

Minutes
John Eaton Elementary School Home School Association (HSA) Meeting
January 9, 2007
6:00-8:30 pm
John Eaton Library

Present: Kim Koontz Bayliss, Gwen Wright, Kelley Ellsworth, Stuart Weiser, Joy Carroll Wallis, Don Blanchon, Mark Boss, Eileen Langholtz, Carolyn Barnhardt, Leslie Tune, Shaun Seaberry, Tysan Williams, Jeanie Mah, Alex Wilson, Paul Basken, Jocelyn Drakeford, Margie Lidoff, Dietra Rogers, Marla Blount, Maureen Greenwood, Lisa Woods

Absent: Deborah Evans, Claudia Withers, Mercedes Lemp, David Shapinsky, Phronie Jackson, Kimberley Hughes

Approval of Minutes: Stuart Weiser moved to approve the minutes from the December 12, 2006 meeting. Mark Boss seconded. Approved.

Update on LSRT (Alex Wilson): The Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT) has elected representatives from every key area of the school: staff, principal, teachers, community representatives. (Several LSRT members were present at the HSA meeting: Paul Basken, Carolyn Barnhardt, Mark Boss, Dr. Drakeford and Alex Wilson.)

Kim Bayliss has been working on Enrollment for the past two years. We had enrollment problems last year, which caused us to lose teachers in the middle of the year. We are now doing active recruiting. We do not want to be a dozen kids shy of our goal. Our goal is 410-418. We are at 404 now. We are assuming we will lose our 6th grade in the fall of 2009 as planned by DCPS. To make up for this, we are expanding other grades. We also tend to see drop off in the upper grades due to private school enrollment, etc.

This year we expanded kindergarten from two classes to three. We may do that again next year, so that we will have three classes each of kindergarten and first grade. This year's 4th grade has three sections due to a promise to Hearst to provide space for their students. So we will probably have three classes of fourth grade again next year, as well as three classes of fifth grade.

If all these changes take place, then we will need two additional classrooms. DCPS says our building can theoretically hold 450 students. Dr. Drakeford said that we might be able to move the Special Ed and ESL into one shared classroom, as ESL groups are often just 4-5 children; however, additional thought will need to be given to providing the additional classrooms.

If in-boundary students could sign letters of their intent to stay, it would be helpful in planning. We will have a few slots publicly acknowledged as available to out-of-boundary students at every grade. If we advertise just a few, we can always take more. If we advertise "no slots," we will lose options.

PreK is not guaranteed, even for in-boundary students. Pre-K students must be 4 by September 30 this year.

Kim made a plug to join into the Enrollment Committee, which is working on recruitment from several preschools. Karen McAdoo will arrange a visit to Hearst to continue that relationship. We will also visit the Intelsat, Gahn, School for Friends, Kinderhaus, NCRC and Rosemount schools. Eileen suggested Washington Hebrew, but Gwen pointed out that they did not even want a flyer for our Open House because we are competing with them for students.

Gwen said several people who attended the November Open Houses have already said they plan to attend as in-boundary, or to apply to Eaton as out-of-boundary.

Strategic Planning: The LSRT is doing strategic planning around three broad priorities: Communication, Leadership, and Vision/Mission. Communication has improved already, with newsletter coordination, etc. Leadership: we have a new leader (our new principal). Vision/Mission: the LSRT is holding a community meeting on Thursday, January 18 to gather collective input on what Eaton is all about and to create a simple statement that expresses who we are. The Vision/Mission must be a work in progress, so all feel invested.

Budget: There will be another LSRT community meeting later in the year to work on prioritizing budget items. Our budget went up 12% last year. We have little discretion, however. We have some flexibility for items such as administration and professional development. We have continued to focus on our Special Education, and have money for the half-time position in the office (Ingrid Gutierrez' old position), but have not hired anyone yet.

Autonomy: we may be in a position to have this option as the Superintendent works to develop this program for high-performing schools.

Parents wondered if expansion of 5th and 1st grades will mean hiring more co-teachers through HSA. According to our current system, each grade has a co-teacher, regardless of the number of classes, but perhaps we will consider having 1.5 positions for those larger grades.

Eileen Langholtz pointed out that her daughter has always had a three class cohort. They have always had one co-teacher. They tried hiring two part-time teachers this year for 4th grade, but one left. They now are back to one. It was pointed out that fourth grade is a tricky grade because you have a number of students from Hearst who are new to Eaton.

Chinese language: There are now seven schools altogether involved in the program. We will get a teacher in March.

Dr. Drakeford just received an update that everything is still on track. They are currently applying for Visas for the teachers from China. The teacher is to arrive sometime in March. This year will be a pilot program, without much concern to curriculum and writing, and more focus on hearing the language and getting used to it. We will have 4th-6th grades in the pilot. In the fall, it will expand to Pre K-6th. The Chinese teachers will each be given a \$1000 per month housing stipend. We are asked to help scout out ideas for initial housing. They may choose to all live together. It would be nice to have some housing ready for them. They will be here for three

years. It is unclear whether this year will count as year one, or not. We may also have to pick up some of the expenses over time.

Principals Report:

Facility: Because we are so far down on the Master Plan for major renovation, DCPS is sending an independent contractor to fix the items that need immediate attention. Dr. Drakeford will be conducting a 2 hour walk-through tomorrow. The contractor will only be working with Eaton.

Dr. Drakeford is working to establish a partnership with Verizon through Katherine Brown (head of projects with schools). She told Ms. Brown that we have nice, new monitors in our classrooms, but no internet connection. Ms. Brown responded and gave a contact person, who is the President of the DC office of Verizon.

We keep getting a bill from Comcast and we do not know where the connection is. Kim Bayliss has contacts at Comcast and will try to expedite getting cable access.

