

**PTA Council Meeting Minutes**  
**April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 7 p.m.**

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21  
Lincoln Elementary School  
910 Forest Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60202

**Attending:**

Kristin James (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Steve Jones (Lincoln), Jenny Blickenstaff (Washington/Nichols), Hillary Coustan (Bessie Rhodes), Vicky Vye (Bessie Rhodes), Elliot Frolichstein-Appel (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Saul Lieberman (Dawes/FAN), Rebecca Langan (King Arts), Sarah Laing (Lincoln), Karen Larkin Young (Lincolnwood/ETHS), Ellen Durston (Oakton), Danida Nelke (Oakton), Carolyn McNulty (Orrington), Margaret Storey (Park School), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Katie Smith (Washington/D65 Special Ed Parent Advisory), Rhonda Present (ETHS/ParentsWork), Kenzi Huelskotter (YMCA), Jeannette Mihalek (YMCA), Paul Rosencrans (Appons), Tracy Quattrocki (D65 School Board), Juliet Bond (COPE), Kevin Bond (COPE), Rebecca Parmet (COPE)

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

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

**2. Approval of Minutes from January Meeting**

- Elliot made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes as presented by Secretary Jenny Blickenstaff, Steve Jones seconded. The January minutes were unanimously approved.

**3. Treasurer's Report**

- The current bank balance is \$1,501.99. Steve acknowledged Heather Sweeney, who did a great job of raising additional funds for the Navigating Diversity Series. Copies of the most recent budget report were available at the meeting.

#### 4. **Illinois PTA Reminder – Nominating Committees and bylaws and dues**

- Local PTAs should be getting their nominating committees together for next year's slates. Also review bylaws if your PTA needs to do that this year.

#### 5. **Phyllis Ganser Award**

- Copies of the nomination form for the award were available at the meeting. This is a wonderful opportunity to recognize those great PTA volunteers at your school. Kristin would love to have at least one nominee from each school this year. Winner will be recognized at a school board meeting.
- Nominations are due by May 6 – no extensions will be given this year.

#### 6. **D65 School Board Report – Tracy Quattrocki**

- Tracy Quattrocki offered to take questions from the group:
  - *Grammar instruction* – There is a growing recognition that grammar instruction (especially in middle school) isn't being rolled out consistently. It is part of the Common Core, so by the end of middle school, students need to recognize parts of speech.
  - *Budget cuts* – These are in part being driven by the shift of the pension deficit from the state to local districts, in Evanston to the tune of \$4 million. In addition, the new Senate Bill 1 (in its current form) has D65 losing \$6 million. It focuses on poor districts instead of poor students. Because we are high wealth, high poverty, we are disproportionately affected compared to other districts. In addition, because our taxes are capped, the District is limited in what they can raise through taxes. Another factor is the growing deficit under the teacher contract because the CPI has gotten so small, and teacher salary is rising at a rate greater than the CPI. The Board is forecasting a \$5 million deficit in the next few years.
  - *Referendum?* The School Board could seek a referendum for the capital budget AND the operating budget (which is funded by the tax base). To Tracy, losing \$10 million from their operating budget would be a compelling reason to go out for a referendum. Referendum is "looming." She feels we have to wait for a resolution on Senate Bill 1 – timing is unclear on that, and they got a sense that it might slow down.

#### 7. **Community Announcements**

- *APPONS Fundraiser – Paul Rosencrans*
  - Appons is a shop local coupon app – similar to the Entertainment Book, but done through an app. The local zone for the app includes Evanston and part of Skokie, and includes 50+ restaurants and merchants. App has been tested in Highland Park. It consolidates people's ability to get local discounts and learn about new vendors. Merchants aren't charged to participate.

