

# ACCESS Academy PTA

## Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, December 13, 2016, at 7 p.m. in the library, Rose City Park School, 2334 NE 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Portland, Oregon

**Meeting called to order by** President Jennifer Ellis at 7:00 p.m.

**Attendance:** 24 people signed the attendance list; of these, 16 were members for 2016–17. 6 members constitute a quorum for a General Membership Meeting.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the 11/15/16 General Membership Meeting, which were available for review, were accepted.

### Officers' Reports

#### President's Report

President Jennifer Ellis reported that the Executive Committee met over the previous weekend. The Executive Committee has noticed that Mr. Kreuz (who teaches physical education) spends his PTA-allocated funds more quickly and more completely than other teachers. He has also submitted requests online to fund specific projects using DonorsChoose.org.

The Executive Committee wondered whether the per-teacher \$500 allocation is sufficient for Mr. Kreuz's needs and whether the PTA should add a budget line item specifically for physical education. A parent suggested that the PTA should consider additional funds for Mr. Kreuz when he has specific issues.

Jennifer observed that, at her neighborhood school, the PTA would identify a certain point in the spring at which it would ask teachers to pool any unspent monies and allow teachers to apply to receive informal grants from that pool. She reported that the Executive Committee is considering such an approach at ACCESS.

A parent observed that some teachers are requesting informal support from parents for certain activities. They should be encouraged to use their PTA-allocated funds first, before doing so. Jennifer said that it would be good at least to remind teachers of those funds. Principal David Wood agreed to do this at the next faculty-staff meeting.

Jennifer pointed out that teachers can also get funds from a line item in the PTA budget for field trips. Teachers wanting to use those funds should contact the PTA (either Jennifer or Treasurer Colin Cunningham) before their field trips.

Jennifer reported that there has been an overwhelming response to the PTA's Helping Hands donation drive. It has brought in about \$2,600 in donations and an additional grant of \$1,000. Most of the funds will be converted to scrip (Fred Meyer gift cards).

Six to eight families will be supported. A substantial amount of money will be disbursed in advance of winter break. Some money will be held back to support needs that may arise later in the school year. Any funds remaining at the time of spring break may be disbursed at that time.

### Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Colin Cunningham reported that he has photocopies of latest financials to distribute.

The PTA checking account ended November with a balance of about \$36,000 (an increase from last month). There are no significant causes for concern.

The PTA has disbursed about 13% of the funds allocated to individual teachers (math and science teachers have yet to spend any allocated funds). To encourage teachers to use the PTA-allocated funds, Principal David Wood suggested that he will more frequently deny teacher requests for funds from his budget and encourage them to go to the PTA for reimbursement.

The PTA has raised about 2/3 of the \$9,000 goal of the annual GIVE Campaign. There are currently 109 paying members of ACCESS PTA, which is more the double the number expected in the budget.

A parent asked about the "PTA Admin" line item in Section D of the budget (under "administrative expenses"). Colin explained that this line item includes budgeted funds for fees, taxes, and training.

A parent asked about a line item for "lab expenses": is this in addition to per-teacher funds allocated to science teachers. Colin confirmed that it was and that the budget includes \$2,000 for science overall.

### Other Presentations

Following the meeting (from 7:20pm to 8:45pm), there was a presentation by and discussion with the following administrators from PPS: Judy Brennan, Director of Enrollment Planning, Enrollment and Transfer Center; Andrew Johnson, Program Director, Talented and Gifted (TAG); Carla Gay, Director, Early Warning Systems. Notes on these appear in an addendum.

### Old Business

A parent asked if there were any new information about the Chromebooks, whose funding was approved at the October meeting.

Principal David Wood confirmed that they have arrived at the school and have been tagged. They are owned by the PTA, which contributed \$800 to their purchase (the remaining \$868 came from Mr. Wood's budget). The Chromebooks are generally kept in the school library and complement others that were purchased with school funds.

A parent asked whether there were sufficiently many. Mr. Wood indicated that he was not aware of any deficiencies.

### **New Business**

#### **Auction**

Auction Chair Kristi Byfield reported that auction planning has reached an advanced state. Another announcement will soon be going out to parents (separate from the weekly Atomic Flyer. This year's auction will have a "disco" theme.

