

## Minutes

### John Eaton Elementary School Home School Association (HSA) Meeting

February 20, 2007

6:00-8:00 pm

John Eaton Library

**Present:** Gwen Wright, Kelley Ellsworth, Sari Henry, Joy Carroll Wallis, Mark Boss, Eileen Langholtz, Shaun Seaberry, Jeanie Mah, Paul Basken, Margie Lidoff, Dietra Rogers, Marla Blount, Lisa Joy Woods, Christine Newman, David Shapinsky, Laura Broach, Emily Blakeslee, Sheri Carline, Regina Bell, Claudia Withers, Charles M. Hankins.

**Absent:** Deborah Evans, Kim Bayliss, Carolyn Barnhardt, Leslie Tune, Jocelyn Drakeford, Mercedes Lemp, Phronie Jackson, Kimberly Hughes.

Meeting began at 6:33

**Minutes:** Shaun Seaberry moved that we approve the minutes from the last HSA meeting. Mark Boss seconded. Approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** In the absence of our Treasurer, Gwen Wright gave this report. She explained that our accountant, Pat McClane, has agreed to give us monthly reconciliation reports to help in our financial oversight. She is also willing to do an audit if we desire it, although there will be an extra charge for this service.

Gwen then presented our budget comparison chart (attached), prepared by the accountant. Gwen emphasized that this is a draft document and that additional work needs to be done to assure that every item is accounted for correctly. As far as revenue, the Annual Fund has done better than budgeted, thanks to Maureen Greenwood. The Christmas Tree Sale and ENF look like they are under budget on the draft comparison charts, but there needs to be adjustments to correct the figures – the reality will bring them closer to the budget goals. Lisa Joy Woods stated that the ENF fund is just below \$50,000 right now. Apparel sales are doing well, although we went over budget on expenditures in this area. The Block Party and Grocery Certificates are under budget.

Gwen would like to meet with Emily and Bodil to take a hard look at whether the Grocery Certificate program is worth the time involved. Christine offered to work with Gwen on setting up this meeting and doing this analysis. One concern is that Pat, our accountant, said that it has been difficult to keep track of the inventory of grocery gift cards/certificates. Most of our bad debt write-off last year was due to gift cards that could not be accounted for, not bad checks. Where are they? Are they somewhere in the HSA office? An idea for improving the Grocery Certificate program was that we should charge people up front for their certificates. At Hearst, they sell their certificates on a weekly basis for payment up front. For a hoped \$8000 per year in revenue, is this program worth the effort?

There was a brief discussion about making copies, and whether parents should submit for reimbursement. The conclusion was that it is better to ask for reimbursement, or at least submit the paperwork for accounting and tax purposes so we can keep track of real expenses. If making photocopying for a specific project, such as the auction, when submitting for reimbursement it is best to include such detail so it can be expensed properly by the accountant. It was noted that Kinkos gives us a good discount on copies and we have an account with them.

Kelley raised concern that we are under budget on so many fundraisers, especially since we had originally budgeted conservatively and started out the year assuming that we would spend more than we would raise. Claudia pointed out that instructional support is well under budget, due to hiring 6<sup>th</sup> grade and 4<sup>th</sup> grade co-teachers later in the year, among other reasons.

**Personnel:** (Eileen Langholtz) An allergy workshop was held on January 24 for all the HSA employees. The feedback was good. The teachers felt it was useful. Claudia said there is a new DCPS policy about allergies and epi-pens. When this new policy is known, it will be printed in the Eaton newsletter.

Claudia said they may do a survey about opinions about the co-teacher program in time for this feedback to be helpful.

### **The Fourth Grade**

Ms. Anthony has been calling in sick and not reporting to work for several weeks. There was a long series of substitute teachers. Dr. Drakeford had discussions with Ms. Anthony and DCPS. It has just been announced that Ms. Anthony is no longer an Eaton teacher. There is now a new teacher, who is a long-term sub, named Fitzgerald “Fitz” Carter.

