

PTA Council Meeting Minutes
January 20th, 2015 7 p.m.

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21
Washington Elementary School
914 Ashland Avenue
Evanston, IL 60202

Attending:

Kristin James (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Steve Jones (Lincoln), Jenny Blickenstaff (Washington/Nichols), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Katie Smith (Washington/D65 Special Ed Parent Advisory), Jen Goldstein (Washington), Tracy Juell (Washington), Myriam Borrayo (Washington), Yancey Hughes (Lincoln/Nichols), Molly Pope (Lincolnwood), Elliot Frolichstein-Appel (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Rebecca Langan (King Arts), Beth Goldberg (King Arts/Lincolnwood), Akari Yamada (Lincolnwood/Haven), Karen Larkin Young (Lincolnwood/ETHS), Jodie Ford (King Arts/ETHS), Saul Lieberman (Dawes/FAN), Anne Hutchinson (Willard), Stephanie Teterycz (Haven), Sara Walz (Willard), Vicky Vye (Rhodes), Lara Trubowitz (Dewey), Stephanie Clemson (Dewey/Nichols), Lonnie Stonitsch (FAN), Harvey Pranian (YEA!), Janet Footlik (Gifting Bunch)

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. Kristin circulated a few documents: (1) a copy of the Strategic Planning Report for the Executive Advisory Committee to the Strategic Planning process, (2) copies of the Illinois School Report Card for each of the D65 schools, and (3) a copy of a summary of the feedback from the Strategic Planning forums.

2. Approval of Minutes from November Meeting

- Molly Pope made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes as presented by Secretary Jenny Blickenstaff, Vicky Vye seconded. The November minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Treasurer's Report

- The current bank balance is \$2,336.12.

4. Navigating Real Life Diversity with our Kids – Dr. Gilo Kwesi Logan

- Dr. Logan was ill and unable to attend the meeting, but Heather Sweeney provided an update from the PTA Council's Parent Education Committee. The Committee has grown to around 25 members, including representation from Chiaravalle and Baker.

- Dr. Logan will conduct two sessions: February 18 and March 18. These sessions will be more interactive than the fall sessions with Biz Lindsay-Ryan. In order to accommodate the more interactive style of the February and March events and to move to a different neighborhood, the sessions will be moved from the library to Family Focus. Dr. Logan’s emphasis will be on “Bridging Difference through Dialogue and Action.” The February session will address the barriers that prevent us from having cross-cultural relationships. The March session will focus on action, and what we can do to cross those barriers. There will also be discussion of Evanston’s racial and ethnic history. Promotional fliers will be out in the next couple of weeks. The Parent Ed. Committee would appreciate everyone’s help in getting the word out to your school communities.

5. Illinois PTA Reminder – bylaws and dues

- Just a few reminders for all member PTAs:
 - If your bylaws are up for review this year, please make sure it gets done and submitted to the state.
 - PTA dues are typically submitted in the fall. If you have new members since that time, please remit dues for those new members as well.
 - The Illinois PTA is also asking for copies of recent tax returns, audit reports and proof of insurance. An email was circulated earlier today to individuals with schools that have not yet submitted these materials. Please check in with your treasurers to make sure this gets taken care of.

6. The Gifting Bunch – Janet Footlick

- This is a potential business venture Ms. Footlick is seeking feedback on. The program would provide parents an easy way to organize and contribute to teacher group gifts at holiday and end of school year (or whatever times of year a school selects).
- Process: An “organizer” would create a page on The Gifting Bunch website for a particular teacher and/or ancillary staff (nurse, crossing guard, custodian). The page is a template that could be customized to your school. Once set up, the page can be e-mailed to your school community. The website can be setup as a gift from an entire class, regardless of who contributes. Amounts and identities of contributors will not be available to recipients of the gifts.
- Payment must be made by credit card. At this point, they are not contemplating accepting cash payments. Those would have to go through someone who would charge the amount through the website.
- The Gifting Bunch organization would keep a record of payments, send reminders to your school community, and basically take the legwork out of collecting for teacher gifts. They will also generate an e-gift card that can be printed and given to the recipient.
- The organization is still determining the payment structure, but is leaning toward a flat annual fee for each school. They are looking for input on what a reasonable fee would be - \$25 per school year was proposed by Ms. Footlick.
- Additional group feedback was that Spanish translation should be provided, and ideas were discussed for connecting with families that don’t have regular e-mail access.

