

PTA Council Meeting Minutes
September 15th, 2015 7 p.m.

Evanston/Skokie Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, District #21
Dawes Elementary School
440 Dodge Avenue
Evanston, IL 60202

Attending:

Kristin James (Dawes/Chute/ETHS), Jenny Blickenstaff (Washington/Nichols), Olga Bernick (Washington), Elliot Frolichstein-Appel (Dawes/ETHS), Christine Levy (Dawes/Chute), Akari Yamada (Haven), Karen Young (Haven/ETHS), Isabel Schultz (Lincolnwood/Haven), Miriam Barnett (King Arts), Jodie Ford (King Arts), Carolyn McNulty (Nichols), Stephanie Teterycz (Nichols), Daniela Nelke (Oakton), Thawivann Spalding (Orrington), Anna Guillemain (Park), Taishiya Nix (Rhodes), Jen Goldstein (Washington), Heather Sweeney (Washington/Nichols), Katie Smith (Washington), Anne Hutchinson (Willard), Denise Kohn (Willard), Lisa Degliantoni (Nichols/Hackstudio), Melissa Messinger (D65 Communications Coordinator)

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. Elliot gave a brief overview of Dawes School. Christine Levy talked about the Dawes garden, which was the first school garden in the District.

2. Jason's Deli – Katie Lugenheim

- Jason's Deli (15 Waukegan Road in Glenview) provided dinner for all attendees. Local Sales Manager Katie Lugenheim talked about the variety of ways Jason's Deli can partner with (and deliver to) your school. Their Community Partner program is exclusive to local schools and churches, and the program offers reduced pricing on catering, and they have fundraising nights (15% of proceeds donated back to your organization). For more information you can reach Katie at 972-841-3749 or Katie.lugenheim@jasonsdeli.com. She would be happy to meet with you to discuss your school's particular needs. During September, kids eat free on Tuesdays after 6 p.m. In December, teachers eat free – spread the word! Additional information from Jason's is attached to these minutes.

3. Hackstudio – Lisa Degliantoni

- Hackstudio, located at 2510 Green Bay Road (the former Domicile Furniture building) is launching September 21. It is a creative studio space where kids ages 8-18 can do “anything they set their minds to.” They have adult mentors on staff to encourage kids

to have a quest/long term goal, and they help them develop projects to make progress towards that goal. The mentors work with groups of 6-8 kids and help guide them through the project process. The mentors will also help the kids come up with ideas for the kinds of projects they want to pursue. More information at www.hackstudio.com.

- Hackstudio is currently hiring mentors (\$25/hour). Mentors need to be 21 but need not have a college degree. Check out the “Careers” button on the Hackstudio website.
- The cost is \$32/hour to participate. Typically you go once a week for 2 hours at a time, but the program is flexible based on a student’s needs.
- Lisa wants everyone to be able to participate in Hackstudio’s programs, so they are looking for private and non-profit sponsors to fund participation.
- For more information, contact Lisa at lisa@hackstudio.com.

4. Approval of Minutes from May Meeting

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

5. Treasurer’s Report – Budget Discussion and Request for Audit Committee

- Olga Bernick introduced herself as the nominee for Treasurer of the PTA Council and presented the Treasurer’s report.
- There has been no activity on the account since 6/30/15. The account balance as of August 31, 2015 is \$1,448.31. 2 checks were issued in August (\$370 for Insurance and \$517.20 for PTA Council Palooza), but had not cleared the bank as of 8/31/15.
- Dues for this year will be increased from \$75 to \$100 per school to support the programs of the PTA Council and cover projected expenses. Invoices will be sent out to your treasurers after the budget is adopted.
- Last year’s books need to be audited as required by the Illinois PTA and Council bylaws. Olga is looking for 2 more volunteers to help her with the audit. Taishiya Nix and Karen Young volunteered.
- Budget discussion will be postponed until after the election of the new officers at October’s meeting.

6. PTA Council Leadership Nomination 2015-2016

- A Nominating Committee was appointed in May consisting of Akari Yamada, Julie Cutter, and Miriam Barnett. Miriam Barnett has agreed to step in as Vice President to work with Kristin this year. The Nominating Committee will post the proposed slate to the listserv at least 30 days in advance of the October 27 meeting.

