

Minutes for the Stoddert PTA Executive Meeting on October 16, 2014

Attendees:

Leigh McKenna
Mary Clare Claud
Caitlin Oppenheimer
Alysia Lutz
Denea Bruce
Anne Banner
David Clark
Robin Spence
Tom Strike
Ginger Jacobs
Liz Ludgin
Cristina Boccuti
Allan Gordus

PTA Presidents' Report

Fall Festival

The Fall Festival is on track for a great time on Saturday. The Fall Festival still needs volunteers.

Big Chili Planning Progress

May Piotrowski has agreed to co-chair the 2015 Big Chili with Alyssa McClellan. Many thanks to both of them for volunteering to lead this event, which is Stoddert's biggest fundraiser of the year. The entire team from last year's Big Chili has agreed to return this year. The Big Chili team will have its first meeting of the year on November 4. At that meeting, the team will hopefully identify a possible date and venue for the event. It will be in April or May, preferably on a Saturday. The team is still looking at locations for this year's Big Chili, including Georgetown University, which offered us space last year.

Playground Progress

Caitlin Oppenheimer gave an update on the rehab project for the playground. On October 10, there was a meeting with Earl Gilliam from the DC Department of General Services (DGS) about the rehab of our playground. Caitlin reminded Gilliam that Stephen Kitterman had agreed that DC DGS would pay for new turf, an outdoor classroom near the back trees and replacing the teeter totter as soon as DC DGS received its new budget on October 1. Caitlin also reminded Gilliam that we wanted to get this work done as soon as possible and before winter. Gilliam agreed that DC DGS should pay for this work, but there was no date set for the work to begin. Also, Stoddert parent and local artist Wes Lawrence has volunteered to paint a four-square box and hopscotch lizard on the playground. Wes is the person who painted our amazing Wolf logo on the cement in front of the school.

Book Fair Results

Caitlin Oppenheimer, who served as Book Fair manager, reported on the recently concluded Book Fair. We used a new vendor this year—Bookworm Central. Overall, we did really well as we earned about \$8,400, which is similar to what we earned at last year's book fair even though the book fair this year was open for only 4 days (because Friday was a professional development day) versus 5 days last year. This year's book fair sold over 1,400 items. Caitlin is looking for feedback on what everyone thought of the book selection at the book fair.

Caitlin raised the possibility that another book fair could be scheduled for this year and is open to any thoughts anyone might have on whether we should have another book fair and when it should be scheduled. There was a comment that future book fairs might have higher sales if it is scheduled closer to the holidays, maybe in early December.

Caitlin said that she is also looking at better ways to do the teachers' book wish lists. It might be better to allow the teachers to browse the books before the book fair starts and then display the wish-list books for each teacher on a table to make it easier to purchase the books. There is also a thought that it might be beneficial to allow the students to browse the books before the book fair starts.

Principal Patricia Pride Visit – October 21

Patricia Pride, the principal at Hardy Middle School, will be coming to Stoddert on the night of Tuesday, October 21. Principal Pride wants the PTA to collect questions from parents and send them to her before the meeting so she can prepare for the meeting and have answers for everyone's questions. Principal Pride will bring two teachers and a vice-principal with her to the meeting. Principal Pride may also bring the coordinator of the gifted and talented program at Hardy Middle School.

The PTA at Key elementary is hosting a Hardy feeder school parent meeting the same night that Principal Pride is coming to Stoddert.

A tour of Hardy Middle School for Stoddert Parents is being organized. It will probably be scheduled for a Friday as that is the day when it is easiest for most parents to attend a tour of Hardy during the school day.

Extended Care Program Update

The wait list for the Extended Day Program is now down to one family. This family should be able to join the program in November.

There are around 130 families in the Stoddert Extended Day Program at this point, representing around 170 students. It seems that most families on the wait list at the beginning of the year found alternative after school care, many through Coach Ricky's program through the DC Department of Recreation. The Board acknowledged that by failing to accommodate these families in the Extended Day Program, the PTA likely lost an opportunity to capture additional dues that are required to be paid when a family joins the Extended Day Program.

