

**CITY OF GREENBELT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Tuesday, January 24, 2017. Meeting was held in the Council Room and presided over by Susan Breon. Meeting started at 6:30pm following refreshments.

PRESENT

ACE Members:, Susan Breon, Kate McElhenny, Jon Gardner, Janet Mirsky, Ema Smith, Rosalind Ceasar, Leta Mach, Sudhanshu Sinha, Don Rich, Elsie Waynes

Schools: Lois Scales (TPA), Parfait Awono (DKFI), Reginald McNeil (ERHS), Sharelle Stagg (GES), Phyllis Gillens (MES)

ABSENT:

ACE Members: Melinda Brady, Veronica Martin-Alston

Schools: GMS, SLES

PRINCIPALS' MEETING

After welcomes and introductions, Susan briefly explained the awards and clubs programs. Jon explained the grants program and shared the results from the last proposal call.

Jon also shared highlights from ACE's report to Council after the last Student Awards. All the schools thought removing the gender requirement, "One Male and One Female Student", was appropriate. One suggestion was to use the phrase "Two Outstanding Students".

REPORT FROM SCHOOLS

TPA

Ms. Lois Scales, Character Education Program director, represented the principal. She reported that there have been several deaths in the TPA community this academic year. She said even with support from the County, the school felt overwhelmed with handling the grief. She asked how other schools managed such situations. Mr. McNeil responded that in addition to the County's support, the Guidance Department at ERHS has created a team of counselors and teachers who step-in during a crisis.

Ms. Scales said TPA continues to hold monthly Discovery Nights. She said after-school activities remain a challenge because of difficulty with transportation but at the last Principals' Meeting, she got the idea to engage more parents. Ms. Scales was happy to report that there has been significant improvement because more parents are helping.

She said the school was disappointed that the County has not permitted them to participate in athletics because some parents have already donated uniforms and other equipment.

She said parents have been donating books towards a library so they will be starting a mobile library soon - they do not have space to house a library. She expressed enthusiasm for the grants program and was appreciative of the funds TPA was receiving this year. She committed to attending the next grants workshop.

ERHS

Principal McNeil represented his school. He said the school was doing well on all fronts – athletics, academics and clubs. He expressed pride a just-released report said ERHS raised its graduation rate to 91%.

Mr. McNeil said ERHS is gearing up to register students for next year's Science and Technology program.

He said they are still publicizing the AP Capstone program. The program currently has about 200 students and continues to grow. He invited the other administrators to visit and experience some of the classes.

Regarding extra-curricular activities, he said the Boys' Soccer team went to the state semi-finals and the Volleyball team went to the regional finals.

MES

Principal Gillens represented MES. She said the school's Robotics team will be competing in this year's Lego League. She said the team is made up of 4th graders and eighty percent of the members are female. She said their theme this year is "Endangered Species".

She also reported that the school defends its Science Bowl championship this year.

After-school programs like the Step Team and Imagine Learning are on-going. She said they are planning a 3-night creative arts festival in May that will be featuring poetry and drama performances, among others.

Ms. Gillens said community partners have been reaching out to assist the school and have funded projects like recycling, a marquee etc. She said the Rotary club continues to sponsor dictionaries for third graders and the North Baptist Church has created outside learning spaces for the school. She invited members to participate as judges at their upcoming STEM fair in March.

GES

GES was represented by Assistant Principal, Sharelle Stagg. She said she is new to the school and so she said she is still observing, learning and forming relationships but she notices a strong sense of community in the school as evidenced by the PTA, large attendance to school events like the Honor Roll Assembly etc.

She said that since GES is an Art Integration school, art is fused into all content areas. All grades get 45minutes of art weekly and the school arranges field trips or brings in resources to support that goal. She pointed out that many of the grant proposals submitted by the school this year are geared in that direction.

Environmental literacy is also high on the school's agenda and so they have a strong recycling program. Teachers are getting professional development training in both art & environmental literacy.