One parent lamented having been unable to come into school to meet and work on the auction. Kristi said that there will be a meeting at 4pm on Sunday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, at a parent's house. Details about that meeting will be in the Atomic Flyer and in the special auction announcement.

#### **Run for the Arts**

This year's Run for the Arts raised \$22,000 raised (up from \$15,000 last year). It seems that the decision to move the event to October (to separate it in time from the auction) was a good idea. In addition, parents agreed that being able to make donations online this year made it easier to raise a lot more money.

A parent asked how the raised funds were spent. Principal David Wood said that the funds were used to pay for performing or visual arts for classrooms (or the school). In the past, about 1/3 has been used for performances (e.g., trips); about 1/3 for efforts in the classrooms; and about 1/3 for supplies and equipment. Because of the larger amount raised this year, those proportions may be adjusted somewhat. So far, teachers have requested only about 1/3 of the funds that have been made available to them.

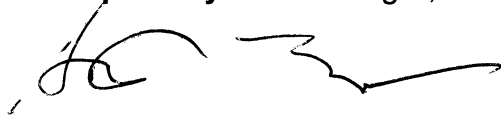
Mr. Wood observed funds from the City Arts Tax would be needed to pay for a certified art teacher. The school does not otherwise have funds for a half-time or part-time instructor. There are also space issues; the school does not have a dedicated room for regular art instruction or for special workshops.

A parent reported that at least one middle-school student has lamented that school's arts focus seems to be more at the elementary level. Mr. Wood noted that.

**Next General Membership Meeting is 1/24/17 at 7 p.m. at Rose City Park School.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.**

**Minutes compiled by Gilbert Neiger, Secretary**



**ACCESS Academy PTA**  
**Notes from General Membership Meeting**

Tuesday, December 13, 2016

**PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

Following the meeting, there was a presentation by and discussion with the following administrators from PPS: Judy Brennan, Director of Enrollment Planning, Enrollment and Transfer Center; Carla Gay, Director, Early Warning Systems; Andrew Johnson, Program Director, Talented and Gifted (TAG); and David Wood, Principal of ACCESS Academy.

Mr. Wood explained that he and Mr. Johnson had been tasked to provide feedback on the superintendent's proposal for the ACCESS admissions process. As part of that process, they are seeking input from parents. In addition, they want to hear ideas on how to serve students who are not admitted (or are not applying) to ACCESS. They are looking at "big picture" ideas.

The first presentation and discussion focused on the future of PPS TAG services and ACCESS, and was led by Andrew Johnson. Following this, there was a presentation and discussion of proposals for a new ACCESS entry process, led by Judy Brennan.

**Future of PPS TAG Services and ACCESS**

Many TAG programs are sited regionally. (One example is Beaverton's Summa program. This program is only for middle-school students, and admission to the program based solely on test scores.) Feedback is desired on TAG services broadly and not just ACCESS. Mr. Wood and Mr. Johnson have been asked what PPS is doing for wait-listed kids.

Mr. Wood said that there is deadline of 1 March to provide feedback on feasibility and that he has a responsibility joint with Mr. Johnson to gather any feedback from the public.

Mr. Johnson then began a discussion. He said that TAG is looking at the concept of a "scholars' program" on which to build a strong foundation at neighborhood schools. There should be a systematic mechanism for supporting eligible students who were not accepted (or did not apply) to ACCESS, and also a way of bringing professional development, enrichment, etc.

Mr. Johnson would meet with the leadership of each school to determine that school's specific needs. For example, Creston Elementary School was found have 40 students to be served but few resources. Discussions with that community led to development of an "expo" (an approach used in some International Baccalaureate programs). Each student identifies a topic of interest, does research, develops a project, etc. Once a

week, someone from TAG comes to the school to work with the students. In the spring, the school hosts an “expo” at which the students showcase their work.

One can ask the following questions:

- What happens at the neighborhood level?
- What happens at the transition from elementary to middle school?
- What happens on the K–12 continuum with ACCESS on that continuum?

Answering these can help develop a comprehensive story for TAG services across the district.

