at JEH during this meeting was being filmed, and Melissa will share a link to the video when it is available.

7. Upcoming FAN (Family Action Network) Programming

9/19/14	“The Paradox of Modern Parenthood” with Jennifer Solar	7 p.m.	New Trier
9/30/14	“The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn From Each Other” with Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot	7 p.m.	ETHS
10/14/14	“Harnessing the Power of Parents through Community Schools”: A Case Study from Chicago’s North Suburbs	7 p.m.	JEH

- Last year, D65 and D202 officially partnered w/FAN to bring some programming to Evanston. Pam Tingley highlighted some of the upcoming programming (above).
- Please help get the word out about these programs in your respective school communities. All programming is free.

8. Parent-Teacher Conference Workshop – Judith Treadway

- Ms. Treadway (D65 Special Services/Family Liaison) has offered to come to individual schools and facilitate a workshop for parents about preparing for the upcoming parent-teacher conferences. She would like PTA representatives to work with principals to schedule these workshops in the individual schools. It was Kristin’s impression that Ms. Treadway would like to try to meet with all willing schools before fall parent-teacher conferences.

9. Student Directory Information

- Each year, the District provides each interested school with an electronic file containing all of the student directory information for that school. Sharon Mitzen from the District (information management) has offered to host a meeting about how best to use the student information directory information provided by the District. There was discussion of inviting her to a future meeting to address this issue for next year’s student information. Kristin will also check in with Melissa Messinger about how to share and distribute this information most efficiently.

10. D65 Transportation Forum Update

- Roger Allen (D65 Transportation Manager) and Dr. Mary Brown (D65 Assistant Superintendent for Business Services) attended the May PTA Council meeting to discuss issues parents are having with D65 transportation. They have offered to hold a forum to talk about what the District is doing to improve the transportation situation and get parent feedback. Kristin proposed holding 2 forums to give parents the best opportunity to attend. She will communicate with Dr. Brown about scheduling these forums. There was discussion of choosing a location that might be most convenient for a majority of the students who use District transportation, and having day/evening/weekend sessions to maximize attendance. There was discussion of having each of the forums at a different location.

11. Science Fair Survey – Hillary Coustan

- A group of parents is working to collect data across the district about how various schools run their science fairs. There is a great amount of variability across schools. In order to try to organize the information, a survey has been prepared which will be distributed to school science fair coordinators. The survey is in a Google Doc and will be forwarded via the PTA Council listserv. The more data collected, the better the resource this will be, so please encourage your Science Fair coordinator(s) to submit the data for your school.
- Information from this survey will also be provided to the District's new STEM coordinator, with the goal of achieving some meaningful coordination between schools and the District. The hope is that the District will provide a little more guidance and consistency across schools with respect to science fairs.

12. Navigating Real Life Diversity with our Kids – Biz Lindsay-Ryan and Gilo Logan

- This is the title of an exciting Parent Education series coming up this year. It is a 4-part series on diversity and inclusion – October 7, November 4, February 18 and March 18, each from 6:30-8:30 at the Evanston Public Library. Biz Lindsay-Ryan will be facilitating the first 2 sessions, and Gilo Logan will facilitate the second 2. Each session will be designed to stand on its own, so people should feel free to come to any of the subsequent sessions, regardless of whether they have attended a previous one.
- Heather Sweeney described the origins of this series. A group of representatives from most D65 schools was formed to investigate Parent Education opportunities. The group started meeting over the summer, and quickly decided that diversity and inclusion would be great topics for Parent Ed sessions this year. Some schools have already had conversations on these topics (Washington, Kingsley) and others are thinking about it (Dewey). This group wanted to offer this at the District level to try to reach as many parents as possible, and to then potentially bring these conversations back to the individual schools.

- PTA Council is partnering with the Evanston Public Library, D65 (they've met with Dr. Goren and Joyce Bartz) and Y.O.U. to sponsor this Parent Ed series.
- Biz Ryan addressed the group. She is a professor at DePaul's School for New Learning and also does diversity/inclusion consulting. She attended the meeting to give a brief overview of what she hopes to cover in the first 2 sessions. Some thoughts/impressions gleaned from her comments are as follows:
 - Most Evanstonians know that diversity is important, but that doesn't mean that we're that good at it. We may be trying to navigate these difficult discussions with our kids, when we've never done it ourselves. We have good intentions, but don't feel comfortable navigating these things.
 - Her work is about balancing safety and risk. It is important to set up a space that is safe for open conversation, knowing there will be missteps, and use those as learning experiences as well.
 - It's not enough just to be in a diverse environment – if we don't talk about it, our kids will provide their own context (different is bad, etc.). We need to be talking to our kids about this, and it's not a one-time conversation. There are age-appropriate ways to continue this conversation with your kids throughout childhood, and her sessions will discuss these various ways.
- The first session (October 7) will focus on the individual experience, and how it impacts how we can navigate these issues with our kids. Intervention is not in noticing difference, but ascribing meaning to difference. How do we encourage this reflective thought with our kids?
- Second session will focus on skill development. There will be opportunities to work through some scenarios about how various issues might be dealt with.
- Gilo Logan's sessions will focus on more collaboration and community building. How do we take these concepts outside our own families and into our wider community?
- This is the start of an ongoing conversation, so please help spread the word in your school community and beyond.
- PTAs may be solicited for additional funding for this program – in the \$50-\$250 range. Kristin has asked for individual PTAs to look at their budget to see if they can help underwrite this program.

Upcoming Events:

9/17/14	Navigating ETHS: Resources for Parents (panel discussion)	7 p.m.	ETHS
9/18/14	'Kits, 'Cats and Kids Block Party	5-7:45 p.m.	Downtown Evanston
10/7/14	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:

10/21/14	Chute	Communications	Melissa Messinger, D65 Communications Coordinator
11/18/14	King Arts	Sharing Circles/Restorative Justice Project	Patrice Quehl, Evanston Police Department
1/20/15	TBA		

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.