

**CITY OF GREENBELT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Tuesday, February 28, 2017. Meeting was held at the Youth Center and presided over by Vice-Chair, Jon Gardner. Meeting started at 7:08pm.

PRESENT

ACE Members: Kate McElhenny, Jon Gardner, Janet Mirsky, Sudhanshu Sinha, Don Rich, Elsie Waynes, Rosalind Ceasar.

Club Facilitators: Cortland Jones (GMS), Bonnie Merryman (SLES), Yawa Kwakou (DKFI)

ABSENT:

ACE Members: Susan Breon, Leta Mach, Veronica Martin-Alston, Ema Smith

MEETING WITH CLUB FACILITATORS

REPORTS

DKFI

DK has been approved for an ACE Reading Club but the club has not started meeting. Ms. Kwakou attended the meeting to gather ideas from the facilitators of the existing clubs.

SLES – This is Ms. Merryman’s 7th year of running the reading club. Admission to the club is by teacher referral and is open to 3rd-5th graders. She said 3rd graders form the largest group this year and she has significantly more female students than males. She reported that this year she has had higher than usual attendance, with up to 16 students. This is because she has made arrangements so that her students can substitute attendance to the Reading Club for attendance to other tutoring programs.

She said she allows students to guide activities. Some activities are based on seasonal themes but they have also had activities related to Common Core.

Don asked why she did not have more boys. Ms. Merryman explained that teachers make the referrals to her group. However, she also thought that girls generally have more interest in reading than boys and may be a factor. She said she usually aims for an initial size of 20-22 students because she expects attendance to drop over time.

Jon asked if there were more kids who would be interested in the club if she increased the numbers. She said she usually has a waiting list so she invites those students to join when someone drops out. She indicated that she would like to run a book club but has realized it is difficult with her age group.

She extended an invitation to ACE members to visit a club meeting.

GMS

Mr. Cortland Jones said the Literature Book Club meets bi-weekly and is open to all grades. They started with 10 students but are currently up to 20. The only requirement for admission is parent permission.

He said that in a survey that he took 2 weeks ago, students expressed a desire not only to read but also to draw and act and so he is planning a final project that will incorporate all that. The

students will translate Aesop's fables into contemporary language from a teen's perspective and present it in the medium of their choice. There will also be a haiku and short story contest, that will be open to the whole school.

Don asked how he selects his reading material. Mr. Jones explained that he can only work with the approved reading list. Jon wondered about books that the kids are reading. Mr. Jones explained that when a student passionately wanted to share a book, he allowed the student to make a presentation and lead the group discussion of the book. He also sometimes invites guest speakers because this exposes his students to new knowledge.

Jon said that when the reading club started, students filmed book reports which were then aired on city TV. Mr. Jones expressed an interest in that and said he runs another club, Literature to Theatre, for writing plays and film. He said he was looking for cost effective ways and production support to film the students' work. Jon suggested that he contact GATES to find out if they could be of assistance. Mr. Jones thought it would be good for his students to see the community's involvement. Jon added that in the past the Utopia film festival has aired productions by students and so he could contact them if they produced any films. Elsie asked if he had parental support and he said parents have been very supportive.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minutes of January 24th were accepted without amendments.

Educator Awards –

Jon pointed out that at the last meeting, members had agreed to not accept late submissions but seemed to have gone back on that when only ERHS met the submission deadline. After discussion, members decided that:

- They will proceed with the Educator Awards with the 6 schools that eventually submitted nominations.
- For the Student Awards, liaisons will start contacting their schools to turn in nominations long before the deadline.
- The two options for next year's Educator Awards will be to 1) Cancel it, or 2) Invite nominations from anyone in the school system e.g. teachers, PTA etc. More discussion to follow.

Jon suggested that after the Educator Awards, all liaisons make an appointment to meet face-to-face with their principals to discuss this problem and find solutions.

STARTER KITS FOR PTA BOARDS In Melinda's absence, there was no discussion.

VOTING AGE PETITION – Rosalind reported that she had forwarded Jon's report to Cindy Murray.

UPDATES

Joint Program with Berwyn Heights Rosalind reported that Melinda had sent an email that said the planned program was cancelled but BH organized a smaller event that afternoon. Melinda was unable to attend because she was sick.

School board hearing – Leta was not present to report on the hearing earlier in the month.

AOB

Jon informed members that the school board voted to start next academic year before Labor Day, in contravention of the Governor’s request. They also dedicated \$500,000 in the budget to subsidize AP testing.

Greenbelt Elementary School had requested to change the allocation of their grant funds. Members approved the change because it was in line with their original proposal.

NEXT MEETING

The meeting ended at 8:50 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for March 28th.