

Parent Advisory Committee Meeting Notes – March 9, 2009

The Parent Advisory Committee Meeting was held from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. The meeting was delayed one week due to a snowstorm on March 2. The meeting place was also changed from the auditorium at 850 Hungerford to the conference room at the Department of Family & Community Partnerships. The next meeting will be May 20th. Several optional workgroup meetings will be scheduled in advance of that date, in the normal place (850 Hungerford).

Attendees-

Parent Advisory Council: *Juliet Mellow, Vicmarie Arocho, Holly Searl Hurst, Kelly Eiskant, Sharon Mosley-Ramsey, Jill Ortman-Fouse, Bonnie Arze, Alma Orellana, Elisia George, Wanda Coates, Tori O'Neil McElrath, Richard Sieber, Hugo Escobar*
MCPS: *Eric Davis, Denise Stultz, Marcia Vogel, Chris Cram, Ben Lesnick*

Welcome/Outcomes

Eric began by introducing the desired outcomes for the meeting:

- Reviewed the action items from the December 2, 2008 meeting
- Participated in feedback gathering activity around the MCPS 7 keys to College Readiness
- Received an update regarding the PAC Advocacy Workgroup
- Discussed next steps

He then addressed the first item, the action items from the previous meeting:

- *Submit bio (100 words) to Eric Davis* – the last bio has been submitted and will be available at the website shortly.
- *Submit feedback on Policy ABC revisions to Eric Davis* – Eric received helpful feedback from a number of PAC members.
- *Post notes of December 3, 2008, PAC meeting on DFCP website* – Eric reports that this has been done.
- *Contact Eric Davis to sign up to serve on workgroup creating training plan for parent advocacy/leadership workshop* – three workgroups were held with several members!
- *Submit any agenda items for consideration for March 2, 2009, meeting* – Eric reminds everyone that if they are so interested they may submit agenda items two weeks in advance. For the next meeting, please have desired items prepared by May 6.

Eric also noted that he appreciates the group's flexibility with the altered meeting time and place. He knows that as parents you all have very crowded schedules to work around and is glad that so many could make the 'snow date'.

MCPS 7 Keys to College Readiness

Eric introduced the new “7 Keys to College Readiness” program to the group. The 7 Keys are a set of data points identified using research which have a cumulative effect on students’ success after High School. These points are placed throughout the educational process, starting with advanced reading levels in Kindergarten and ending with SAT and ACT scores in High School.

The 7 Keys are currently being rolled out to school staff; all MCPS employees will be made familiar with them. The Department of Family and Community Partnerships will begin presenting the material to parents in April with a set of Parent Academy presentations (one for each Community Superintendent’s area).

7 Keys Parent Academy Schedule:

Monday, April 20	Loiederman MS	Stetson
Wednesday, April 22	White Oak MS	Hermann
Monday, April 27	Clemente MS	Kimball
Wednesday, April 29	Wood MS	Liebes
Monday, May 4	Eastern MS	Morrison
Wednesday, May 6	Shady Grove MS	Talley

Eric presented a video on the project to the group; it was created to help introduce the effort to Principals and is distinct from (though similar in focus to) videos which will be provided to parents.

The Office of Communications and Family Outreach is currently developing materials to support the parent rollout, including a separate parent video, a dedicated parent web site and a brochure detailing the keys. PAC members were asked to provide feedback and best practice tips for helping to ensure children are following a path to success:

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7 Keys Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjustment/accommodations/etc. – necessity is recognized, but what is the next step? • What does committed mean? • How is the county going to provide this additional support? • Isn’t this just to make parents more aware of what is available? • Any discussion about changing the names of classes? • How does this translate into resources available at a school and ability to support parents and teachers? What is in place, what do we as parents need to do? • Need talking points for each point for parents. What is reasonable to expect from school, what can PTA do? • What is this based on? (Algebra in 8th Grade) • Text levels. What are examples? • This is good – easy to read, layout is good, not too technical, everyone can understand. • Would like to see a second page that’s school-specific. Listing resources

that are available at your school. Our councilor's name is ____, etc.

- Use Edline to contact teachers about specific issues. Edline should be emphasized.
- Scenarios! "If your child X then you can contact Y"
- Great tool for students, too. Some kids do not have parent support in all areas. Kids knowing what they should be doing helps.
- How will kids see this material?
- Remember to be encouraging and inspiring rather than scary.
- Plan for reaction of Elementary School vs. High School; handling is everything.
- Re: "If your child is struggling..." – be more specific for the parent. "If my child is struggling with specific subject then".
- Any chance of getting Amharic translations?
- Make sure everyone is on the same page; teachers want to teach but are often frustrated by lack of support and resources.
- After school activities are important – why are only teachers coaches?
- Consider presenting this material outside of schools to reach as many parents as possible.
- Make sure special ed situations are recognized in a serious manner.

