

**PTA Council Meeting Minutes**  
**November 15, 2016 7 p.m.**

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21  
Willard Elementary School  
2700 Hurd Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60201

**Attending:**

Kristin James (Chute/ETHS), Miriam Barnett (King Arts), Jenny Blickenstaff (Nichols), Nadege Claude (Bessie Rhodes), Traci Powell (Bessie Rhodes), John Curnyn (Dawes), Sydney Blattner (Dewey), Julie Cutter (Dewey/Nichols), Alison Shapiro (Dewey), Marvet Marsh (King Arts), Tessa Bediz (Kingsley), Meredith Schreiber (Kingsley), Jeanne Noone (Lincoln), Megan Lynch (Lincolnwood), Isabel Schultz (Lincolnwood/Haven), Renaud Beaudoin (Orrington Principal), Terry Hackett (Orrington), Leslie Luning (Orrington), Christina Mato (Orrington), Kristin O'Connor (Orrington), Matt Pavich (Orrington), Anna Guillemain (Park), Stacey Porter (Walker), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Melani Bishop (Willard), Cathy Heldt (Willard/Haven), Kate Lister (Willard), Aurora Pelaez (Willard), Sarah Peterson (Willard), Edie Rabinowitz (Willard), Chris Skoglund (Willard librarian), Allison Stark (Willard), Ruth Young (Willard teacher), Ismalis Nunez (D65 Family and Community Engagement Coordinator).

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

**1. Welcome & Introductions**

- ***Papa John's Fundraising.*** Papa John's Pizza would like to offer local schools (and other organizations, i.e. scout troops, etc.) free and discounted pizzas for events as well as the opportunity to earn money for their organization through restaurant nights at Papa John's. Ryan Schroeder from Papa John's visited the meeting and supplied pizza. Papa John's can do \$7 large pizzas for any school event, and if more than 20 pizzas are ordered, Ryan may be able to lower the price to \$6 (contact him directly about this). Ryan also volunteered to donate a limited number of free pizzas for school events. Ryan can be reached at [ryan@ozarkpizzacompany.com](mailto:ryan@ozarkpizzacompany.com) or 815-370-3513 (cell).
- Papa John's also does a "school give back night", which runs for 2 days in a row. During the scheduled 2 days, the school earns 20% on every order that mentions the school. These nights typically run Monday-Thursday, but a Thursday-Friday event may be a possibility. These events include delivery, online and carry out orders. Papa John's generate all the promotional materials and signage. He's also willing to hear from local PTA leaders with their fundraising ideas involving Papa John's.
- Kristin welcomed everyone to the meeting, and all attendees introduced themselves.

## **2. Bundled Blessings Diaper Pantry – Diane Peterson (First United Methodist Church of Evanston)**

- This volunteer-run service is provided through the First United Methodist Church of Evanston. Representative Diane Peterson talked about the difficult choices facing parents who don't have enough money to purchase enough diapers for their child. Illinois Link cards cannot be used to purchase diapers. This "diaper pantry" (which is the only one in Evanston) was started in response to a real diaper need in our community. They started by asking for diaper donations from individuals, and monetary donations from community organizations. They also have a partnership with the National Diaper Bank Network that allows them to purchase diapers at a discount. 100% of donations are used to purchase diapers, and all donations are tax deductible.
- Diapers are distributed through a variety of Evanston social service agencies: Teen Babies support (ETHS), Baby-Toddler nursery (Infant Welfare Society), Family Advocacy Center, Family Focus, Child Care Network of Evanston, and a local refugee resettlement program, among others. Every month, orders are submitted and Bundled Blessings provides 50 diapers or 40 pull-ups to each child pursuant to the order. The organization is currently sending out 12-13,000 diapers each month.
- In addition to looking for donations, they would like to reach out to local schools to see if any are interested in hosting a Diaper Drive. They provide a kit, signs, collection bins, and pick up the diapers for you. The Girls on the Run program at Dewey has hosted a couple of successful drives.
- Further questions, or interested in hosting a drive at your school? Call 847-864-6181 x226 or email [bundledblessings@outlook.com](mailto:bundledblessings@outlook.com).

## **3. Approval of Minutes from September Meeting**

- Ruth Young made a motion to approve the September meeting minutes as presented by Secretary Jenny Blickenstaff, Julie Cutter seconded. The September minutes were unanimously approved.

