

**CITY OF GREENBELT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

Tuesday, October 27, 2015. Meeting was held in the Council Room and presided over by Chair, Susan Breon. Meeting started at 6:45pm after refreshments.

PRESENT:

ACE Members - Susan Breon, Sudhanshu Sinha, Jon Gardner, Don Rich, Melinda Brady, Elsie Waynes, Janet Mirsky, Rosalind Ceasar, Veronica Martin-Alston
PTA Presidents – Jacqueline Lilly (GES), Karen Lee (GMS), Katrina Dodro (DKFIS), Anne Gardner (ERHS).

ABSENT:

ACE Members - Dave Whiteman, Leta Mach
PTA Presidents – SHLES, MES, TPA

MEETING WITH PTA PRESIDENTS

After Susan gave an overview of ACE and its activities, Jon explained the grants program. Not all the presidents seemed aware of the program or that a call for proposals had gone out.

Reports from Schools

GES – Jacqueline said boosting membership is her top priority so she attended orientation at the start of school, collected email addresses and invited parents to join the PTA’s Yahoo group. She said the PTA also offered a reduced membership fee for parents who signed up at the orientation or at the first PTA meeting. She said attendance at their first meeting was impressive because of the membership drive but she also noted that it immediately followed a TAG presentation, an event that attracts a lot of parents. She would like to see improvement in communication within the PTA.

GMS

Karen said her challenge has been getting a full complement of executives but the school administration has been supportive. She has also had difficulty recruiting members and connecting with families. The PTA has found it helpful to combine membership drives with other school activities e.g. this year, they plan to tie the Multicultural Night with the ongoing curriculum and use the event as both a fundraiser and a membership drive.

FIS

Katrina is in her 2nd year as president. She would like to create an information-sharing culture. She said the PTA has streamlined its Yahoo listserv so that they now have one list for the whole school and one for each grade level. They also publish a weekly newsletter and they have increased patronage on their Facebook page. She said this year, the PTA is using a new site, *payforschoolstuff.com*, which is designed to allow schools and PTAs to collect fees and payments for activities, purchases etc. She said the PTA switched from Paypal because this new provider offered better charges. The site also allows

members to sign-up for the newsletter and the PTA is planning on disseminating all information through the site.

Katrina also said that the PTA wants to renovate the sound system in the school so they are planning a fundraiser.

ERHS

Anne said the PTSA at ERHS has had a lot of success in the last 3 years with online membership sign-up, using a Weebly site and Paypal. They also set-up presentation tables during orientation events to encourage on-the-spot sign-up and to hand-out bookmarks with online sign-up information. She noted that there is increased attendance at meetings because they are discussing issues relevant to parents e.g. At October's meeting there was a presentation about college applications and in February, they plan to have another presentation on financial aid for college. She said they use Google Groups which allows them to directly add new members, unlike Yahoo Groups. She said they have two group accounts, one for announcements only, and another for parent discussions.

Interaction

After discussing the challenges of using Yahoo Groups, Anne suggested that in subsequent years, DKFIS could transition gradually to Google Groups by setting up incoming KG classes with Google instead of Yahoo.

To improve PTA membership and meeting attendance, Katrina suggested scheduling PTA meetings immediately before or after school events, or inviting guest speakers to address hot-button issues. She said DKFIS had good attendance when county officials came to talk about transportation. Veronica advised that the PTAs collaborate with their Counseling Departments so they can combine PTA meetings with events that schools are mandated to host, e.g. Parent Night.

Anne said robocalls are effective for notifying parents who are not on a listserv about meetings and other activities. Karen asked how they catered to their Hispanic population. Both Anne and Katrina said a Spanish speaker read the announcement for recording. Veronica added that it was possible to use a text-to-voice option but the sound quality was usually poor.

Katrina asked if others were noticing fatigue among teachers due to increased demand for reports. Melinda explained that the county was implementing a new teacher-evaluation system that required more reporting. She felt this was negatively impacting after-school programs because teachers did not have time to run extra-curricular programs.

