

Minutes
John Eaton Elementary School Home School Association (HSA) Meeting
December 12, 2006
6:00-8:30 pm
John Eaton Library

Present: Lisa Woods, Margie Lidoff, Mark Boss, Kelley Ellsworth, Leslie Tune, Jesonne White, Shaun Seaberry, Gwen Wright, Stuart Weiser, Carolyn Barnhardt, Steven Weinberger, Laura Broach, Joy Carroll Wallis, Mary Ann Nash, Dietra Rogers, Marla Blount, Paul Basken, Maureen Greenwood, Kim Bayliss, Deborah Evans, Claudia Withers, David Shapinsky

Absent: Eileen Langholtz, Mercedes Lemp, Phronie Jackson, Kimberley Hughes, Jocelyn Drakeford

Meeting commenced at 6:37

Approval of the Minutes: Lisa Woods moved to approve the November 14 Minutes. Mark Boss seconded. Approved.

First Advisory Awards Ceremony:

Dr. Drakeford was not able to attend the meeting because she was needed to do the calligraphy on the awards certificates for tomorrow's award ceremony. The ceremony for the First Advisory begins at 9:30, and is for grades 1-6. Children will receive awards for being on the Honor Roll, the Principal's Honor Roll, perfect attendance, and Good Citizenship.

Ms. Barnhardt mentioned that there will be a similar program for PreK and K in the cluster area soon.

There was some discussion about whether giving academic awards was appropriate for very young children, such as first graders and about the ratio of students who receive awards to those not receiving an award. It was generally agreed that it would not make sense for all students to get an award because then it would dilute the purpose. And if a majority of students are getting awards, this makes it too devastating to those who are not. But this ceremony will be a good opportunity to acknowledge our students' academic successes, in addition to their sports successes, etc.

The group felt it would have been nice to hear about this when the idea was hatched, and not a couple days beforehand. Ms. Barnhardt mentioned that Dr. Drakeford talked about doing this a couple months ago and the faculty responded positively. It was suggested that this is more appropriate for 3rd grade and up. Mark Boss and Gwen Wright will discuss this with Dr. Drakeford during their semi-weekly meetings.

Workshop on DCCAS and the New Report Cards:

Leslie Tune and Claudia Withers reported that Dr. Drakeford gave a nice overview, and talked about the different skill levels, how to monitor how your child is doing, as well as what has, and has not, been introduced. She had a PowerPoint presentation, and some HSA members suggested that this should be posted on the website. She talked about benchmarks and suggested ways parents could work with our children to help them to improve, such as asking our children about storylines and plotlines.

Personnel:

Claudia Withers reported that we are covered in every grade. There is still an HSA-funded Kindergarten aide until DCPS begins to fund it. The two fourth grade teachers will transition to one, and that one will increase her hours from 20 to 30-35 hours.

There was a holiday luncheon for the HSA-funded co-teachers and special teachers, to get feedback and to thank them. Claudia and Eileen will be checking in with the teachers about how things are going, and Eileen will be sitting in on the art and music classes. They encouraged the special teachers to put items in the newsletter letting parents know what they are doing, such as the recent singing event at the Omni Shoreham. Laura Broach mentioned that this event will be covered in the next Northwest Current. (The

Omni Shoreham singing event was part of a deal struck with the hotel in exchange for using the site for the Auction.) There will be a workshop with HSA employees on how to deal with food allergies in January. This is a follow-up on the last HSA meeting about how to help children with severe allergies.

Annual Fund: Maureen Greenwood reported that we are mailing to 3,000 homes. Children have already helped to stuff envelopes. Some people are personalizing the letters that are going to people they know, and others are writing handwritten “thank yous” to those on the “hot” list for contributing last year. Those attending the HSA meeting were asked to help personalize letters and stuff invitations during the meeting, which they did.