7. D65/D202 School Board Announcements

- **School Calendars.** The proposed school calendars for the 2016-17 school year have ETHS starting Monday, August 22, 2016 and D65 starting on Wednesday, August 24, 2016. D65 is starting later because of penalties in the teacher contract if teachers are called back before August 20, which they would be if school started on the 22nd. Otherwise, the proposed calendars are well aligned between 65 and 202 on days off and holidays.
- **Structural Deficit.** A structural deficit occurs when expenses grow at a greater rate than revenue. D65 is currently in a structural deficit situation. District expenses are dictated primarily by payroll (which makes up some 3/4 of the District's budget), which is largely contractual. Contracts are up for review soon, so it is unclear what terms might change going forward. On the other hand, revenue growth is capped by property taxes and inflation, which has been low for the last decade. When payroll costs continue to rise faster than the District's tax revenues, positions need to be cut each year to balance the budget. Addressing this deficit situation will be a Board challenge going forward. Anticipate more discussion of this over the coming years.
- **Board Agendas.** Both boards are now publishing year-long planning agendas along with the materials for each meeting, so the community can see when different issues are proposed to be considered by the boards in advance of when agendas are posted on the respective BoardBook sites. District 65 is at <https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicItemDownload.aspx?ik=37618786> and District 202 is at <https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicItemDownload.aspx?smk=48273>.

8. D65 Administration Announcements – Melissa Messinger

- **School Supply Drive.** Dr. Goren wanted to thank all the parents who participated in the school supply drive and fundraising initiative. Over \$15,000 was raised and the initiative was able to provide kits for 950 students. This is a good start, but because there are over 2500 students on free and reduced lunch in D65, this conversation will continue. Kristin James mentioned that a priority going forward will be to work with schools to make the supply lists more consistent, making more uniform and bulk purchasing options possible. Please share with your schools that a "School Supply Closet" is starting up at the District warehouse building for additional supplies and extra school supply kits. If supplies are needed, school social workers should contact either Melissa Messinger (messingerm@district65.net) or Maria Allison (allisonm@district65.net).
- D65 and the PTA Council are hosting a "Meet the D65 Leadership Team" night on Wednesday, September 30 from 7-8:30 at the JEH building. Team leaders will share information about their roles, responsibilities and tips for a great school year. There will be time for questions and visiting at the end of the session. Childcare will be provided: to reserve, please email Melissa Messinger at messingerm@district65.net.

They are also hoping to live stream the session for families that cannot make it in person.

- The District just welcomed a new STEM Director – Matsuo Marti. They hope to have a STEM Curriculum night sometime this fall.
- On October 6, parents will receive a text message to “opt in” to receive text messages from the District. Be on the lookout and opt in to receive important news, announcements and reminders from D65 and your child’s school. You will receive approximately 4 text messages per month. Make sure the District has your most up-to-date contact information so you receive this text. You can update via the SISK12 parent portal (<https://sisk12.district65.net/vs/default.aspx>) or by sending an email to parents@district65.net.
- The 2016-17 school year calendar is set for a vote at the next D65 Board meeting (September 21). Proposed first day of school is Wednesday, August 24, 2016.
- ***Emergency Closing Days:*** The District will be implementing a late start option this year. On these late start days, school will begin 90 minutes later than the normal start time.
- ***PTA Websites.*** Many PTAs have created new websites through the new District web platform, Schoolwires. If you would like to create a page for your PTA or migrate part of an independent PTA site onto that platform, contact Melissa at messaging@district65.net.
- ***PARCC Results.*** The State of Illinois is releasing District-level results tomorrow (not for individual students or schools). A communication will be sent to all families as soon as possible after the results have been reviewed. The District does not yet have the PARCC testing windows from the state for this school year.

9. Student Information Directory

- Kristin circulated the information about getting directory information from the District last week. As of today, only 2 schools have requested the information. Make sure your directory chair has this information. Kristin will resend the emails that can be forwarded to your school directory chair.
- The District will release to each school PTA all the directory information they have for those school families who have opted in on the registration consent form.

10. Family Action Network (FAN) Programming

- Lonnie Stonitsch, FAN Executive Director, will be at next month’s meeting to talk about future programming. In the meantime, you can check out their website for upcoming events at www.familyactionnetwork.net.