Ms. Mia, who does a great job running the Extended Day Program, says that the program is completely full and can grow no larger based on the current model. Ms. Mia has acknowledged that for the program to accommodate more students, the model would have to change. As such, she encourages a school community discussion about the future of the Extended Day Program. There will most likely be a long waitlist for the program next year unless the program is changed to accommodate more families. The question is whether the program should be changed to allow more families into the program. Ms. Mia has researched other after care programs and has information on them.

There were comments that Stoddert's Day Care Program is great and should be preserved as it is. Alternatively, there was also a concern that all families at Stoddert who need after care should be able to get it as it is a real problem to not have after care.

By February or March 2015, there should be a clear vision of what the program should be next year. The DCPS target for the number of students at Stoddert will be important in determining how many families may need after care next year at Stoddert.

Fillmore

The Fillmore 40th Anniversary Party on Saturday, September 27 went very well. John Claud, Stoddert parent and Chair of the Friends of Fillmore, led the organization of the party. He passed along his hearty thanks to all the volunteers and all the families who came out to the party.

Principal's Report

Principal Bryant is at an "America Achieves" meeting in New York City. He has a fellowship with this group. America Achieves supports the common core standards. In his absence, Assistant Principal Alysia Lutz gave the Principal's Report.

Student Enrollment

The current number of students at Stoddert is between 415 and 420. Currently, roughly 10% of Stoddert's students are out of boundary. Next year, there will be a requirement that 10% of Stoddert's students be out of bounds, which may not affect Stoddert significantly since we are already at 10%.

Currently, Stoddert has not reached its projected enrollment of 429, set forth by our budget. Last year Stoddert was under its target number of students by 30 to 40 students. While we have not quite reached 429, we likely will, and if we don't our budget should not be impacted negatively.

Staff

Stoddert's newly hired half-time psychologist started this week. The psychologist will be needed for EPASS testing, among other things. Our psychologist is shared with Murch Elementary.

Stoddert's half-time English Language Learners (ELL) teacher started. Stoddert shares its ELL teacher with Amidon Bowen Elementary School.

Stoddert is now fully staffed with the exception of its half-time math resource teacher. Stoddert's half-time math resource teacher, Dolores Pesek, is out until January. Stoddert will consider hiring a long-term substitute teacher for two months. Principal Bryant asked to get access to the money that DCPS is saving due to this absent teacher, but DCPS said no.

The West Wing

All security cameras for the trailer classrooms are mounted. The screens for the security guards will be re-programmed soon so that these cameras will show up on the screens with the other older cameras.

The projectors for the trailer classrooms are working but need to be mounted into all the classrooms. Some of the projectors are mounted and some are not. Every projector should be up and running by the end of tomorrow.

All of the trailer classrooms need to re-keyed so that there is only one master key for all the classrooms instead of the 6 separate keys that we currently have.

The proper desks for the trailer classrooms are still on their way but are not yet here. As soon as the baskets for the desks arrive, they should be installed ASAP. There is some frustration among parents that students are having to do without properly fitted desks, losing valuable instruction time to increased transition time as students must store everything in their cubbies. There is urgency around getting this fixed.

Earlier in the year, there was an idea that there should be water coolers in the West Wing classrooms. Some teachers assigned to the West Wing seem to think that the students are doing OK with bringing their own water. DCPS was supposed to pay for water coolers in the trailer classrooms. The PTA already pays for a water cooler for the nurse's office. While the PTA could consider taking on this expense, it would be significant and ongoing. It would require the purchase of water coolers and then monthly deliveries. The initial cost for water coolers would be \$1,000, and then cost around \$500 per month after that. An alternative to water coolers is to get water out of the sinks in the trailer classrooms. Ms. Bruce will check with the teachers to gauge their feelings about this situation.

