

DRAFT

ARLINGTON COUNTY COUNCIL OF PTAS - Minutes of September 21, 2009

Attendees:

Reports from APS:

School Board Member Abby Raphael spoke of the importance of being involved in our children's education and also in education at the school and county level. She also shared some of the topics that the School Board is working on at the moment.

- The School Board is planning the budget framework for next year. They have worked with the superintendent and staff to evaluate current programs, with special focus on aligning dollars spent with the highest priorities within the strategic goals. With a framework in place, they will be better able to evaluate new budget proposals.
- The various capital improvement projects are going well. Washington-Lee is nearing completion and the Reed building is open. Yorktown is on schedule and on budget. The Wakefield schematic design has been approved and the project is moving forward..
- The School Board had a summer work session on enrollment, developing a consensus on what direction to take. They will hire a consultant to address capacity issues (what a building's capacity is, how to calculate capacity, how to use efficiently). The consultant will also look at the county's methods of projecting enrollment. The consultant will report to the Board towards the end of November. Abby expects that there will probably be no big changes for 2010; they want to get the report first and then figure out how to address the issues with some long-term solutions.
- A task group has been formed with the county to look at after-school programs, which have been shown to affect student achievement. The School Board is looking for recommendations for best practices and increased efficiency, with improvements that will not cost additional money.
- Abby reported that APS is planning and working with the county on H1N1; they are as prepared as they can be. They are trying to get the message out to practice good hygiene and stay home/keep kids home if they are sick. The vaccine may be distributed at schools (but not during school day). It needs to be coordinated regionally; information will come out as decisions are made.
- Finally, President Obama spoke at Wakefield on the first day of school. It went really well, and staff did a wonderful job organizing on short notice. The students were great. It was a good way to start the year.

Superintendent Pat Murphy reported that projected enrollment for the year was 21,130. At the seven day count we had 20,075 students, which is close to the projected student count. There was lots of growth at kindergarten level, adding 7 - 8 classes. Relocatables are a way to manage changing enrollment but it's not a long-term solution. The county will look at long-range solutions in the context of the capacity study (see above). The consultant will help with equity issues across buildings. One option being considered is to reduce space like computer labs, and turn them into classroom space.

We are fully accredited by the state and met SOL goals. We still have challenges with NCLB, but we are making progress in all groups.

Superintendent Murphy would like to have more staff members involved in PTAs this year. We all have roles to play, and he will work with CCPTA to foster and build on PTA relationships.

In response to a question - most of the budget is personnel cost. APS will look at how to change staffing formulas in the future to reduce that cost. Right now they are having discussions with principals to find out what they think. They will discuss this with lots of people in the system, as a collaborative process. There is no change right now. It's an option for next year.

Topic for the Evening:

The role of the CCPTA representative/Fostering school/family partnerships – We will discuss this throughout the year.

Connected to this topic, Nancy van Dorn spoke about the Latino Summit, to be held October 22nd at W-L. This is an outgrowth of TJ PTA efforts to get increased Hispanic parent participation at PTA meetings. The summit will help provide ideas about why not all parents participate and how you can increase participation in school and PTA activities. Teachers and parents should come; there will be student speakers as well, talking about their experiences and why students might feel reluctant to fully participate in their schools.

Several CCPTA members attended a virtual town hall with Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education. He spoke eloquently, including about parent engagement. He also discussed establishing a national set of standards, and having those standards be high ones, not a floor but a ceiling to aim for. He spoke of moving NCLB move to a new level. But there is concern that with no minimum standard to achieve, some students will lose out. PTA will have a role to play there. He also mentioned that schools should be community centers, and include adult education and activities as well as their more traditional role.

What is our role as a council? How can we share information in a useful format, about useful topics? Where do we need training (what areas)? Make sure that every school has a rep and they come to meetings. Suggested topics for discussion –

- We have a good model in the discussion about the directories; can we extend it to other areas? (Like topics/speakers for PTA meetings, increasing participation/membership, reaching out to new volunteers.)
- How do we communicate with parents? What works in the different communities?
- Listserves – do we go to APS or not? Why?
- How do you keep parents engaged through the year? How do you re-energize parents in the spring?
- How do you create a welcoming community? How do you welcome and include and engage everyone?
- Use the CCPTA website to share what each school does and to develop a template for various activities that includes what has been done to make a particular event successful (and also to avoid conflict with dates).
- How do you recognize participation behind the scenes and not just those who attend meetings?

PTA/Business Reports:

Roxanne Lindholm gave the treasurer's report. The audit is complete. We had \$12,661 in income last year, which is more than we originally budgeted for. We had \$16.025 in expenses. The additional

income enabled us to fund more scholarships. We are spending more than we are bringing in, but our goal is to spend what we raise. We don't have the books from the audit so we can't approve the budget for this year; we will do that at the next meeting.

Cecelia Espenosa reminded the group about the Reflections art contest. Reflections helps to foster out-of-classroom achievement. This year's theme is "Beauty is...". Friday, October 23, is the school deadline for submissions. November 15 is the deadline for each school to get projects to Cecelia for entry at the county level. The district PTA is hosting training this weekend; Reflections chairs can attend a training session at the district conference if anyone is interested. Cecelia also mentioned the Civic Federation meeting on October 6 at 7:30 at Virginia Hospital Center. They will be talking about H1N1 at the county level if you are interested

The Virginia Board of Education is holding a local hearing on October 30 in Alexandria on budget issues if parents want to attend.

Mary Ann Moran distributed the Family Network calendar. The Family Network has coordinated PTA offerings of programs to parents. Check the website for events and to suggest ideas.

The Special Education Parent Resource Center has lots of resources for all parents, not just parents of Special Education students. They can also come to the schools and PTA meetings. Contact them if you are interested.

The CCPTA is still looking for people who are interested in helping with bylaw amendments, the APS calendar, and the summer activities fair.

The minutes of the June meeting were approved.

NOTE: The next CCPTA meeting is October 15, a Thursday, not Monday, because of the holiday.

Respectfully submitted, Tracey Funari, Secretary