- There was also discussion about including Downtown Evanston on the list of gift cards that recipients can select.
- Goal is to have this in the schools by fall 2015.

7. YEA! Update – Harvey Pranian

- On May 16, 2015, YEA! will celebrate its 28th annual event. One of their big issues is sustainability – making sure YEA! continues and thrives. Harvey is looking for volunteers, both for the day of the event and before, during the planning stages.
- There was discussion of potentially having the PTA Council be in some kind of partnership with YEA! Kristin encouraged the group to think about ways either individuals or school communities can support this important event in our community. Harvey is also looking for someone who might be interested in learning from him and taking over the initiative at some point.
- Harvey is currently the curator of an exhibit at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center called “A Family’s Journey Home” in connection with Black History Month (2/7-3/5). It highlights the work of Evanston artist Jevoid Simmons. The artist is willing to meet with school classes who come to the exhibit, so take this back to your school communities.
- For more information about the exhibit or how to get involved with YEA!, contact Harvey at <mailto:harvey@harveyantiques.com>. His website is www.harveyantiques.com.

8. FAN Programming – Lonnie Stonitsch

- PEC (Parent Education Consortium of the North Shore) calendar – if your school is doing Parent Education programming and would like it included on the PEC calendar, please e-mail Lonnie at lonnie@stonitsch.net.
- Upcoming FAN events:
 - **January 25 1 p.m.** - Screening of “Internet’s own Boy: The Story of Aaron Swartz” at the New Trier east campus.
 - **February 9 7 p.m.** – Screening of “The Mask You Live In” at New Trier’s Winnetka campus (Gaffney Auditorium) – an exploration of American masculinity.
 - **February 12 (evening) and 13 (daytime)** – Bruce Perry from the Child Trauma Academy at New Trier West. He is an expert in trauma and its effect on the development of a child’s brain.
 - **February 23 (evening)** – Ron Lieber at North Shore Country Day School. His new book is “The Opposite of Spoiled.” How to raise kids with a set of values regarding money.
 - **March 23** – Bryan Stevenson. Latest Book is “Just Mercy,” a memoir of his path to having founded the Equal Justice Initiative. He has argued cases in front of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding overturning the juvenile death penalty. FAN is partnering with the Moran Center in Evanston and other aligned entities to sponsor this event.
- For other upcoming events, go to www.familyactionnetwork.net.

9. D65/D202 School Board Candidacy – questionnaire and forums

- The PTA Council, in conjunction with the Evanston League of Women Voters and ETHS Parents Engaged will be sponsoring a forum for each district. Dates are not yet set, but the PTA Council may be looking for a few volunteers on each of those nights.
- Mindy Wallis is going to prepare fliers about each of the D65 and D202 candidates, and is also willing to plan a forum for pre-K families about why school board elections are important.
- April 7 election date is during Spring Break, so the Council will also be encouraging people to get registered and vote early.
- 4 candidates are running in D65, 7 in D202, with 3 open spots in each district. Help emphasize in your communities that D202 elections are also important for families with younger children.
- Reminder: No PTA organization can endorse or oppose any single candidate in that capacity. We can all endorse candidates in our personal capacity, but it must be clear that the PTA organizations are not making any endorsements.

10. Special Needs Event – Katie Smith

- **Tuesday, January 27 at 6:30 p.m. at the JEH Center**, the D65 Special Services Parent Advisory Committee will be hosting Myra Gorman, City of Evanston Parks & Recreation Inclusion Coordinator for a presentation about securing special needs accommodations for summer camps (and other rec programs).
- Please RSVP to the program by calling or e-mailing Katie Smith (847/826-3910 or katiesmith327@yahoo.com). Also contact her with any questions.

12. PARCC

- On February 24 (in lieu of a regularly-scheduled PTA Council meeting), Dr. Goren, John Price and Peter Godard will meet with interested District parents to answer questions about the upcoming PARCC assessments. Mr. Godard was recently hired by the District as the Chief of Research, Accountability and Data, and will be charged with (among other things) reviewing the assessment results. There seem to be many questions about what this new testing regime is going to look like and how it will be administered.
- There was discussion of having additional Q&A sessions like this to accommodate more parents. They are looking for a middle school auditorium to host this event.
- ETHS received a partial waiver from PARCC, and as a result, only Algebra 1 and Freshman Humanities will be tested at ETHS this year. There was a lot of concern about the amount of testing for the older students, in addition to the other testing they will be doing around that time.
- Before this forum, encourage parents to go on PARCC's website (<http://www.parcconline.org>) and take at least part of a sample test to get a sense of what it is like.