## **4. Treasurer's Report – Olga Bernick**

- Olga was not present at the meeting, but circulated the November 15 Treasurer's Report via the PTA Council Listserv. Bank account balance as of October 31, 2016 was \$5,057.45.
- Olga reported (through Jenny Blickenstaff) that dues invoices were sent out to all schools on November 15. Please check with your school treasurers to make sure they received the invoice, and contact Olga at [obernick@koscpa.com](mailto:obernick@koscpa.com) if not.
- During October, the Council received a \$4,500 grant from District 65 for the Navigating Diversity series, and made 2 payments totaling \$673.70 to cover speaker and translation fees for the first Navigating Diversity session on September 27, 2016.

## 5. PTA Council Leadership 2016-2017 - Election

- Kristin Harris, one of the Nominating Committee members, posted the slate of nominees on the PTA Council Listserv on September 25, 2016. Due to the postponement of the October 25 PTA Council meeting, the election of PTA Council officers was similarly postponed to this meeting. The Nominating Committee members are Kristin Harris, Vicky Vye and Elliot Frolichstein-Appel.
- The slate of executive officers is as follows:
  - President: Ms. Kristin James
  - Vice-President: Ms. Miriam Barnett
  - Secretary: Ms. Jenny Blickenstaff
  - Treasurer: Ms. Olga Bernick
- Ruth Young made a motion to elect the slate of executive officers as presented, John Curnyn seconded. The slate as presented was unanimously approved and the nominees elected.

## 6. D65 Teacher Negotiations Update

- Kristin asked the meeting attendees to keep questions and comments regarding the ongoing teacher contract negotiations brief in order to leave more meeting time to focus on the main topic of the meeting – enhancing family engagement and community-building in our schools. Ismalis Nunez attended the meeting to speak to this topic (see below).
- The PTA Council hopes to host a forum for parents and community members this Saturday, November 19 at 10 a.m. at King Arts, as an opportunity to better understand the current offers and positions of the parties. Additional information will be available tomorrow (Wednesday) regarding the parameters of this forum. D65 has offered to DEC (the teachers' union) the opportunity to continue their negotiations on Saturday, so if DEC agrees to that, the timing of the forum may be affected. At this point, D65 has agreed to participate in the forum, but DEC has declined. Council leadership and D65 representatives are working with the City of Evanston to see if the event can be live streamed or videotaped. They are also looking at mechanisms to submit questions ahead of time.
- Dr. Goren is hosting a Community Café tomorrow at 7 p.m. at the Levy Center. He will be able to clarify points and respond to questions at that session.
- November 28 is the first possible strike date. Once notice of intent to strike is given, the strike begins 10 calendar days later. The earliest date notice of intent to strike can be given is November 18 (which is relative to the November 14 public posting date).
- What options will there be for parents in the event of a strike? Kristin met with John Price today, and she reported that this Friday, the District intends to release information regarding a contingency plan for childcare in the event of a strike.

## **7. Navigating Diversity Series – Heather Sweeney**

- The session scheduled for November 2 with diversity consultant Corrie Wallace - “Have You Had the Talk...About What Racism Means to All of Our Children” was canceled due to the World Series. No new date will be added, but the information from that session will be included in the remaining 2 sessions.
- The September 27 session with Biz Lindsay-Ryan was very well-received and well-attended. It laid some great groundwork for the remaining 2 sessions.
- Themes for the upcoming sessions, presented by Corrie Wallace:
  - February 6: Have You Had the Talk...About Identity?
  - March 13: Have You Had the Talk...About the Power of One?
- For more information, please contact Heather Sweeney at [hsweeney1107@sbcglobal.net](mailto:hsweeney1107@sbcglobal.net).

## **8. PTA Council Racial Equity Statement**

- Earlier this year, some local parents/PTA leaders drafted a Racial Equity Statement for the PTA Council. The initial idea was for the PTA Council to show support for the important equity advocacy being done in our community by OPAL (Organization for Positive Action and Leadership) by having representatives from local schools/PTAs read the proposed Equity Statement (or a statement of their own on the subject) at upcoming D65 Board meetings. A copy of the statement was distributed at the meeting and will be posted on the PTA Council Listserv. The text of the statement is also included at the end of these minutes.
- A signup sheet was circulated at the meeting for schools to sign up to read the Racial Equity Statement. Julie Cutter will be coordinating this effort. If you would like to sign up on behalf of your school, or need more information, please contact Julie at [julie-cutter@comcast.net](mailto:julie-cutter@comcast.net)
- In light of the recent national events, Dewey parent Katelyn Varhely reached out to the Council to gauge interest in setting up an event where on one day, “families from all schools in the Evanston area join together before class begins, hand-in-hand, forming a human wall symbolizing that all our children are protected, honored and loved – a show of support and love that contrasts the hate we are seeing in the world.” If you are interested in helping Katelyn coordinate this effort, email her at [katelyn-varhely@yahoo.com](mailto:katelyn-varhely@yahoo.com).
- In addition, there is an interfaith solidarity gathering this Sunday at 2 p.m. at Fountain Square, which will be followed by a Community Meeting at the Unitarian Church of Evanston (1330 Ridge Ave.), attended by a number of local elected officials, including Jan Schakowsky, Daniel Biss and Robyn Gabel.