She said GES has a goal of improving literacy and so they are taking steps to improve their library e.g. by adding an online catalog, giving the children more choices and challenge in material etc. They are considering creating an outdoor classroom in their courtyard to improve learning experiences.

DKFI

DKFI was represented by Principal Awono. He said the school was at a recognition ceremony at the French Embassy in DC last month for 2nd and 4th graders who participated in an international French exam. He said this was the first year the test was administered to 2nd graders and to the school's surprise and pride, they all passed.

Mr. Awono said DKFI was designated an Arts Integration school this year and so their aim is to help students represent their thinking visibly and to show their grasp of concepts through art. He noted that the approach is leading to improved learning in all content areas.

He reported that the school just completed its Science Fair. He noted that parents are very supportive e.g. they have donated equipment for indoor recess. He expressed appreciation that ACE had approved a grant for indoor recess equipment because the school has limited outdoor recess space and so recess is a challenge, especially in bad weather.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minutes of December 6th were accepted without amendments.

MEETING WITH CLUB FACILITATORS

DKFI had put in a request to start an ACE club. Members approved it for immediate start.

They also agreed that although there are currently only two facilitators, arranging a meeting will allow them to trade ideas. It was decided to invite any potential facilitators from DKFI, even if the club has not taken off.

STARTER KITS FOR PTA BOARDS

In Melinda's absence the discussion was postponed. Jon pointed out that PTAs receive a lot of support from the national organization.

VOTING AGE PETITION

Emma made a presentation explaining the Youth Advisory Committee's point of view.

- If 16-year olds and 17-year olds can work, drive, be taxed and tried as adults, then they can vote.
- Research on decision-making shows that by age 15 or 16, most people have developed the cognitions necessary to make voting choices.
- 16year olds care about politics.
- It will boost voter turnout. Takoma Park had higher turnout when the voting age was dropped.
- By graduation, people have the civic knowledge they need to be good voters.

Emma said the YAC does not want the petition to be put to referendum because adults would be voting and adults have a skewed view of teenagers.

Members agreed to recommend that Council grant YAC's petition on the basis that it will help young people to learn civic responsibility while still under the guidance, and with the support of, their parents. Don noted that it may also have the effect of engaging the parents more and Jon said allowing 16year olds to vote in City elections prepares them to vote in presidential elections at 18.

Jon will draft a response to Council.

POLICIES FOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

Members agreed on the following

- Limit length of write-ups to 125 – 175 words.
- No late nominations – Liaisons make additional contacts as deadlines approach.
- Student residency requirement – School to append signature that residency has been verified.
- Placement on Council Agenda for the evening – Rosalind to liaise with Cindy.
- Length of presentation – Susan to rewrite and shorten script.
- Seating – Rosalind to notify Leta if there is a problem with getting Public Works to fulfil chair requests. Move Press table or provide smaller table.
- Student gender requirement – Remove requirement but monitor nominations for skewing.
- Location – Maintain current location. It brings people to a Council meeting to learn what local government is about. Shows connection of ACE to Council.

UPDATES

Joint Program with Berwyn Heights

In Melinda's absence, there was no discussion.

Grants

Jon reported that he was at Council Meeting to represent ACE. He said Council was sympathetic to ACE's recommendations because the recommendations were persuasive. He said Council wanted ACE to engage TPA next year. Jon suggested holding the workshop at the school.

AOB – Leta reported that there will be another public hearing on school boundary assignments during the week of February 5th, date to be confirmed. She will represent the City and present an updated letter on behalf of Council. She is planning on finding families at Greenbelt Station who are impacted by the current assignment and invite them to participate. She invited ACE members interested in speaking to attend.

Leta promised to send specific details of the meeting to Rosalind once they become available. Susan suggested that Leta talk about ACE's support role and how part of the community will be deprived of that support if the students are assigned to outside schools.

Rosalind informed members that County Council Member Turner has a community meeting that conflicts with ACE's February meeting. It was decided that she should make alternate arrangements - the Council Library will be a backup.

NEXT MEETING

The meeting ended at 8:45 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for February 28th.