

# ACCESS Academy PTA

## Minutes of General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, November 15, 2016, at 7:00 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 7:04 p.m.

**Attendance:** 16 people signed the attendance sheet; of these, 14 were members for 2016–17. Six members constitute a quorum for a General Membership Meeting.

**Introductions:** President Jennifer Ellis invited everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and they did so.

**Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the 10/11/16 General Membership Meeting, which were available for review, were accepted. A link to those Minutes and accompanying Notes will be provided in the next week's issue of the Atomic Flyer newsletter, and on the ACCESS Academy Parents' Facebook page.

**Financial Report** -- Colin Cunningham, Treasurer

October books balanced. \$32,269 in bank account as of October 31. For details about income and expenses from 7/1/16 to 10/31/16, as compared to amounts budgeted for FY2016, attendees were directed to printouts of the following document, viewable at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B\\_G8USHqxN0WaklCeXF6M3RIa0k/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_G8USHqxN0WaklCeXF6M3RIa0k/view?usp=sharing)

**Income:** So far this fiscal year the PTA has already raised \$21,013 from all sources toward its goal of \$51,650. This includes \$5,820 raised toward its Give! Campaign goal of \$9,000. Membership currently stands at 103 (about double that of this time last year). Good news: lots of teachers are joining!

**Expenses:** \$15,127 of the total of \$61,580 expenses budgeted for FY2016 have been paid. Of the \$10,250 budgeted this year for Teacher Classroom Expenses, teachers/staff have spent only 8% so far. These funds, allocated \$500 per Full Time Equivalent employee, are used to pay for field trips, supplemental books and materials. Teachers submit receipts and a form to get reimbursed by the PTA. Most spending of and reimbursement for these funds tends to happen in the second half of the school year, or when teachers receive reminders to spend (and submit receipts).

**Principal's Report** – David Wood

### 1. Parent-Teacher Conferences.

All time high turnout by families at Conferences held November 9 & 10 -- virtually 100% participation. Math conferences are conducted separately for those math-accelerated students not yet in middle school. Individual conferences should be scheduled with those teachers. ACCESS PTA provided dinner on one of the two evenings to all of our ACCESS and Beverly Cleary School (BCS) teachers.

## 2. Site Council.

First meeting of this school year will be week of December 5. Purpose of ACCESS Site Council: to review school improvement plan and school decisions at the program level, with input from, and feedback to, Mr. Wood and staff. Oscar Gilson, PPS' head of High School programs, has been invited and is expected to attend on Dec. 5.

## 3. Admissions Process for Fall 2017.

Interim Superintendent Bob McKean asked a small working group (including Mr. Wood, Karl Logan, Sr. Director – Grant & Jefferson Clusters (including ACCESS), Andrew Johnson, PPS Talented & Gifted director) to refine ACCESS' admissions process. As currently recommended, that process will remain primarily at ACCESS, but ACCESS will receive assistance from one or more TAG Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs).

Questions and lengthy discussion followed.

Who will be eligible to apply to ACCESS? Across the district student eligibility will be measured using current 99%-ile screening tests. In addition it is likely that for applicants to 4<sup>th</sup> grade and above, certain state normed assessment tests such as SBAC will also be used to establish 99% eligibility. Kids testing at or above the 99% cutoff would then enter a second stage to determine whether they demonstrate need for ACCESS' alternative program. Eligibility language is being made more consistent: in their application families and schools will need to speak to kids' experience at their school (or other current learning situation). Students' needs for alternative program will be rated on a numerical scale. Criteria for needing the alternative program are being further specified. Those meeting a cut-off number could advance to a weighted lottery to become eligible for either admission or waitlist status.

Timeline to implement this new process? "ASAP." Meeting is imminent (was supposed to have been today)." The working group's recommendation is currently with the Superintendent. New admission process should be in place for admissions cycle this spring. Test scores for kids TAG tested this year are being handled within PPS (unlike last year) and are expected back before winter break. This should provide adequate lead time for follow-up.

Question: A parent reports having seen a memo from someone at PPS that referred to "illegal recruiting" by alternative schools. What is allowed?

Mr. Wood answers: Oregon state rules prohibit alternative programs from "recruiting." However, we can inform families whose kids are 99%-identified of ACCESS' program, suggest they may wish to consider ACCESS an option, and let them know we have current families eager to answer any questions they might have.

From now on, letters notifying families of their kids' 99%-ile status will come from PPS' central TAG office rather than from individual schools. This will help keep the identification process separate from the application process.

Question: Will weights put into lottery be made transparent? What priorities will be applied? Mr. Wood replies: As long as there are more applicants than slots, a lottery will be used and if there is a lottery then filters/priorities will be established and applied.