Mr. Johnson summarized by recalling that the principal goal is to impact what happens at classroom level. There are many ways to approach the various topics being discussed here, but improved classroom experience is the key outcome desired.

Following Mr. Johnson’s presentation, Mr. Wood said that the expectation going forward is that ACCESS will be a service for a subset of TAG-identified student and thus part of a larger service for all TAG students. He and Mr. Johnson will continue to work together — probably more closely now, given the new superintendent’s interest in plans for TAG students who do not attend ACCESS.

Mr. Wood observed that some things will become clearer as the future ACCESS location (and size) become clearer. He acknowledged that there will continue to be more demand for ACCESS than can be supported at the Rose City Park building.

There is a fairly tight timeline between now and 1 March for Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wood to give feedback to superintendent. They are hoping for input from PTA as representative parents: how best to serve students who do not come to ACCESS; what questions should be asked; and what should Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wood be thinking about.

At this point, parents provided feedback.

On parent observed that the Beaverton Summa program has very high cut-off and serves only middle school. What would be the scope of students for whom Mr. Wood develops recommendations? Those in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile? All TAG students?

If a PPS program differs from Beaverton by serving elementary students, how would that work? Different neighborhood schools have different number of TAG students; would elementary programs be clustered?

The Summa program has no socio-emotional component. Students take three classes together and spend the rest of their day with the rest of their school. That might be reasonable in middle school — but how would it work given the way that PPS organizes middle schools?

Another parent observed that, in some cases, TAG students are only given extra work. Students generally figure that out, and it often doesn't work out well. The parent used her background in child mental health to emphasize that many of these students benefit greatly from an opportunity to be with similarly bright children, rather than having their "own corner" in a neighborhood school and standing out from other students. There is value in their being able to interact with children of their own age rather than being advanced to be with older children.

It is hard to imagine that we can do something meaningful, given financial realities over the last decades, and especially the recent loss of Measure 97. The parent has seen many patients who are teachers verging on PTSD; they can barely get their normal work done, let alone doing extra work for TAG students. How can we support those teachers without additional resources?

Another parent expressed concern that, at a recent meeting of the PPS Teaching and Learning Committee, a parent representing ACCESS took off his "PTA hat" and took his own part (rather than representing ACCESS); this seemed like a potential distraction. The parent then reflected that he brought his son to ACCESS to give him a community that he would not have in a neighborhood school.

A parent asked Mr. Johnson how a student outside ACCESS would experience the support that might be provided. What would those students' experiences be like? Principals at the neighborhood schools should be held accountable for the experience of those students.

Another parent observed that ACCESS gives students an opportunity to study at their level (or close to it) in language arts and mathematics. There is no stigma; students simply take an examination and are then placed into the proper math class. Outside of ACCESS, this is extremely hard and has the potential to stigmatize students. It is a burden to ask children to do this only "on the side" or as enrichment.

Another parent remarked that she sent her child to ACCESS hoping that the school would also serve her child's unique social needs. Doing so would also be very important for qualified students who do not attend ACCESS and remain at their neighborhood schools. Is there a dollar amount allocated for students who aren't able to attend ACCESS? What is model for that?

Another parent recalled that, when he was growing up back east, a group of TAG kids traveled once a week to a single school that served the entire district. Could an approach like this work? It doesn't really solve the issue of acceleration beyond a grade or two (e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> grader taking 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math). Being pulled out in this way did call out these kids (in front of their fellow students), but it also gave them some community; they made friends all over city (as well as keeping their core neighborhood group). Another parent suggested that PPS once had a model like that.

Another parent remembered being in an experimental program that combined grades 6–8 in one classroom. Work was adjusted to students' abilities, although they all took the same test every year. Students had to demonstrate learning and could move on — or stay back — as appropriate. The parent remembers going from being far behind in math to completing Algebra 1 on his own during that three-year period.

Another parent suggested that serving students who are grouped based on ability need not cost more than serving students conventionally. This should be considered when phasing in a structure such as the one being considered here. There was a suggestion that Summa focuses on middle school because doing so is easier.