Eaton Alumni Association: Gwen Wright reported that this group will be created to help with a capital campaign to raise money for the playground or other purposes. The 100th anniversary of John Eaton is 2011. Gwen Wright said that perhaps we could raise the money and have the new playground ready by then. At the Election Cantina, we had 8 or 10 people sign up for this association. Mark Boss mentioned that we can also sign people up at the Christmas Tree sales. We hope to convene the first meeting this winter. It will take a long time to get this database together, but we have four years. Kelley mentioned talking with the former owner of the Washington Redskins and Baltimore Orioles, whose parents were in both in the inaugural kindergarten class at Eaton.

Open Houses: Gwen Wright reported that one Open House was held on November 15th, and another on the 21st because of an advertising mix-up. There were about 20 people at the first one, and 15 at the second one. There was a lot of interest, good discussions, tours, and testimonials. Dr. Drakeford talked about her vision and philosophy. Gwen Wright proposed that we hold three more: January 17, February 21 and March 20. The out-of-boundary deadline is the end of January. Claudia pointed out that last year there were close to 40 people at one snowy winter Open House. Joy Carroll Wallis pointed out that School for Friends parents are very interested in Eaton.

We explored the questions about advertising for our Open Houses. So far we have gotten the word out through the Cleveland Park listserv, as well as putting up posters at area businesses and nursery schools. David Shapinsky mentioned having a competition for a drawing to make a John Eaton poster to put up in businesses, or even to sell. Paul Basken suggested we re-do the outdoor sign as well. Kim Bayliss mentioned that the outdoor sign requires more input. Claudia mentioned we could solicit input through the newsletter.

We can also get the word out through other listserves, such as in Mount Pleasant, and through the DC Urban Moms listserv. We currently list our Open Houses in the Northwest Current Upcoming Events section for free. It is quite expensive to place advertisements.

We need to find out whether there will be two kindergartens or three when talking to potential parents.

Claudia Withers pointed out we should emphasize Githa Natarajan’s award as DC Teacher of the Year. We will save some newsletters to put in the info packets. There was discussion about how to publicize Ms. Natarajan’s standing as teacher of the year. DCPS said they wanted to publicize it first. Once they DO, we could include a copy on the next annual fund mailing. She started out as an HSA teacher. Maureen mentioned using the email addresses we are gathering for the Annual Fund to periodically notify community members about this kind of news.

Annual Fund:

We currently have two mailing lists we use for the Annual Fund mailing: a 20008 address list we purchased some years ago, as well as the “hotlist” of former donors. Kelley mentioned using the previous school directories to use as a third list. There was also discussion about how to pass along and store electronic data from directories, etc. so that this information does not have to be inputted again and again. We can use floppies, CDs, a portable hard drive, or an online storage archive such as yahoo groups.

Holiday Tree Sale:

Gwen reported that we are close to meeting our goal this year after just two weekends of selling. The goal

from approved budget was to net \$22,500. We are now near \$20,000. Kelley and Joy Carroll Wallis mentioned that we are ordering new trees for this weekend so they will be fresh. They will be smaller trees, which sold out the first weekend. Gwen pointed out that this fundraiser is now the second highest fundraiser. David mentioned that he has worked a couple times and that, during those times, Don Blanchon and Trish Berman (who are chairing the sale) were the only other people there. Shaun Seaberry (Room Parent Coordinator) said that she was out of town for the second weekend of the sale but assumed the shifts were covered. Gwen mentioned that it was her impression that volunteerism for the sale was going better than previous years.

Getting Parents More Involved:

There was discussion about how to get more parents out to help with the Holiday Tree Sale as well as other events. Marla suggested a competition for the most representation from each class at the end of the year. We could track participation in all activities, including volunteering in the classroom. Leslie Tune mentioned that we need to find out from parents who are NOT involved, WHY they are not. Mark Boss pointed out that several parents do not celebrate Christmas, and this is why they are reluctant to help with the Holiday Tree Sale. There was discussion about cultural and economic factors. Deborah Evans said that sometimes we just have to rely on the core people.