Priorities might include: free & reduced lunch, geographical, sibling, other. Only after admitted would SPED or IEP status be considered.

Question: Then, will aid be given for the kids ultimately accepted who need SPED, an IEP, 504 plan, etc.? Given the hiring cycle, will PPS be sufficiently and timely responsive?

Mr. Wood answers that the revised admissions process is designed to take place sufficiently early that the supports a student got at their current school can follow that student to their new school. Earlier admission date will give PPS and ACCESS the opportunity to do necessary planning, including appropriate staffing. Yes, there's a shortage of paraeducators even for current students. And yes, the district is obligated to provide those supports.

There will be more direct expectation that the current school will convey to families and to ACCESS what they've tried and what has/hasn't worked. This will enable applicants to more effectively state how they would benefit from the alternative program, and to get the services they need.

A parent expresses concern that some kids have no advocates (teachers, parents, counselors, etc.) and so may never get the enrichment they need at their neighborhood school let alone the opportunity to apply to ACCESS. Must they endure a whole year after being identified as 99%-ers, to have their needs met?

Will ACCESS have input into what the weightings will be? Gender slots? We are a program not a school so we may not be required to follow the same formulae used by other schools or alternative programs. Superintendent will review and make recommendations, and then ask for public comment about the lottery and the weightings (priorities) that will be applied. Example: sibling preference and other priorities would then be implemented by Enrollment and Transfer.

Previously, ACCESS' Admission Committee determined who "needed" ACCESS' alternative program; is that discretion going away?

Mr. Wood answers: Current plan envisions there will be a "cut point." A 4-point scale might be used to indicate "4. Lots of evidence, 3. Some evidence, 2. Little evidence, or 1. No evidence" of each of the criteria used to qualify for the alternative program. Criteria will be scored and a total number determined for each applicant who has previously qualified at the 99% level. Then those above the numerical cutoff will be put into the pool for the lottery. Probably fewer kids will be waitlisted.

Parent question: If, as this sounds, the effect is to reduce the number of applicants put onto the waitlist, wouldn't that make it look like we need fewer slots (less growth?)

Mr. Wood answers: Formerly we had YES/NO (binary) responses to our subjective evaluation of need for alt ed. The committee will now seek to define an amount of need. One of the Complainants says they have requested the Board specify what happens to the waitlisted child. If the letter that says anything other than "Admit" it should list resources available to the waitlisted or rejected applicant.

Question re “Exceeding all benchmarks” criterion. Isn’t every child who exceeds a benchmark, but is given no opportunity for acceleration, demonstrating need?  
Mr. Wood observes: Even a child testing at 85%-ile might “exceed all benchmarks,” however, the Board has called for 99%-ile to be the cutoff for ACCESS eligibility.

Question: How can you tell if the kid is exceeding ALL benchmarks?  
Mr. Wood answers: It may be hard to determine but using tools such as SBAC & OAKS tests in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade & beyond will give indications; but younger kids (below 2<sup>nd</sup> grade) are still missed. Question: Aren’t kids who are testing at 99%-ile for cognitive, by definition exceeding at least some benchmarks and in demonstrating need for acceleration?

Parent question: Will students who test high but are sent back to their neighborhood school receive a “TAG plan” to be implemented back at their home school? How can we (and PPS’ Karl Logan) know that these plans will be adequate and implemented?  
Mr. Wood answers: ACCESS will be communicating back to the home school what needs need to be met at the local schools. ACCESS will acknowledge in its response to each application that the student is in need of plan, and communicate the nature and extent of those needs back to the school (and parents).

Question: What about growth?  
Using a lottery will be moot if there are slots sufficient for all qualified applicants, but whether ACCESS will grow to provide new slots has yet to be determined. The Board’s Teaching & Learning Committee meets November 29 to consider this issue.

#### 4. Online school directory.

Input gathered from new families this week, data being entered this week by hand. Directions and link to login to MySchoolAnywhere will be emailed out to ALL families. Users will be able to sort by last name, grade level and, for elementary kids, teacher’s name. There will be a mechanism by which groups of students. To get messages to a group of students you will be able to use the directory; if you want to message teachers too, contact Mr. Wood. Families will be able to edit into their own listing online.

#### 5. Health update.

Matt Loomis, head custodian, fell off a ladder about 10 days ago, while retrieving balls from ACCESS’ roof. Seriously injured, he is still in hospital and will be recuperating for months from fractures and multiple internal injuries. Mr. Wood and Trish visited him over the weekend in the hospital, and he OK’d that this news be disseminated. Roof safety issues are being looked into as part of the OSHA accident review process.