There was discussion about, again, improving communication between the administration and parents. Gwen said she will pass this on to Dr. Drakeford, who is currently at a conference in Florida. Note: HSA does not supervise or choose DCPS employees. The emphasis is for the HSA and the parents to be informed of issues in a timely manner. Misinformation spreads quickly. Dr. Drakeford told Mark Boss that one issue that was problematic as part of the Ms. Anthony situation was that parents would not write letters for her to use in documenting problems. Several parents stated that letters had indeed been written and submitted.

After Ms. Anthony’s second week absent, Dr. Drakeford did send out a letter to parents to inform them of the issue, but without giving the cause of the absences. She informed parents that she was working on solving the problem. There have also been student problems in the class. There has not been appropriate discipline in Ms. Anthony’s class.

The HSA co-teacher for 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Ms. Jackson, went from halftime to fulltime to help with this very large grade population. Claudia says she suspects that Ms. Jackson is feeling stretched. It may make sense to have 1.5 co-teachers in grades with three classes

in the future. So far the co-teacher has been used on a first come-first served basis, and the teachers have not always gotten along. Hopefully this is changing.

It was suggested that we, as a school, find out how to solve the immediate problems for fourth grade, future problems for next year's fourth grade, and make sure that next year's fifth grade is not a repeat for these families.

There was a discussion about how to transition in the large 4<sup>th</sup> grade influx of kids who are new to Eaton each year. One parent suggested holding an upper grade orientation on how parents can support their children and the teachers. Perhaps this would be good for lower grades as well. Parents need to understand that being an involved parent does not mean coming up to the classroom every so often and creating a fuss. The orientation could include information about the Eaton culture and expectations, and how we can be effective parents. Last year the Eaton Handbook was published at the beginning of the year by Dr. McElroy. This was not distributed this year. This might be helpful to new parents.

It was suggested that the school policy of not bringing toys such as Pokemon to school should be included in the newsletter to help the teachers maintain focus in the classes. In addition, cell phones are not only a distraction in the classroom, but also get in the way of real interaction during recess.

Joy suggested we get a sense of which teachers will have full-time student teachers. This could help in distributing the time of the co-teachers.

### **Report on Recent Events:**

Gwen gave thanks for those who assisted with the Open House, especially Joy who spoke to families from School for Friends; and for Sari Henry and her husband, Stuart Weiser, for putting on the Footloose Dance. The Principal's Breakfast, held on January 24, was well-attended, especially by teachers. These will be every two months, so next will be mid-March. The teachers also held a Valentines Day breakfast for the parents, which was organized by Ms. Steinkamp.

### **Upcoming Events:**

**Book Sale and Dinner:** (Shari Carline) Eaton will get 20% of qualified sales from books at Politics and Prose, and 15% from qualifying purchases of dinner at the Uptown Cathay across the street. Storytime will be held on Saturday and Sunday, with different teachers reading at different times. There are also many speakers who have been scheduled by Politics and Prose. Sarah Aiken, who is also a co-chair of this event, suggested asking each teacher about their favorite books. The teachers have been telling the students about their favorite books over the morning announcements. These books are separate from the teacher wish lists. There is also a library wish list and a JEAP wish list. When a wish list book is purchased, the kids can write their own inscription on the spot. The class with the highest number of parents showing up and signing in at the bookstore wins a pizza party. They will need two people per hour per class, and a need to cover both days.

**Auction:** The auction is scheduled for April 28 at the Omni Shoreham. February is auction donation month. Feb 23 is the deadline for submission of donations. All classes except two have chosen their themes. Each class is to choose a letter, such as “R for Road Trip.” For now, the auction chairs just need a theme and description for class baskets. The items to go in the baskets can be purchased later.

**Raffle:** Trish Berman is running the raffle. The permit is ready to be notarized and submitted, along with an insurance form. The prize will be cash.

Trish has been hired as “the new Ingrid,” otherwise known as “the registrar” for Eaton. This position will be paid for by DCPS.