Kim Bayliss mentioned that at another school, all parents were “required” to put in a certain number of hours. Early this year, all parents were asked to give ten hours of volunteer time during the course of the school year, but we are not officially keeping track of volunteer hours. David mentioned we could send something out through the room parents reminding them of that volunteer hours commitment. Steven Weinberger mentioned that parents really did not sign on for those ten hours.

Gwen pointed out that she first got involved at Eaton because a friend asked her to help. If we all reach out that way, it will work better. Kim asked each of us to bring two people to the next meeting. Kelley mentioned getting recent alums (teenagers) to help out at the Holiday Tree Sale and get their community service hours during this time of giving. She also suggested getting uninvolved parents to help with small projects and tasks rather than those we might know better. One parent mentioned that perhaps we are asking for too much from our parents.

Joy mentioned that on Sunday the Holiday Tree Sale worked well, and the kids had fun. Why not organize something for the kids to do during the Christmas tree sale, such as kickball, or Santa, or something? Gwen mentioned that some people might need to feel invited in order to participate in various HSA events over the course of the year. Deborah said it is about choosing how to spend time, making a choice. Leslie Tune and Mary Ann Nash pointed out that some parents are doing more in the classroom and do not come to HSA meetings. Marla suggested that we have a committee to improve parental involvement.

Treasurers Report: Deborah Evans reported that the taxes were submitted and January payroll taxes are due. Communication has improved between Kim, Lisa, Deborah and Pat McLean, the bookkeeper in terms of categorizing incoming checks. (This was an issue discussed at the last HSA meeting.)

Educational Needs Fund:

Kim Bayliss reported that the ENF is on track as compared to last year. We are awaiting a matching grant from either Freddie Mac or Sally Mae (Kim did not have the details at the meeting). We need to better account for who has contributed what before we can have a class competition. (We do not yet know where each class stands in terms of ENF contributions.) The ENF goal is netting \$75,000. That is what Kim and Rose made two years ago. Last year was \$65,000 until a couple of big individual contributions came in at the end of the year, which took it to close to \$80,000. We are in the \$20,000 range right now. Mary Ann Nash suggested we start in the Spring to plan for next year. Gwen thanked Kim and Joy for the work they have done so far on the ENF fund.

The Politics and Prose Book Sale is March 10 or 11. A new parent, Sheri Carline is chairing this event, and may get a co-chair.

The Footloose Dance is January 26 for all students. Sari Henry and Stuart Weiser are chairing this, but

would like to work with another family.

Auction:

Marla Blount mentioned picking a date for an Auction Solicitation Day, to get people motivated, and to go out and solicit as a group. This would be earlier than other incentives we have used in the past, such as “if you get your forms in by such a date you are eligible for a raffle drawing.” Kelley suggested it could be like an Eaton army: with different “platoons” going to different neighborhoods. Gwen will check with Tysan about that. Joy Carroll Wallis said the Auction Committee is sending out a parent packet just after Christmas.

Service Activity:

David Shapinsky talked with the H.D. Cooke principal. She said she is reluctant to have a one way gift exchange, which would create an uncomfortable dynamic. She asked what he had in mind. He talked about a video project. They discussed drawing or writing about what it means to give. Gwen suggested an exchange of holiday cards. We could sort and exchange the cards by grade level. David could put video messages on the web, but we would need permission from parents for their children to be taped. It was agreed that this is just the beginning of the conversation about how we can partner with H.D. Cooke. Kim mentioned that MLK day is a day of service. Perhaps we could design a mutual project by then. It was agreed that for now, we will do the holiday card exchange. Marla suggested perhaps big Christmas cards, one for each school or grade.

Next Meeting: Gwen Wright suggested that the next meeting focus on the LSRT and the topics discussed at its recent retreat.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm.

Signed,

Kelley Ellsworth
HSA Secretary