## **9. Parent Engagement – Ismalis Nunez, D65 Family & Community Engagement Coordinator**

- “Why Aren’t ‘They’ Coming?” Looking at family and community engagement with an

equity lens. Equity is about getting uncomfortable, and seeking to change the way certain things have been done that may not work anymore. Equity is an ongoing process. It's about creating opportunities, not taking anything away from anyone. It is challenging work.

- Who are the “They” we are trying to engage? There’s a need to identify the communities we’re trying to engage. Black, African-American, Latino, English language learners, etc. There may be different strategies for engaging different groups.
- Ismalis stressed that she was not criticizing the work anyone has done, but is trying to enhance it and make it more productive/successful.
- Family engagement looks different to different people/groups/cultures/ethnicities. You can’t measure events based on how many people showed up. Don’t blame the families who don’t show up. “We need to meet our families where they’re at.”
- Post-it activity: Attendees recorded PTA events they had attended on yellow post-its, and observations about the events on blue post-its. Takeaway: lots of factors impact engagement, and it seemed as though PTAs across the district are struggling with this.
- Ismalis then shared some comments from families she heard during the Community Conversations she hosted last year. Common themes: “Most PTA meetings and PTA-sponsored events are not well attended by diverse parents, and the people that show up don’t represent the school. Would love to see a broader level of involvement.”
- Why does it always seem like the families we’re trying to engage have to come to us? “You need to give up some of your power and privilege to make room for someone else at the table.” This is part of the work that PTAs have to do.
- To build community and strengthen relationships within your school, your real job starts when you walk out of the PTA meeting. Connect with parents on the playground, at sporting events, at after care, etc. Call parents who don’t regularly participate and ask them to help out. Reaching out (especially by phone) to families is often very effective.
- Ismalis distributed a handout of “Family Engagement Action Toolkit Strategies,” based on the PTA’s National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. The full text of the handout is included at the end of these minutes.
  - Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community
  - Standard 2: Communicating effectively
  - Standard 3: Supporting student success
  - Standard 4: Speaking up for every child
  - Standard 5: Sharing power
  - Standard 6: Collaborating with community
- At a future meeting, we hope to discuss successes and failures experienced by local PTAs with respect to family engagement and outreach.

## **10. School and Community Announcements?**

- **D65 and D202 School Board Elections.** The petition period is currently open for people considering running for D65 or D202 school boards. Petitions and forms are due in December. There are 4 seats up for election on each school board, plus Anya's Tanyavutti's two-year term on D65.
- **Next meeting – PTA Fundraising.** There has been discussion at the D65 Board level regarding PTA fundraising, and how to make it more equitable across the District. There will be some information distributed about this prior to our next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

**UPCOMING DATES:**

Thursday, December 1	ETHS Special Education Incoming Freshman Night	ETHS, Room N112 7 p.m.
Wednesday, December 7	ETHS Parents Engaged meeting	
Wednesday, December 7	School Improvement Day (Early Dismissal)	
Tuesday, December 13	PTA Council Meeting – Equity in PTA Fundraising	Orrington School 7 p.m.
Thursday, December 15	Community Café with Dr. Goren	Family Focus 7 p.m.

Candidate Forums Feb/March 2017

Election Day 4/4/17 (2<sup>nd</sup> day back from spring break)

ETHS Parents Engaged events:

- 1/11/17
- 5/10/17 (tentative)

Other ETHS Parents Engaged meetings:

- 2/1/17, 3/8/17, 4/5/17, 5/24/17

Other PTA Council Meetings: generally 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays

- 1/24/17 - Washington
- 2/21/17
- 3/21/17
- 4/18/17
- 5/16/17
- June 2017 (tentative)

Other events of note:

- 2/6/17 – Navigating Real Life Diversity
- 3/13/17 – Navigating Real Life Diversity

## **Evanston/Skokie PTA Council Racial Equity Statement**

The Evanston/Skokie PTA Council is the umbrella body created by Illinois PTA to coordinate among all the PTA units in schools in the District 65 and District 202 footprint. The PTA Council supports District 65's adoption of a racial equity statement and policy that acknowledges the great disparities that exist by race. We applaud this proposed statement that will guide the District in ensuring that all students are supported to thrive in our community.