- Cost is \$10 for 3 months of access to a zone. You can designate “favorites” through the app, and it will remind you when you are near the favorite locations.
  - If your school is interested, Appons will help provide an initial e-mail to outreach to your school communities. Why should you get your families signed up? For their initial 3-month purchase, 100% of the proceeds will go to your PTA. Thereafter, Appons automatically renews after 3 months, but can be canceled at any time. Each time one of your members renews with Appons (at 3 month intervals), 10% of the proceeds will go to the PTA. You can also get friends and family to sign up (outside your school community), to benefit your PTA.
  - Please forward this information to your fundraising chairs. Interested schools can contact Paul if interested: [prosencrans22@gmail.com](mailto:prosencrans22@gmail.com).
- *COPE – Juliet Bond, Rebecca Parmet*
    - COPE was founded about 5 years ago to help support families dealing with cancer at a local school, and soon expanded to help families struggling with poverty and death.
    - According to its mission statement, “COPE is a community network of volunteers who are housed at individual Evanston schools. Our mission is to provide assistance for Evanston families who have needs related to sustenance, safety or shelter.”
    - Sustenance programs include providing groceries, meals and assistance with water and electricity bills. Safety programs include providing furniture and other emergency help and facilitating Courageous Conversations programs. Service programs include monthly service projects, Buddy Benches at local schools, and other projects.
    - Each month, COPE provides groceries for 60 families at 6 local schools. They would like to increase to serve 100 families monthly.
    - COPE currently needs parent representatives at Dewey and Bessie Rhodes, and are looking for new reps at Kingsley and Orrington.
    - They are also asking local PTAs to consider adding COPE to their budgets for the next school year so the program can continue to grow and provide much-needed services and support to local families in need.
  - *Park School – Margaret Storey*
    - Park is a self-contained special education school for ages 3-22. They have about 65 students now. It serves students w/moderate to profound cognitive and/or physical disabilities.
    - Park was founded in the 1950s by parents whose kids weren’t welcome in the public school system (before federal protections). It is currently governed by a joint agreement between D65 and D202. D202 carries 40% of the cost, D65 60%, plus they own the building.
    - Park PTA is reaching out to raise awareness of the school and its value to the community. They are hoping to collaborate with other schools on a mural project and a playground-resurfacing project. The playground area currently

- has wood chips, which is not accessible/safe for all their students. They would like to add solid surfacing instead, and they are looking to raise money for that, or get assistance in writing a grant for those funds.
- In addition to collaboration and sharing of expertise, they would also be grateful for any donations that local PTAs might be able to share.
  - D202 is suggesting that they are going to pull out of the joint agreement. Margaret Storey has worked on the long-range planning committee, and they have not gotten any information about how EHS plans to educate these children if they're not at Park School.
  - D202 currently gives \$6.5 million to other districts to educate some of our special needs students, but gives only about \$1million to Park under the joint agreement.
  - The whole community is invited to Park's Family Fun Night on May 28. The event will be accessible to all.
- *YMCA Reading Program – Kenzi Huelskotter and Jeanette Mihalek*
    - 6-week free summer program for below grade level readers entering 1-3 grades in the fall. Purpose is to prevent summer learning loss – 2 reading months typically lost during the summer.
    - Program has been running for the last 3 summers, and has been growing. YMCA partners with District 65. Morning is 2.5 hours of literacy instruction w/certified teachers/instructors. Afternoon is a typical day camp experience.
    - AM curriculum is the Four Blocks Literacy curriculum. Success is measured with pre- and post-program testing.
    - Parents also commit to read to their children nightly and participate in parent education opportunities.
    - They are looking for parent volunteer “Reading Buddies” to come once a week to read with the students.
    - Each participant receives a 3-month family membership to the YMCA.
    - Results have shown a 2-3 month reading GAIN over the summer (as opposed to 2-month loss).
    - The program will serve 192 students this summer (number was 100 last year). Please help spread awareness of the program and its success. They are also looking for financial support. Cost is about \$1600 per child for the program – they are trying to raise \$185,000 to fund all of the children in the program. In addition, they are looking for 100 volunteers Thursday mornings from 10:30-11:30 for 7 weeks.
    - Volunteer application packets were available at the meeting. We will circulate an electronic copy on the PTA Council listserv, or contact Jace Smith at the YMCA: [JaceS@mcgawymca.org](mailto:JaceS@mcgawymca.org) or 847-475-7400 x 218.
  - *Calendar – Rhonda Present*
    - These are the current Calendar Committee guiding principles: (1) greater alignment between D65 and D202, (2) trying to create as many 5-day school weeks as possible, (3) transparency about decisions made with respect to the calendar.