(It should be noted that Marjorie Lidoff found the baby in the King cake during the meeting.)

**Open House:** Gwen pointed out that an Open House was scheduled for tomorrow, but has not been published very widely. It has been cancelled, but Mark will be on call in case some parents show up. We have another Open House scheduled for late March, and publicized in the newsletter. There was discussion about whether to schedule another Open House between now and then, but it was decided that this was not necessary. There was a brief discussion about the growth plan for the future. Our fourth graders will be the last 6<sup>th</sup> grade class. We cannot have three classes in all the other grades because there are not enough classrooms. Perhaps some different grades could be combined to have 2.5 classes per year.

**Celebrating Ms Natarajan as DC Teacher of the Year:** DCPS has made their official announcement that Ms. Natarajan is the Teacher of the Year. Ideas we discussed as to how we, as a school and community, could celebrate this achievement: A gift from kids? A scrapbook of items from her current and former students? A community cookout? Something during the teacher appreciation lunch, held the last day of school? Something after the auction in early May or so? Should we use Ms. Overton’s retirement party as a model? A school assembly during school? Should we try to get some PR about this event? What is the hook to make it a news story? Would Ms. Natarajan feel offended by being used as a PR vehicle? Should we ask her what she might like? Sari Henry volunteered to co-chair this celebration and will look for a current second grade parent to also co-chair. We will also need someone to put together a scrapbook for Ms. Natarajan. Shaun will email the room parents to get another co-chair.

### **Funding Requests:**

**Girls on the Run:** Emily Blakeslee explained that Girls on the Run is a national organization designed to help girls navigate adolescence. Girls meet once or twice a week at their schools and train for a race, but also learn about cooperation, gossiping, bullying, etc. Girls on Track also works with middle school girls around eating disorders, etc. This is a large national organization, founded by a woman, Molly Barker, who was a Redbook

and Running World Hero. There are three units: “Getting to Know Me,” “Teamwork,” and “Being a Part of a Community. The program culminates in designing and implementing a community service event. Eaton will be the first public school in the area to offer this program. The cost is \$50 per person, but scholarships are available. Ms. Blakeslee is running the Eaton program here, along with Ms. Coti. They are asking for an HSA donation to help pay for scholarships and for entry fees for the 5K race, incentives, t-shirts, snacks, and waterbottles. Sixteen girls are signed up so far.

David Shapinsky pointed out that this is a terrific opportunity to get some good press for Eaton, and suggested that Ms. Blakeslee get photo and video permission slips and get to him the “backstory” about why this is an important program. David is then willing to videotape some interviews for the press. Ms. Blakeslee came in 8<sup>th</sup> in the Marine Corps marathon.

Claudia moved that the HSA donate \$300 towards this program. Marjorie seconded. It was approved.

**Library Printer:** Laura Broach made a request to the HSA to replace the library printer, which we purchased three years ago. Eileen’s husband, who works for Hewlett Packard, can get us a \$1500 printer for \$400. This one is a workhorse printer with a larger capacity than the previous printer.

David moved that the HSA donate \$400 for the purchase the printer. Kelley seconded. Motion was approved.

**Vacuum:** There was discussion about appropriating some money to purchase an industrial vacuum for our janitor, who has no vacuum at all and must clean our carpets with a broom. Gwen pointed out that this is a slippery slope, deciding where to draw the line in terms of buying equipment that DCPS should really be providing. There was discussion about the televisions purchased by the school that are still not usable, and concern that DCPS money is not being allocated effectively. It was suggested that perhaps a new vacuum could come from the Gilbert Arenas money.

**JEAP** is having the Parents Cabaret on March 23 from 7-10, and will send flyers home in the backpacks tomorrow. Please buy tickets ahead of time. The cost is \$15. This will be like Jazz night, but not necessarily jazz. This is not a parent talent show.

Meeting adjourned at 8:16 pm.

Submitted by:

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Kelley Ellsworth  
HSA Secretary