Karen asked how they could get teachers more involved in the PTA. Katrina said at DKFIS, a member of the PTA attended one administration meeting each month as a way to boost the staff's involvement.

Jon asked the presidents how their schools could collaborate, citing the Cluster concert at ERHS.

Anne said students at ERHS need community service hours and so she could forward requests for volunteers from the other schools to Roosevelt. She also said that in the past, the band has held 20minute concerts at the other schools as part of the holiday festivities.

Karen and Jacqueline said one avenue for cooperation was Shadow Days and transition tours. Karen found the tour offered when her child was moving to GMS very helpful. Anne said in the past, GMS PTA went to the elementary schools to answer parent questions. Melinda suggested that the PTAs could invite parents from their feeder schools to one of the PTA's last meetings of the year for a tour. Veronica pointed out that they could use that, and the annual meeting for feeder schools, to sign-up parents for the PTA before their children started a school. She said that the county provided transportation for such tours but the schools needed to set them up. Katrina said that at FIS, they asked current KG parents to create a brochure, with information that is not covered in the typical orientation or transition tour, for incoming KG parents. She suggested the other schools adopt that.

Katrina asked if any school was hosting the county PTA council during the year. Anne said they are schedule to visit ERHS in Jan. Jon noted that the council had been disbanded once due to management difficulties but Katrina said the current council is very strict about enforcing regulations.

Sudhanshu suggested that the PTAs include their ACE liaison on their listservs. The presidents asked that Rosalind email them contact information from the sign-up sheet.

PREVIOUS MINUTES:

Minutes of September 22nd were approved without amendment.

FEEDBACK

Meeting with PTA Presidents

All members agreed that the presidents interacted nicely, had a good discussion and shared useful ideas.

City Dinner

Susan and Don were the only two who attended. Susan thought attendance this year seemed lower than previous years. She informed members that she received a 5-year pin. Don thought it was pleasant to meet other volunteers serving in the city. Susan said the dinner was an indicator of the value the city placed on volunteers.

GRANTS

Review Procedures & Deadlines - Jon offered to pick up paper proposals from Rosalind. He will send out the evaluation forms after compilation and all evaluations are due back to him by December 1st.

Final reports – Jon said all schools, except SHL & FIS, have submitted their reports. ERHS requested an extension and a change of project for one of their proposals because a benefactor(s) donated the items they would have purchased with the grant.

Jon was concerned about SHL, because of their two outstanding proposal reports. One of them was for a proposal from 2 years ago for which they had already received an extension.

He wanted ACE's decision if SHL requested another extension. Susan suggested a 1-month extension, at the most. Sudhanshu asked that Jon send him the contact information of the one teacher involved so he could follow up with her.

UPDATES

Clubs - Rosalind reported that the GMS Reading Club has started. She also reported that Finance was having trouble with uncashed checks made out to one of last year's science club facilitators. Don said he received an email that a teacher at MES had expressed interest in continuing the science club. He will send Rosalind the teacher's contact information so she can follow-up.

Awards Dates – Rosalind reported that she has received responses from only 4 liaisons. Don had MES' dates so based on the 5 schools' responses, members scheduled the Educator Awards for March 14th, 2016 and the Students Awards for May 23rd, 2016.

AOB

Rosalind shared that the City Manager had suggested a meeting of the education committees of the 4-Cities. Leta also had sent members an email to that effect.

Jon said past efforts had not been fruitful, except for organizing a community meeting about the selection of a new Principal for GMS. Don suggested meeting with College Park, since that committee is functional. Janet suggested a format similar to the PTA presidents' meeting, with each committee sharing information about their activities and then holding a general discussion. Susan thought a one-time meeting would suffice but members felt that they needed more information in order to organize that meeting.

Rosalind also informed members that City Manager had requested ACE's criteria for reviewing grants and suggested the potential for an ACE member to be involved in a grants review process that the Recc Department is developing. Members asked Rosalind to get more information.

NEXT MEETING - The meeting ended at 8:55pm. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 8th for the Grants Review. Sudhanshu asked to be excused because he will be out of town.