

**CITY OF GREENBELT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Tuesday, March 22, 2016. Meeting was held in the Council Room and presided over by Chair, Susan Breon. Meeting started at 7:00pm.

Present:

ACE - Leta Mach, Don Rich, Ema Smith, Jon Gardner, Janet Mirsky, Susan Breon, Melinda Brady, Sudhanshu Sinha, Veronica Martin-Alston, Kate McElhenny.

Club facilitators - Bonnie Merryman (SHLES Reading Club), Dorette Gamble-Bennett (MES Science Club) Joe Fernandez (MES Science Club), Deborah Buggs (GMS Reading Club)

Absent:

ACE - Elsie Waynes, Rosalind Ceasar

Club Facilitators – MES Reading Club

MEETING WITH CLUB FACILITATORS

Susan thanked the club facilitators for their work, did introductions and then invited them to talk about their programs.

GMS Reading Club

Ms. Debra Buggs said the club at GMS is called *Random Acts of Reading* and is run after school. It started in September and has been meeting monthly. She has 8 consistent students but maximum attendance is 17.

She said that because most students only do prescribed reading, her goal is to encourage random reading for pleasure. She incorporates writing activities and so the students have produced some books. She said the club is thinking about designing a T-shirt iron-on that promotes reading.

MES Science Club

Ms. Dorette Gamble-Bennett and Mr. Joe Fernandez run the Young Scientists' club at MES. The club has a STEM focus. They currently have 16 members. They said the club was originally limited to high-achieving or TAG students but they now accept teacher-recommended students. The program is very structured and requires commitment from students and so they have noticed that playful students tend to drop-out. Ms. Gamble-Bennett said that if a child drops-out they try to get a replacement from that child's classroom.

SHLES Reading club

Ms. Bonnie Merryman has been running the club for 6yrs. She limits participation to 3rd - 5th graders. She targets students who are above-average in reading because she finds that there are many supports for low-performing students. Previous club members have automatic admission at the start of a new year, but new members are only accepted by teacher-recommendation. She said she started this year with 22 students but as other clubs have sprouted, she has lost half of her members.

Discussion

Jon asked if students were required to sign-up for the clubs or could drop-in. Ms. Buggs responded that in order to collect emergency contact information etc. students had to sign-up.

Don also wanted to know how the clubs were publicized. The facilitators said it was either by announcements at school and/or notes sent home.

Ms. Merryman replied that a visit from an ACE member would encourage the children, when Susan asked if facilitators needed any further support from ACE. Ms. Gamble-Bennet asked for help finding judges for an upcoming science fair.

In response to Don's question about parent involvement, Ms. Gamble-Bennet answered that she tried unsuccessfully to engage her parents. One challenge, the facilitators pointed out, was PGCP's requirement to fingerprint all non-school system persons.

Leta explained that the reading clubs were started to promote the idea that reading was fun. This was after the committee learnt that some Virginia parents had complained because teachers had assigned reading books over the summer. She said students were videotaped doing book reports etc. in the past. Ms. Gamble-Bennet said that her club showcases its work.

Sudhanshu noted that ACE used to publish a science club newsletter but Jon explained that it ceased because of difficulty with distribution. Sudhanshu also expressed that he had unsuccessfully tried to find a teacher to run a science club at SHLES. Ms. Merryman noted that a previously identified teacher currently runs a robotics club at the school. She wondered if ACE would have the budget if she could identify another teacher.

Susan commented that with four clubs currently running ACE's budget is fully allocated so Leta suggested that since the city budget will be adopted on June 6, there was the possibility of adding on to the current budget proposal.

In conclusion, Ms. Buggs thanked ACE for investing in Greenbelt's children and exposing them to material outside the curriculum.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minutes of the previous meeting were approved after a minor change in wording suggested by Jon.

EDUCATOR AWARDS

Members agreed that the ceremony went well. Sudhanshu suggested reserving seats for ACE members in the future by reducing the press section.

FEEDBACK ON COMMITTEE CHAIRS' MEETING WITH COUNCIL

Melinda attended on behalf of ACE. She reported that the City is offering training on procedures for running a meeting. She did not think ACE needed the training but other committee representatives expressed interest.

She also reported that the Code of Conduct for committee members was discussed. Leta advised that any members who had not yet signed one should do so and cross out any parts they did not agree with.

Melinda reported that some committees were moving their meeting venues around the City to enable public participation. Leta noted that ACE is already active in all parts of the City but she suggested holding the Principal's meeting at one of the schools to encourage better attendance.

Leta also reported that the Youth Advisory Committee went to the League of Cities. Ema confirmed that 4 YAC members attended and interacted with youth committees from around the country. They held a mock national youth convention, created a policy platform and nominated two presidential candidates.

UPDATES

Leta informed members that the City Manager will present his proposed budget on Monday. It will then be reviewed in detail till it was voted on in June. Janet said ACE's current budget is \$14,000. Members expressed concern about the scholarship fund which is currently at \$22,000, from a high of \$35,000. It was decided that the budget will be on the agenda for next month.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, April 26. Nominations for the student awards are due on April 20. Liaisons might need to help with those.