One parent went to a magnet school for high school in Nashville and learned (only recently) that many classmates there had been beaten up regularly while in elementary and middle schools because of their “special status.” Administrators here should bear in mind that some forms of “service” to TAG students could result in their receiving negative pressure from peers. Victimization of TAG students as “freaks” may peak in middle school, suggesting that this might be the best time to intervene on their behalf.

Another parent encouraged Mr. Johnson to spend a few days at ACCESS, with special-ed kids, etc. She remarked that one of her children (who started at ACCESS only recently) responded to a grandparent’s “how is school?” inquiry with “I’ve come home”; ACCESS has been an academic home that many of its students have never had before.

#### ACCESS Entry Process

Ms. Brennan began by calling out her own personal background as an accelerated student in PPS and later as a parent of gifted children in Florida.

Ms. Brennan then gave a presentation “2017-18 DRAFT ACCESS ENTRY PROCESS,” which was handed out and displayed on the screen. It can be viewed and downloaded at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9ypD-9qUIZWaWs1REdHLWixajA> . Because this presentation is readily available, these notes do not attempt to summarize or report on it.

**Note.** Following the presentation, there was a group exercise to collect feedback from those parents who were present. Those who did not attend and record their preferences in the exercise are encouraged to provide their feedback using an online survey accessible at the following address: <https://goo.gl/forms/7hD7nhKPpjgdDYvJ2> . (This address is also given in the presentation itself.)

Ms. Brennan called attention to the fact that the earlier proposal by Karl Logan (PPS Senior Director for the Grant and Jefferson Clusters) regarding ACCESS admissions had been refined somewhat based feedback that the ACCESS PTA gave to Mr. Logan.

The idea is both to have a large long-term conversation regarding the future, and to be looking at improvements for the next group of students and parents going through

admissions process. The focus of the latter would be on an ACCESS entry process that is fairer and more accessible.

A workgroup has been meeting with new superintendent, who is very interested in making improvements. The goal for now is not to attempt to solve every problem but rather to establish systems that would simplify things for the next permanent superintendent.

The 6<sup>th</sup> slide of the presentation (ACCESS Enrollment and Entry History) recalls that the original 2002 Memo describing ACCESS stated that, "If there are more qualified applicants than space, ACCESS will follow the Student Transfer admission policy." Ms. Brennan observed that ACCESS later moved away from that policy.

The 14<sup>th</sup> slide, which presented a draft of a new ACCESS entry process, discussed lottery preferences. A parent asked about the possibility of weighting the lottery based on a student's "need" to attend ACCESS (e.g., as measured by grades ahead in the student's current school). Ms. Brennan said that the lottery preference order (proposal on the 16<sup>th</sup> slide) refers to different levels of eligibility. She was hoping to get parents' input on this proposal during an exercise following the discussion.

Another parent asked whether geographical distribution could be an additional criterion? Ms. Brennan said that it could be.

Another parent asked about the possibility of using income as substitute for racial diversity and also wondered about the fact that not all neighborhood schools are created equal. A student may be impacted by attending a school in a low-income neighborhood even if the student's family isn't low income.

Ms. Brennan responded that the planned exercise would solicit input on how to rank the various criteria and to identify additional criteria that should be considered.

A parent asked about the status and timing of testing. Mr. Johnson responded that testing of 2<sup>nd</sup>-graders (about 4,000 students) is complete and that letters have gone out. This is well ahead of last year's schedule. Some schools have already completed all testing. The goal is to have tested all of K-12 by 15 February. In total, about 6,000 letters go out to families.

A parent asked when letters would go out to parents of students who scored in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile. Mr. Johnson was not certain whether those letters were being accelerated or would be held to go out all at once with the others. Another parent observed that communication to those in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile has been very important, especially for those in underserved groups. Ms. Brennan remarked that that was good feedback and that PPS needs to balance addressing that issue with limitations on recruiting.

After parents completed the exercise, Mr. Wood asked that Ms. Brennan's staff transcribe the exercise results and fold them into the survey responses collected online.



He invited people to provide feedback on the revision process, cautioning that the initial part of process (or information being provided about it) may be delayed a little.

**Notes compiled by** Gilbert Neiger, Secretary