Eric and Marcia Vogel, who is heavily involved in materials development, addressed some of the feedback:

- The keys are guidelines for all parties involved (parents and staff) and not a change in the school's academic focus. One goal is to educate parents as to how they can best advocate for their children – specifying often-confusing things like reading levels, class titles and the like.
- There will be material that covers scenarios in which the Keys are not (or can not) be met. The goal is to provide parents with another tool they can refer to rather than to scare them in any way.
- Re: confusion over math class names - a workgroup is currently re-examining the entire math curriculum.
- There is a desire to simplify this material wherever possible; the website will feature 'parent to parent' segments in which MCPS parents offer tips for
- The Seven Keys points are based on actual research that correlates things like early Algebra placement to higher SAT scores.
- Examples of text levels will be available at the 7 Keys website.
- Schools will accept this information – a huge part of the push is making sure the 7 Keys are recognized throughout the county. Everyone will be on the same page.

Chris Cram from Instructional Television asked that any interested parents stay after the meeting to record video tips that will be used as part of the 7 Keys rollout. These will be one of the features available at the website.

Parent Advocacy Workgroup Update

Eric began this point by thanking everyone who attended the three PAC Workgroup meetings held recently. Attendees included Holly, Hugo, Juliet, Kelly, Jill and Sharon. He also recognized Vicmarie, who attended all three meetings!

The following timeline has been generated, including steps leading up to the April 30 Parent Academy workshop on parent advocacy, which the PAC will be responsible for.

Timeline:

February 9, 2009	Create agenda draft / Discuss next steps for workshop development
February 18, 2009	Meeting to begin work on Power Point and other resources for the Parent Academy workshop
February 19 - March 2, 2009	Workgroup continues the development of resources and materials for Parent Academy workshop
March 9, 2009	Workgroup receives feedback from entire PAC
March 10 – March 30, 2009	Workgroup continues the development of resources and materials for Parent Academy workshop
March 30, 2009	Workgroup meeting to review final presentation plan Identification of presenters
March 30, 2009 – April 17	Presentation / resources and materials are translated into different languages
April 30	Parent Academy Workshop 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.
May 3	Share final workshop / workshop participant feedback with entire PAC

Eric expects the meeting, the first of its kind, to draw more than 100 people. He asks that all PAC members attend to work as facilitators, the goal being that each subgroup of parents might have two PAC members on hand to help walk them through breakout sessions.

Eric also asked the group to select a superior name for the workshop. The two options being considered were: “Parent-to-Parent: Can We Talk? – How to Talk to Teachers and Principals to Help Your Child Succeed” and “Parent-to-Parent: Can We Talk About Parent Advocacy? – Speaking Up for Your Child”

The group seemed to prefer the second, but ultimately decided that ‘advocacy’ might confuse otherwise interested parents. The decision was made to combine the two names. The updated version will be put on the Parent Academy’s website schedule.

Next, the group examined the training plan for the Parent Academy session (copies were included in the meeting folders). Eric asked for reaction to and criticism of the plan.

The general consensus was that it was too much – although Eric and Denise have already been working to cut it down, there is simply too much presently scheduled to fit into a 1.5 hour Parent Academy slot. It was also noted that the time for sharing was too limited – once the ‘floodgates are open’ it will be difficult to get parents to stop telling their stories in the breakout groups.

Another suggestion was to turn some points into handouts rather than part of the presentation,. For example, the “quick sharing of 6 National PTA standards” is not essential to the Parent Advocacy presentation and could instead be a handout.

The group also discussed videos which will be put together for the presentation. These will star PAC members who model both right and wrong ways for dealing with situations at schools. Eric gave the example of an angry parent who has trouble communicating with a principal versus one who goes into a meeting knowing what needs to be said.

Notes

- The group agreed that these situations should be both academic and social, with the topic of bullying being mentioned frequently.
- Topic: Where do you go when your child has problems? Many parents simply do not know.
- Topic: Who do you talk to next if your teacher is not helping?
- Topic: Make sure you ask questions and interact with teachers and administrators rather than simply accepting their statements.
- Data notebooks – everyone should advocate for them.
- Can information on bullying be included in a handout?
- Can we let people stay and talk after the presentation is finished (at 8:30). Denise says – just try and stop them!

Filming will take place at the Department of Family and Community Partnerships office.

Remember: the presentation will take place **Thursday, April 30th** from **7:00 to 8:30 P.M.** in the **CESC Auditorium** at 850 Hungerford Drive in Rockville.

Next Steps

Tori is organizing a group which will meet to support parents whose children have been diagnosed with autism. If this is something you are interested in, please contact her. The next meeting is in April, which is National Autism Awareness Month. She is also looking for space for meetings, and would welcome any leads.

Eric will e-mail the group with dates and times for further PAC Workgroup meetings. As before, these are optional and will help develop/prepare for the Parent Academy workshop. There will be 4-5 sessions.

He also made a major announcement about next year: everyone is invited back! Since this year's Parent Advisory Committee has been so outstanding, he welcomes anyone who is interested on staying on for a second term to do so. Meetings will be more frequent – monthly rather than bimonthly. Those who are not interested in returning will have their seats filled with new applicants; please contact Eric if this is the case. He absolutely understands that not everyone will be able to continue.

Finally, several PAC members did record videos for Chris! Thanks for the continued dedication!