There are a lot of dimensions of difference where equity and inclusion are important. Right now and right here, racial inequity is the biggest issue on our community's plate. The persistent racial achievement gap affects all our families, not just Black families.

In order to increase the outcomes for persistently under-achieving student groups, the PTA Council advocates that the District

- provide training for all District 65 staff, teachers, and Board of Directors to actively and continually examine individual beliefs, practices, and teaching in order to identify and eliminate institutionalized policies that have contributed to racial disparities in achievement;
- ensure that African American and Latino students have the resources, opportunities, supports, and interventions to maximize their learning and achieve their full potential; and
- hire staff who reflect the student population because all students have the right to the contributions and viewpoints of a diverse teaching staff. Among many benefits, this helps prepare all our children to succeed in a multi-cultural society.

The PTA Council believes that District 65 and 202 schools must provide respectful and positive learning environments in which students' racial and ethnic diversity are both valued and contribute to their successful academic outcomes.

The PTA Council recognizes that all stakeholder groups must play an active role in increasing equity across our District. The Council is exploring ways that we can build greater understanding and mobilize an active parent body to further equitable outcomes. We will roll this out in fall 2016.

The PTA Council stands in support of OPAL's work to hold the District accountable for narrowing and eventually eliminating the racial achievement gap and for providing an equitable education for all students. We all fail if our community fails our African American and Latino students.

## **Family Engagement Action Toolkit Strategies**

### **Welcoming all Families**

- ❖ Greet other parents at school activities and events; sit with someone you don't know and get to know them.
- ❖ Recruit bilingual parents to greet and interpret for families whose first language isn't English. Work with your building leaders to identify families who could help serve as parent liaisons for this role.
- ❖ Offer family activities at low or no cost so everyone can participate; budget PTA/parent group funds for this purpose (If there are events, how can PTA's serve as the direct contact instead of the school SW).
- ❖ Change the conversation to start to meet families where they are
  - Shift from "blame" for not showing up.
  - Stay positive and celebrate the contributions that all families can make to the community.
- ❖ Hold meetings in a variety of community locations and times (e.g., the local library, a community center, a church) to make them accessible to all.
- ❖ Encourage LGBTQ students and families to self-identify. Emphasize the inclusiveness of the PTA and support for LGBTQ issues. Provide welcoming conditions so that self-identifying students and families feel safe and comfortable participating in PTA meetings and events. Respect privacy and confidentiality preferences.

### **Communicating Effectively**

- ❖ Consider using color-coded lines on hallway walls, or footprints on floors and/or translating, to help direct parents to important places like the school office, parent resource center, and library.
- ❖ Include a two-way communication mechanism, such as a mini survey to be given at the beginning and end of year events to determine school's needs and evaluate PTA's progress.
- ❖ Host information nights on parent-teacher conference for families, demonstrating effective ways for parents and teachers to share information and plan for the future.
- ❖ Ensure that all material is in at least English and Spanish whether your school has a TWI program or not.
- ❖ Welcome new families to the district. Communicate the role of the PTA, its goals, and the various ways to be involved.

### **Supporting Student Success**

- ❖ Create a checklist and tip sheets for effective parent-teacher conferences.
- ❖ Work with school leadership to conduct workshops on interpreting standardized test data and school assessments.
- ❖ Invite teachers and professionals from the community to speak at meetings on various topics.
- ❖ Provide workshops for parents and students on topics such as study skills, individual curriculum areas, and college and career planning.



### **Speaking up For Every Child**

- ❖ In collaboration with school staff, provide information sessions addressing topics such as students with special needs, emerging language learners, etc.
  - Reach out to underrepresented populations to ensure access and equity for all students.
- ❖ Involve parents in ongoing trainings on topics such as being an effective advocate, identifying and supporting learning styles, resolving difficulties, and fostering student achievement.
- ❖ Match new families at the school with a buddy family to show them the ropes.

### **Sharing Power**

- ❖ Working in partnership with the principal, identify ways the PTA/parent group can support one or more goals of the school improvement plan.
- ❖ Consider programs and activities that develop social and political connections.

### **Collaborating with Community**

- ❖ Make sure partnership activities strengthen families and link to student learning.
- ❖ Reach out to senior/retired citizens and invite them to volunteer at the school.