11. Council Committees

- ***Parent Education – Heather Sweeney***
 - Following up on the success of last year’s “Navigating Diversity” series, the PTA Council (through the Parent Education Committee) is sponsoring another series this year – “Navigating Real Life Diversity: Becoming Allies: Inspiring our kids to understand and stand with each other.” Session 1 is October 14 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Family Focus. This will be a “storytelling” session. The committee has lined up 4 professional and parent storytellers to talk about their experiences. This will be a really compelling and unique session, so make sure your schools know about this. There was discussion about providing bio information for the panelists to help create buzz about the event. The second program will be November 16. Dates have not yet been finalized for two planned programs in the spring.
 - Last year, the committee asked all the local schools to contribute money to help underwrite the cost of the programming. This year, they went to the District, and Joyce Bartz was able to incorporate it into a grant she was writing, so expenses for the series are covered this year.
- ***Special Education – Katie Smith and Carolyn McNulty*** – The Special Services Parent Advisory Committee will meet next on September 30, and the meeting will end right before the D65 Meet the Leaders event. The Committee would love to have a representative from every school, but it is open to any parent navigating the special education world. They aim to provide support to those parents and raise awareness in local schools. The committee would also like to learn more about the D65 social-emotional learning curriculum. Another focus this year will be on (dis)ability awareness. They are coming up with some inclusion guidelines that can be shared with school event chairs to make events accessible and friendly to all students. D65 recently hired a “Family Engagement Coordinator” (former social worker at Haven Middle School) who will also work with the committee. Kristin James added that the District is looking at a grant for SEL (social-emotional learning) “mapping.” They are interested in mapping out what is done in with respect to SEL across the District at each grade level.
- ***Curriculum Forums – Karen Young*** – Over the last few years, the PTA Council has hosted Curriculum Forums for parents to learn about a variety of curricular areas and see the progression from kindergarten through 8th grade in that subject area. If you have thoughts for future forums, contact Karen Young (karenyoung@comcast.net) or Kristin James (jamesfamily60202@gmail.com).
- ***ESL – Thawivann Spalding***
 - Thawivann serves as the D65 Parent Liaison Volunteer for the ESL program. Her goal is to help ESL families connect with the community through periodic potluck gatherings and a weekly Literature Club for parents. She is also available to answer questions about school activities, the city of Evanston, or life in general in the US. The fall gathering will be a potluck on October 18, 4-6 p.m. at the Englehart

Graduate housing at Northwestern University. Please get this invitation out to the ESL families at your school.

- Most of the ESL families (other than Spanish-speaking families) are visiting scholars/students at Northwestern. There are about 200 children in this program in the District. ESL programs exist at Orrington, Lincolnwood, Dewey, Lincoln, Walker and all middle schools and at ETHS. In each school, there is an ESL teacher who knows who all the ESL students are in the school.
- At this point, the PTA does not have access to the District's registration system to connect with ESL families directly, so Thawivann has set up a Google Doc to get contact information for these families: <http://goo.gl/forms/C467yrMmUa>. Please share this link with ESL families and teachers in your school to help getting them connected.
- **Arts Education – Sarah Laing** – Next month's PTA Council meeting will focus on arts in our schools, so stay tuned.
- **STEM – Hillary Coustan and Andrea Mainelli** – Kirby Callam is the new EvanSTEM director. He and the new D65 STEM director (Matsuo Marti) have agreed to meet with parents interested in STEM-related activities in the schools. They've also asked the District to look at District-wide guidelines for science fairs – there is a lot of variation among schools. Callam and Matsuo are interested in providing tools for this year to encourage science fair and other STEM-related activities at schools.

12. General Discussion

- **Topics for PTA Council Meetings**
 - School pictures – people have been unhappy with the provider the District has used for the last 2 years. John Price advised a local parent to talk to the PTA Council. There was wide agreement at the meeting about the poor quality of the photos.
 - Best Practices – comparison between schools (fundraising and other things)
 - Do our schools encourage civic engagement?
- **Opportunities for School Collaboration.**
 - There was hope for discussion of how schools could better collaborate with Park School, and how feeder schools could better collaborate with the middle schools.
- **School Board Liaison D65 and D202.** It is great to have parent presence at Joint D65/D202 Board and Board Committee meetings. Kristin James and Elliot Frolichstein-Appel have been to these meetings, and notice that the tone really changes when there's a parent in the room. Encourage parents to attend these meetings if they are interested. Joint Board Meetings are in November and March. There are 3 other Joint Board Committee meetings, which is where planning happens for the Joint Board meetings. They are all open public meetings. A list of all meeting dates can be found here: <http://www.district65.net/cms/lib8/IL01906289/Centricity/Domain/71/2015-16%20Board%20Meeting%20-%20Committee%20Dates.pdf>.

- **Transitions Committee.** Kristin James will be looking for help to address how we can better support students and families in these various transitions:
 - Early Education – Elementary
 - Elementary – Middle School
 - Middle School – High School

Upcoming Dates:

September 16	Navigating ETHS: Resources for Families	ETHS
September 24	Kits, Cats and Kids Community Block Party	Downtown Evanston
September 27	Bike the Ridge	
September 30	Meet the D65 Leaders and Administrators	JEH
October 14	Navigating Diversity & Inclusion Series #1	Family Focus
October 17	COPE: Stuff the Bus Event	Valli Produce
October 18	ESL Family Event	NU Englehart Graduate Housing
October 27	PTA Council Meeting – Arts in D65	Willard
November 16	Navigating Diversity & Inclusion Series #2	Family Focus
November 17	PTA Council Meeting	TBD

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.