- D65 Calendar Committee recently circulated a survey for parent feedback, so make your voice heard. This will be a driving force with respect to what happens in the 2016-17 calendar.
- For the next school year, D202 has already approved the calendar, and D65 is set to approve on April 27.
- *YEA – Kristin James*
  - YEA festival is moving to Raymond Park this year. Because of the brand-new setup this year, it is likely that your art teachers will need more help this year. Kristin will post a list of volunteer tasks that they are looking for help with.

## **8. FAN Programming – Upcoming Events**

- 3 programs with Gregory Kramer, Ph.D.
  - “Mindfulness in Relationship: The Power of the Shared Human Experience” – Thursday, April 23 at 7 p.m. – New Trier HS Northfield, Cornog Auditorium, 7 Happ Road, Northfield
  - “Insight Dialogue: Practicing Interpersonal Meditation” – Friday, April 24 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. – one-day retreat co-taught with Phyllis Hicks, D.Min, Metta Programs – Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Avenue, Evanston
  - “Insight Dialogue: Deepening the Inquiry” – Saturday, April 25 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. and Sunday, April 26, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. – two-day retreat co-taught with Phyllis Hicks, D.Min., Metta Programs – The Lakeview Center at Gillson Park, Michigan Ave. and Washington Street, Wilmette
- George E. Vaillant, M.D.; “Happiness is Only the Cart: Love is the Horse: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study of Adult Development
  - Tuesday, May 5 at 7 p.m. – Glenbrook South High School Auditorium, 400 W. Lake Avenue, Glenview AND
  - Wednesday, May 6 at 7 p.m. – New Trier Winnetka Campus Gaffney Auditorium, s385 Winnetka Avenue, Winnetka
- More information on all FAN programs at [familyactionnetwork.net](http://familyactionnetwork.net)

## **9. Special Education Committee – Katie Smith and Carolyn McNulty**

- Katie and Carolyn head the District’s Special Education committee.
- Currently, approximately 1,000 kids in D65 receive special services.
- Why does it matter to the PTA Council? This issue affects all students in the District. Joyce Bartz (D65 Assistant Superintendent for Special Services) felt strongly that parents should have a voice with respect to these issues, and doing it through the umbrella of the PTA Council increases their reach.
- Goals: disability awareness programming for all students, more formal lines of communication w/the school board, making it easy for all parents to be supportive of all types of students, educating parents about how to navigate the system if you suspect or know that your student may have some special needs.

- PTA Committee chairs should be aware of how to be more inclusive and make the events successful for ALL students, some of whom have varying needs.
- Bessie Rhodes did some disability awareness programming this past fall. They partnered with Access Living, a cross-disability organization. With school administration, they came up with topics that made sense to address with their students, such as: what is a disability, how do we talk about it, what is discrimination and what are accommodations? Students rotated through stations for each of these topics with help from Access Living reps and teachers. It took place on a half day, and the next evening there was a parent education evening to talk about what the students learned.
- Hilary Coustan has been working with Access Living about bringing this presentation to other schools in the District.
- For further information on the Special Education Committee, contact Katie Smith at [katiesmith327@yahoo.com](mailto:katiesmith327@yahoo.com).

**13. PTA Council 2015-2016 – Executive Committee, Budget, Goals**

- Steve Jones is stepping down as Treasurer for next year, so the PTA Council will be looking for a new treasurer.
- An email will go out looking for 3 volunteers (from different schools) to serve on the PTA Council nominating committee, so think about good candidates in your school communities who might be willing to serve.

**Upcoming Events:**

4/23/15	Curbing Youth Violence in Evanston		Levy Center
4/28/15	Curriculum Forum: Disciplinary Literacy – Reading Across the Curriculum	7-8:30 p.m.	Chute Library
4/29/15	Latinos for Education		Civic Center
5/5/15	ETHS Parent-to-Parent Orientation for 8 <sup>th</sup> grade parents		ETHS
5/19/15	PTA Council Meeting	7 p.m.	TBA

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.