Parent: Can PTA help? Mr. Wood informs that Mr. Loomis has children at another PPS school and their school has been helping with meals and family support. A parent suggests ACCESS contribute housekeeping or other services still needed. Mr. Wood or Trish will be in touch with the Loomis family and offer PTA assistance. Treasurer states that using funds already allocated to Staff Appreciation would be appropriate.

### **ACCESS Foundation Report -- Kristi Byfield**

The ACCESS Auction, the Foundation's principal fundraising event, will be April 29<sup>th</sup> -- not so far away. About 70 people are needed to make it work. Kristi is sending a memo out soon to familiarize everyone with last year's process. (About \$70K raised last year.) Sue Fisher will lead procurement this year! Calls need to go out now, with donations going to Kristy for storage.

Auction theme: Disco. Location: Oaks Park Dance Pavilion. Band has been engaged. Simultaneous student skating event at Oaks Park Roller Skating Rink. View the auction website at <http://access.tofinoauctions.com/auction2017>

Volunteer sign-ups open now: food donations for potluck; creation of video used during paddle raise; photography; procurement; skating party T-shirt design project; chaperoning for skating party (~20 needed). Last year there were 238 skaters while 200 parents attended the auction – a very impressive turnout! Many schools contact ACCESS to find out how we manage to get so high a turnout.

### **Committee Reports**

Jennifer Ellis, PTA President, notes that the PTA is in the process of identifying additional committee chairs and members. She introduces reports by the following committees:

1. Communications Committee – Tanya Schaefer, Chair (not present).

President Jen Ellis reports that Atomic Flyer newsletter, going out by email every Thursday morning, has been well received. MailChimp (delivery service) reports that, so far, each issue has been opened (viewed) by about 50% of recipients.

2. Community Service Committee – report by Judy Berck, Chair.

Student Leadership Program. To date, 40 kids from all grades have signed up to participate this school year. Enrollment period has been extended to the end of November. Ms. Byrkit's classroom drive to collect hats/gloves/scarves drive for a Syrian refugee camp in Greece yielded 200 items.

8<sup>th</sup> Grade Leadership (report by Sue Fisher). 8<sup>th</sup> graders will put together winter necessity kits in zip-lock bags for the homeless, and present them Portland Rescue Mission during first week of December.

Box Tops for Education (report by Sue Fisher). Yes, we collect them. Worth ten cents each, they can be used to fund community service projects. Last year they yielded \$200 for clothing for kids at Transitional Community School.

Willamette Week's Give Guide, currently online, lists many organizations and projects needing help from those looking to do service.

Children's Book Bank, and local Food Bank. Sign-ups for our school's designated days have been filling up far in advance. Can we make more days or slots available?

3. Social Activities Committee – David Fikstad, Chair (not present); Sara Kennedy Adams reports.

ACCESS Book Fair. Sunday, December 11, noon to 3p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, Lloyd Center. Performances will be needed. See sign ups see link in Atomic Flyer or contact Sara. Families and Staff, in addition to students, are being invited to

perform this year. B&N donates a percentage of purchases made at that store that day to ACCESS, if buyers identify mention ACCESS.

Middle School Dance – Next one is probably around Valentine’s Day.

Halloween Haunted House (Auditorium): it was successful, scary, fun.

4. Fundraising Committee – report by Jen Ellis. Seeking additional participants, and even a committee head!

Chinook Books. Hardcopies are still available to purchase. Contact

T-shirts/Sweatshirts. Orders have been gathered and submitted to supplier. We didn’t order extras.

5. TAG Education Advocacy Committee – report by Scholle McFarland, Chair.

Update: Last spring the PPS Board’s Teaching & Learning (T&L) Committee (comprising 3 Board members) asked the Board’s Educational Options Committee to come up with sites that could hold an expanded ACCESS, one large enough to meet currently demonstrated need (at least 550 students). As part of this process, staff in PPS’ System Planning & Performance office generated a report for the Board dated Oct. 2016, “ACCESS Academy: Admission, Siting, and Growth Analysis.” A copy of the report was made available at this meeting and is viewable at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9ypD-9qUIZWVzBEUTZwb0hnQ0U/view?usp=sharing>

TAGAC, and ACCESS, await the Committee’s (and Board’s) response. The report identified Humboldt and Rose City Park as most viable options. TAGAC tried to get them to vote in October; instead they turned their attention to coming up with a proposal to serve all 99%-ers, perhaps through programs similar to Beaverton’s Summa or Seattle’s. T&L is due to consider that report make a decision at its November 29<sup>th</sup> meeting, but it’s not clear who (if anyone) might be in charge of T&L.