Dr. Drakeford's stated that if we had video hookup, then the students could help produce the morning announcements.

Kelley suggested we also look into Best Buy, who now have technology partnerships with schools.

Celebrating Ms. Natarajan: Ms. Natarajan has been selected as the DC Teacher of the Year. The woman who is assigned the task of the DC celebration for Ms. Natarajan has been out sick. They are looking at Feb 12-15 for the date for a major DC event. Ms Natarajan will be at a national conference Jan 23 on, so they did not want to rush it. We could organize something for after Feb 15. Joy Carroll Wallis suggested a scrapbook from all kids who have been her students.

Communication: One parent expressed her concern about communication and used the awards ceremony as an example. She suggested that we send home more flyers. If paper conservation is an issue, Office Depot offers a free ream of paper in exchange for used ink cartridges.

It would be great if someone could be in charge of posting things on the HSA Bulletin Board and putting up flyers for HSA meetings.

Dietra Rogers said that, at other schools, there is ONE day that notices come out, and that is the day to check backpacks. Then parents know to check that day. The items come home in a colored folder: that is where you find it.

Ms. Barnhardt mentioned that all teachers are supposed to do a newsletter for the class once a month. It should include important dates. These are posted on the door as well.

Paul Basken: please think ahead and get notices in the newsletter a month ahead of time. The next will come out the 19th, with a deadline of Sat the 13th. The goal is to put it out every two weeks, with deadlines on Saturdays.

Leslie Tune suggested we post ALL the HSA dates on a colorful flyer around the building since we know already know when they will be. (Second Tuesday of each month, 6-8 pm.)

Marla Blount suggested we could have a dedicated drawer where people can drop info emails or flyers, and she and Margie Lidoff can put them up when they get a chance.

Footloose: Stuart Weiser reported that this event is scheduled for Friday, January 26, 6:30-9. This event is lots of fun -- alums even come from middle school. They need help stringing Christmas Lights the evening before the dance: Thursday, Jan 25, starting around 5 pm. They also need to borrow long strands of lights from parents. (All lights will be returned to their owners). They will need help setting up the night of, and also need help selling pizza, selling tickets and collecting tickets at the door. The dance requires 5-6 people at any one time. Last year they made \$1-2,000 from this event. It is not a major fundraiser, but just a fun time for our community. Security rules: if you leave, you cannot come back. No kids can come without a parent.

Treasurer's Report: Deborah Evans, the treasurer, was not present. Ideally we should have a budget update and report at every HSA meeting. We will have an Executive Committee meeting this month to go over the budget and finances.

Christmas event with HD Cooke: nobody has heard from David Shapinsky about whether anything happened.

Personnel Update: (Eileen Langholtz): We now have only one co-teacher in the fourth grade, and are looking for another part-time person. Ms. Jackson is the current co-teacher.

The Personnel Committee held a lunch with the co-teachers/HSA teachers to touch base and will do this again in the Spring. The PreK music teacher was not included. (This was an oversight.)

They are looking for a date in January to have two parents talk to the HSA teachers about allergy issues.

We paid for the Kindergarten aide through 2006. There will be a NEW aide, Ms. Vasquez, coming soon as soon as they check the fingerprints, etc. (Her fingerprints were misplaced.) It takes ten days.

Holiday Tree Sale: We reached our goal of \$22,500 net profit. The weather was great and volunteers enjoyed themselves. Don stated that he has never sold so many trees before. Don has not volunteered to do another year. He and Trish may help next year, but we definitely need someone new to take over.

Volunteers: Marla asked if we do more to acknowledge our star volunteers. Gwen said that we sent a nice plant to Trish and Don thanking them for their efforts. Perhaps we could give out Volunteer of the Year award at the Auction. Eileen suggested perhaps Volunteer of the Month, like an employee of the month. This could be included in the newsletter in a special box. Gwen

suggested we put Don and Trish in the newsletter as our first Volunteers of the Month. There was general agreement voiced. Paul will try to include photos of Don and Trish. Kelley and Marla will work on the Volunteer of the Year award.

Annual Fund: (Maureen Greenwood) She has not yet tallied the donations, but showed us a huge stack of envelopes.

Educational Needs Fund (ENF): (Joy Carroll Wallis and Kim Bayliss) \$38K collected, \$42K pledged. Ms. Steinkamp's class is in first place. The first class to get 100% participation gets an ice cream party.

Principals Breakfast: This will be held every other month to improve communication. The first will be January 18 at 8 am (**although subsequent to the HSA meeting, a decision was made to move this event to January 25th so that it does not conflict with the LSRT Community Meeting on January 18th.**)

Upcoming Events:

January 19: Scores for Schools: Jeanie Mah pointed out that John Eaton will receive \$100 for every basket that Gilbert Arenas makes that night. This is an away game. (Arenas started this program by donating money when he scores points at home games. The Wizards /Abe Polan are matching for the away games.) Perhaps we could all get together to watch it and cheer, with popcorn, etc. We could hold something at ESPN Sportszone. Perhaps JEAP could raise some money if we could get cable TV going in the MultiPurpose Room. It will be aired on Comcast Sportsnet. Kim Bayliss pointed out that Comcast has a brand new facility on North Capital and Massachusetts Avenue with a screening room. Kim Bayliss will follow up to see if we could use it. Joy will put out flyers. Trish Berman and Ms. Magruder each have popcorn machines that perhaps we could borrow for the event.

Feb 21: Open House (tentative)

March 10-11: Politics and Prose weekend

Friday, March 23: Parent's Cabaret, with live music (this is a JEAP fundraiser).

April 28: Auction (This is a new date!)

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Kelley Ellsworth, Secretary