12. Updates: Food Safety Policy, Science Fairs, Park School, School Supplies

- **Food Policy:** A group of parents have been working diligently for the last few months to raise concerns about the current policy. Despite numerous meetings and suggestions/concerns raised by this parent group, the District was prepared to present to the Board the exact same policy they developed last year (i.e. no home-prepared food allowed in classrooms), without regard to the input of these parents. At tonight's Board meeting, Dr. Goren asked for the vote on this policy to be delayed so more information could be gathered and the policy could be more representative of other voices. More to come here.
- **Science Fairs:** Thank you to the schools who filled out the survey. There will be a meeting with the District in the next couple of weeks to share the survey findings about how inconsistent things are across the District with respect to science fairs. If you want to be involved, let Kristin know.
- **Park School:** D202 has recently stated that they may discontinue their relationship with Park School in favor of more inclusion at ETHS. This would have a devastating effect on Park School (they would lose significant funding). There was discussion of writing a letter of support on behalf of Park School. Katie Smith volunteered to work with Kristin on this.
- **School Supplies:** Last year, there was a last-minute scramble to provide school supplies because KASS (Kids and School Supplies) was not operational. There is a huge variation between the schools with respect to how they handle school supplies (kits, bulk supplies, individual purchase). Kristin would like to have a plan in place this year to avoid the scramble, and she will be soliciting different schools for ideas on how to make this happen.
- **Math FUNDamentals:** This is a new math initiative being piloted in the District for math support focusing on 1st grade students (1 hour/week). A training session will be held on Tuesday, January 27th from 9:30-11 a.m. in the JEH Boardroom.

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

- Since there is no February PTA Council meeting, there may be an informal meeting to discuss what the Council leadership will look like and what it will address going forward. Start thinking about what ideas you have for the future of the Council, and stay tuned for a date for this meeting.
- In light of the fact that the Council has become much more engaged and active over the past couple of years, Steve Jones has re-categorized a number of the budget items to more accurately reflect the activity of the Council. He circulated a draft of this re-categorization and the meeting, subject to further refinement as the Council formalizes its plans for the future.

6. Foundation 65 Benefit, January 30, 7-11 p.m. at Smylie Brothers

- Encourage your school community to attend this event that supports all of our District 65 schools.

Upcoming Events:

1/21/15	Community Legislative Committee		ETHS
1/27/15	Special Needs Presentation – <i>Katie Smith, D65 Parent and Myra Gorman, City of Evanston</i>	6:30 p.m.	JEH
1/29/15	Understanding IEP Services – <i>Gina Musielski, Family Resource Specialist, Star Net</i>		JEH
1/29/15	State of the Schools – <i>Dr. Goren, D65 and Dr. Witherspoon, D202</i>	6 p.m. reception 7 p.m. event	ETHS
1/30/15	Foundation 65 Benefit - <i>\$65 per ticket</i>	7-11 p.m.	Smylie Brothers
1/28/15 – 2/11/15	Town Hall Meetings re Strategic Plan		
2/7/15 – 3/5/15	A Family’s Journey Home – <i>Jevoid Simmons</i>		Noyes Cultural Arts Center
2/8/15	ESL Family Event – <i>Thawivann Spalding</i>		American Legion Hall
2/18/15	Navigating Diversity – <i>Dr. Gilo Kwesi Logan</i>	6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Family Focus
2/24/15	PTA Council Meeting – PARCC and Assessment Tools – <i>Dr. Goren, John Price, Peter Godard</i>	7 p.m.	TBA
3/4/15	Curriculum Forum – Social and Emotional Learning – <i>Joyce Bartz, D65 Special Services</i>	7 p.m.	TBA
3/17/15	PTA Council Meeting	7 p.m.	TBA
3/18/15	Navigating Diversity – <i>Dr. Gilo Kwesi Logan</i>	6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Family Focus
3/23/15 – 4/4/15	School Board Elections – early voting period		
4/7/15	School Board Elections – <i>during Spring Break</i>		
4/21/15	PTA Council Meeting	7 p.m.	TBA
4/28/15	Curriculum Forum – Disciplinary Literacy: Reading Across the Curriculum – <i>D65 Department Chairs</i>	7 p.m.	TBA
5/19/15	PTA Council Meeting	7 p.m.	TBA

Meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.