Further background: TAGAC previously submitted a report requesting a permanent home for ACCESS that meets currently demonstrated need, and a plan to meet full need in the future, “TAGAC Recommendation for the Growth of ACCESS Academy,” dated Oct. 19, 2016. A copy was made available at this meeting, and is viewable through a link from the ACCESS Academy Parents Facebook page or at

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9ypD-9qUIZWT2wwOXN5RmJ5Qms/view?usp=sharing>

DBRAC is also awaiting guidance from T&L in their boundary review process. DBRAC needs to move forward formulating plans for the East Side. Beverly Cleary is now at 900 students and growing. Perhaps portables could be used for ACCESS Beverly Cleary and other locations.

Question: Will continuing inertia (inaction) mean ACCESS stays put at Rose City Park for 2017-18? Reply: Likely.

Question: Meanwhile, how do we accommodate the current waitlist? Reducing the "Waitlist" by using the new admissions process/formula (number cutoff) may take the pressure off the momentum to grow to meet that need.

Andrew Johnson is not related to the Teaching and Learning Committee, but it's unclear how this committee relates to other committees and entities within PPS. There's no organizational chart to tell us who is involved in making the decisions about ACCESS' siting, growth, and the TAG issues that remain for kids not admitted to ACCESS. The process seems Balkanized and opaque. Clarity has been difficult to obtain, particularly since many positions within PPS are vacant.

Mr. Wood: "It's being discussed, and I look for clarity coming shortly." This may take the form of some reorganization of offices and departments in PPS that make decisions relating to TAG programs and ACCESS. The Teaching and Learning meeting scheduled for November 29 could give us some guidance. May point to future location. ACCESS is still under Karl Logan. What TAG services will neighborhood schools provide?

In answer to a question, Mr. Wood reiterates that his role is to support the current students and families at ACCESS wherever they are located, to provide the Board with information about the program and familiarize them with the needs of ACCESS' population; he is not in a position to advocate for one or another outcome. He does appreciate being invited to participate in and contribute data to upcoming meetings.

Mr. Wood expresses appreciation for ACCESS families who continue to advocate not only for our students but also for those whose need for an ACCESS education has not yet been met.

A member of TAGAC explained that those who submitted the formal Complaint against PPS in August regarding ACCESS' admissions process presented ACCESS as part of the district's overall TAG approach. Timeline of the complaint? The Board must respond and vote on it in a public meeting (December 6 at the earliest). The Complainants requested a size and growth plan, clearer criteria to be used to assess applicants' individual needs for alternative program, and a plan for kids who have demonstrated need but are not admitted.

Question: Is TAGAC looking at options regarding high school?

Scholle answers: TAGAC is focusing right now on location and size of existing program.

**Teacher Appreciation Committee** – Erika Marks, Susan Tjipto (not present); report by Jen Ellis. Organizes monthly meetings. For conferences, BCS family that owns Sweet Basil Thai donated dinner one evening for their 6 and our 21 teachers. An ACCESS family, owners of Queen of Sheba restaurant donated Ethiopian dinner for all on the other evening.

**Volunteer Coordination Committee** – report by Jen Ellis. Seeking individuals interested in helping coordinate existing volunteer efforts.

**Health and Wellness Committee** – Deborah F.

**Emergency Preparedness Committee** – Deborah F.

Just 1/3 and 1/2 of all kids have brought in their individual Emergency Preparedness Kits. Concern: In the event of a disaster, some will have what they need (family note/photo, fidget, emergency contact list) and others will have nothing.

Deborah solicits suggestions for getting more packets for the rest of the kids.

Suggestions include: sending out one more email/letter request to families; asking homeroom teachers to ask their kids for their kits; having a project to make kits for those who don't provide their own; provide low-cost fidgets for all (by purchase or donation), or small toys/games, inspirational statement cards, and the like.

Sourcing non-allergenic (e.g. gluten-free) foods such as Cheerios with adequate shelf life and low cost has been a challenge. Parents offered some suggestions for safe repackaging and local sourcing. Deborah would like to get on with loading these supplies into buckets for the year, ASAP.

### **Other Business**

10 new Chromebooks have been purchased for the school of which PTA bought four. All are already in use.

Several parents thank Mr. Wood for the message he sent out to the ACCESS community today, which hit the right tone for many who appreciated its emphasis on inclusiveness. Mr. Wood reported that Staff met today together for the first time since the election, and all have had time to reflect since last week. They spoke in depth. Mr. Wood sat in on some 7<sup>th</sup> grade conversations today. When discussion turned to the election, more than a few said, "We're tired of talking about it." Further discussion about the election and its aftermath will take place either in small groups or one to one

**Next General Membership Meeting is 12/13/16 at 7 p.m. at Rose City Park School.**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.**

**Minutes compiled by** Lisa Karplus, Secretary for the Meeting



MINUTES  
APPROVED  
12/13/2016