Miscellaneous

This is the week of drills. There was a lock down drill this week, but Pre-K and Kindergarten missed the drill because they were on a field trip and at Fillmore respectively, during the drill. There was also a real tornado drill this week when a tornado warning was issued. DCPS failed to notify Stoddert of the tornado warning. It was acknowledged that the school needs to work on these drills and also ensure that PreK and K are included and prepared.

It was asked what the plan is for the West Wing when severe weather warnings are issued. The students in the demountables will come into the main building during a weather emergency.

DCPS grant money for field trips, and professional development like Yoga4Classrooms, Playworks, etc. “drops” in October. This money is restricted in that it cannot be diverted to other uses and must stay "in line item." In other words, any of this grant money budgeted for a field trip must be used for a field trip or professional development. Also, all of this grant money has to be used by the end of the school year in June. None of this money can be used between June and October. This grant money totals approximately \$40,000 this year and Stoddert may not get this grant money next year.

There have been some health issues at Stoddert so far this school year. There have been some lice episodes. The nurse needs more lice combs. The PTA agreed to buy 10 lice combs for the school nurse. DCPS has a new policy on lice. Kids with lice can stay in school and no longer need to be sent home. There have also been a couple cases of strep throat. Notices go home to the classroom whenever one of these issues arise.

Principal Bryant has asked DCPS to provide Stoddert with a crossing guard.

Teachers' Report

Mrs. Bruce offered a report on behalf of the teaching staff. The teachers very much appreciate all the books that everyone purchased off of the teacher wish lists from the Book Fair.

Testing Cycle 1 for the unit assessments is complete. Teachers felt that the students took the testing seriously and did well. There was also a general feeling that the testing was not particularly well-aligned with curriculum.

DC schools are part of the PARCC common core testing consortium—12 states and the District of Columbia participate. Stoddert's assessment testing should prepare its students to take PARCC. There were some technological glitches with the assessment tests.

These test results can be made available to parents, but this needs to be talked about with teachers before the test results are given to parents. It might be better for teachers to share the test results with an explanation, especially since this is the first year of this type of testing.

The Math “i-Ready” Diagnostic testing system is coming.

Safety patrol starts in 3rd and 4th grades during recess.

Stoddert's keyboarding program is getting up and running with 3rd and 4th grades being tested on typing. Some students are able to type 10 words per minute without looking at the keyboard. It is also possible to practice typing at home on line after the students get better at typing.

Local School Advisory Team Report

The LSAT is trying to set up its first meeting of year.

Garden Report

Our Stoddert Garden won DC's Best Sustainable Garden Award, which includes a \$500 award that has not arrived yet. The farmers market is doing well. And a big thanks to Ms. Guaraldo for helping Ms. Kealy with the farmers market. The chickens are also back with the garden.

Chorus

The chorus is going great. There may be some performances in the future.

PTA Budget

The PTA needs to think strategically about what it wants to pay for. The PTA pays for teacher stipends as well as augments a couple staff salaries. Currently, the PTA pays \$42,000 in salaries, which is \$4,000 a month. The PTA also pays \$32,000 in stipends. There is a shortfall of \$12,000 in dues projected in the budget for this year. Next year, the PTA most likely will not be able to pay staff salaries and stipends at the current levels without increased dues.

Other schools that are similar to Stoddert have 80% to 90% participation from parents on PTA dues, which is much higher than Stoddert. Currently, only 20 families outside of the Extended Day Program have paid their dues. Even including the families in the Extended Day Program, less than 50% of Stoddert families have paid PTA dues.

In an attempt to increase the number of families paying dues, PTA President Leigh McKenna has drafted a message to encourage more families to pay dues. This message will be sent to all families by email and in student folders. The PTA is looking for any ideas to increase the participation of families paying dues. Some ideas that were mentioned were possibly putting up a "thermometer" poster showing the percentage of families who have paid PTA dues. The PTA could also make clear to parents what expenditures and benefits we may have to cut if we can't raise dues income. There was also a suggestion to consider whether dues PTA dues should be paid per student rather than our current practice of charging dues per family.