

CITY OF GREENBELT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Minutes of Meeting of February 24, 2009

Meeting commenced at 6:00 PM for Annual Principals Meeting and at 8:00 PM for regular monthly meeting.

PRESENT: PRINCIPALS: Reginald McNeil (ERHS), Kenneth Jones (TPA), Linda Sherwood (SHL ES), Phyllis Gillens (MES), Kimberly Seidel (GES), and Judy Austin (GMS).

ACE Members: Laretta Baugh, Theresa Bugg, Jon Gardner, Marie Gueye, Alla Lake, Kathy Lewis, Sudhanshu Sinha, Dave Whiteman, and Staff Liaison Wendy Wexler.

The meeting began with an introduction of all participants and of ACE activities. The upcoming Artful Afternoon, as planned by Dave Whiteman was also discussed and schools not currently represented in the plans (those committed are GES, SHL and GMS) promise to get back to Dave. Mr. McNeil believes there must be some freshman group available as the older students will be preparing for the AP exam the next morning.

There was also discussion of how these meetings have resulted in some shared resources for the schools in the past. One very positive one is where students from ERHS had gone to GES to work with students. Mr. McNeil and Ms. Seidel plan to look into how that plan is working for this year. ERHS sends students to all our area elementary schools to offer mentoring for younger students, but he adds that ERHS is always looking for more internship sites for their students.

Mr. McNeil also expressed concerns that there is not enough participation in extracurricular activities by the students.

There was a lot of discussion about transitions – from elementary to middle; from middle to high school. Mr. McNeil touts a program used this past summer – supported by the county – called Bridge to Excellence that was a big success with incoming middle school students.

Ms. Seidel says her school is really looking forward to the now-annual Basketball Game between her staff and the staff at GMS. All the elementaries are wanting to work with the Middle School to bring over their outgoing 6th graders for a visit at GMS at the end of the year to assist in their own transitions.

Linda Sherwood adds info about the transition from Pre-K to kindergarten and says having that early start does a great job readying young students. Theresa Bugg tells everyone about the Greenbelt Children Center at Greenbrier, which is partnered with GES.

There was a discussion about the role of the Parent Teacher Organization in the schools. Phyllis Gillens says that the MES PTO is much more active this year – due in part to their dynamic president. They have arranged many events such as family movie night, dances, guest speakers – and have been supported by their Parent Liaison surveying the parents to learn what they are interested in. The PTO is also working on projects to get the school security cameras and a fencing beautification. MES continues to need more volunteers for extracurricular activities.

The ERHS PTSA is hoping to get more student involvement in their organization this year. They have a membership of 300 paid members. One very successful event was their Father-Son Breakfast which brought in 200 people. They usually have 30-40 people at a meeting.

The GMS PTLO continues to struggle. Although Ms Austin reports they have 50 paid members, they only have about 3 active members. She is stumped as to how to get more parental involvement. She thanked Dave for his extra support and for sometimes being the only representation at school events – such as basketball games. Other principals suggested she acknowledge parent participation with a trophy or extra credit for students whose parents attend. They all agreed that having teachers present at meetings can be a big draw – although it is difficult to get them there sometimes.

Dr. Jones explains that at TPA, parent involvement is part of the charter school contract, part of the admissions process and therefore he actually is able to take attendance at their PTA meetings.

GES has an incredibly active and supportive PTA. They do such things as write grants, put up murals, bring in speakers, develop a student directory for all parents, donate books to the library. Students get a homework “pass” if their parent attends the meeting.

At SHL there is an active PTA but it has to deal with the transient nature of the school population. Ms. Sherwood reports that 53% of students who start the school year are not there in June. Their population is 50% African American (and half of them are directly African), 50% Hispanic and about 4 % “other”. They currently have 69 homeless children. Therefore, the school needs lots of unique supports for these children and bilingual presenters for their PTA meetings and events. SHL is always in need of socks, white shirts and coats for their kids. The uniform has been very helpful in making the children all feel more equal. The Strengthening Families program at SHL, run by CARES is very popular as it does offer a Spanish component.

All the schools gave specific examples of how essential their Parent Liaisons are and how much they bring to the success of the relationship with the parents and

the schools. But they are all extremely concerned about what they hear about this position being cut back – county wide.

Immediately following the Principals Meeting, ACE members hosted their regular monthly meeting.

Minutes of November 18, 2009 were approved as is.

ANNUAL PRINCIPALS MEETING RECAP. ACE was very pleased with the turnout, although disappointed in the absence of St. Hugh's. The Principals requested assistance addressing the reports that the School Board is considering cutting 70% of the schools' Parent Liaison positions. Wendy says she will contact our District's School Board representative Rosalind Johnson to see when and if BOE will be voting on this.

Marie offers to follow up with ERHS with some questions from the discussion: Why is there trouble getting participation with extracurricular activities? Are fees the issue? Do they need better marketing of the club? She will ask for a copy of the list of clubs, etc. and ask what we can do to help.

In a few weeks, ACE will also check in with the Principals to see how the connections between ERHS and the elementary schools is progressing, as per our discussion.

BUDGET PROPOSAL OPTIONS. ACE members review all the ideas and options we have been exploring for an alternative use of funds previously earmarked for the ACE Reading Club. The main components narrow down to a simplified version of the ACE Reading Club, a similar ACE Science Club (focused on STEM activities: science, technology, electronics, and math) and a grants program for special requests from schools and parent teacher organizations to support or enhance projects. In addition, ACE would like to include a monthly Newsletter encouraging participation and reporting on the activities of all the clubs. The final budget would reallocate the originally budgeted \$14,000 to these projects. A more thorough budget presentation will be developed and circulated.

GMS RENOVATION UPDATE. Jon and Dave attended a meeting earlier in the month in Berwyn Heights where they were given the most up to date info. Apparently the first installment of \$6.5 million has been allocated for the start. The full amount needed is \$20 million, but it is not uncommon for this to be done in increments like this. Currently they are anticipating that RFP's will be sent out in May for the contractors and there will be "shovels in the ground" by July. They are hoping to finish in late fall of the 2010 – 2011 school year.

ACE CALENDAR – Please let Wendy know if you are **NOT** able to attend.

Unless noted all meetings will now take place in the Second Floor City Council Room, City Municipal Building.

3/23.....ACE Educators Awards: Set up 6:30, Reception/Awards 7:30

3/24Regular Monthly Mtg; 7:00
