

PTO Meeting minutes from 9/18/24

A. Welcome

- a. Amber, the PTO co-president, did the welcome and introduced the PTO and the purpose of the PTO, which in general is to: organize, conduct activities, and raise money for the school community
- b. There was also a brief review of the parent survey from last year and the PTO recognized that there may be opportunities for improvement in communication among PTO/Staff/parents and also there was a plea to ensure that all grades have access to parent teacher conferences

B. Introductions of PTO and LSAT members:

- c. PTO:
 - i. Co-presidents: Amber Romine & Lauren Okonkwo
 - ii. Vice President: Amy Zettle
 - iii. Treasurer: Paige Johnson
 - iv. Assistant Treasurer: Liz Daly
 - v. Recording Secretary: Candace Mainor
 - vi. Corresponding Secretary: Artemis Benedetti
- d. LSAT:
 - vii. Parent Representatives: Jessica Caola, Dominic Ju, Julia DeAngelo, Kate Snyder (Co-Chair)
 - viii. Community Rep: Gayle Upson
 - ix. Washington Teachers' Union (WTU) Building Representative: Promithious Denmark-Lawal
 - x. Teacher Representatives: Anne Marie Pereira (Co-Chair), Jamie Weng, Denise Hector, Sabrina Trotter
 - xi. Non-classroom Staff Representative: **Vacant**
 - xii. PTO Representative: Amber Romine
- e. Important contacts;
 - xiii. General school info: Info@Shepherd-Elementary.org
 - xiv. PTO email: PTO@Shepherd-Elementary.org
 - xv. Treasurers: PTOTreasurer@Shepherd-Elementary.org

C. Sessa update from Eric Viera

- f. opening 2nd grade & Kindergarten cohorts
- g. trying to open 4th and 5th grade cohorts (2 counselors away)
- h. interviewing candidates to open pre-k3 candidate (Please sign up on wait list for data points to make sure staffing is planned accordingly)
- i. care available for “No school” days (9am-6pm, with option to pick up 3pm) and can sign up
- j. Sessa is Not open for holiday breaks
- k. enrichment list sent to school (open to anyone at Shepherd, but Sessa participants are given 1st priority) and will be listed 9/20/24 and enrollment to open 9/23/24

D. AP Coles update

- l. Recent Events with the 4th grade
 - xvi. Introduced Dr. Plenty (Resident DC Principal to assist for the next 2 weeks until Principal Russel returns) and SI Larkin (to also assist until Principal Russell returns) & Robyn Harper(DEI team)
 - 1. Larkin gives updates on staff etc:
 - a. Ms. Beastly is covering ELA (she will join the townhall Friday) ELA coach to give support; weekly planning meetings; have check in with coach to support lesson planning; using DCPS passport to learning; to provide updates on class dojo on Friday. Dr. Plenty will provide coaching and Principal Russell when back
 - b. Ms. Hector will support writing, but will go on maternity leave; plan for coverage is a long term sub: Ms. Igo(spelling) will be the coverage and she is shadowing Ms. Hector now to take over in November
 - c. Ms. Ripley’s class: she will attend professional development seminar; receives coaching; school admin to conduct formal and informal observations for support
 - d. CES teacher update: Ms. Monigan is on long-term leave, so the class is combined with Mr. Smith’s classroom. A letter will go home with specific details about how to contact Mr. Smith. There are 2 fulltime aids in CES classroom (total of 11 students). School admin is hoping to request a long term sub until Ms. Monigan is able to return
 - e. Vacancy update: school admin working with HR staffing specialist for these vacancies: 4th grade vacancy; For the school psychologist vacancy, they are hoping to get Howard intern who would work with DCPS program manager (all schools are

struggling with filling school psychologist); prek aid vacancy and CES aid vacancy

- f.** Everyone thanked AP Coles for her work and for stepping up while Principal Russell has been OOO and for her service to the school the community. Team also thanked Dr. Plenty who will help support for next 2 weeks, in addition to Robyn Harper who will help to bring community together
 - i.** AP Coles to work on policy for how to respond to race/gender, things etc

2. Robyn Harper provided clarity regarding recent 4th incident

- g.** Discussed the team that is activated to manage response to incidents of hate/bias in DCPS
- h.** Discussed alleged incident: allegedly there may have 2 students egging each other on to call another student a racial slur, following that incident, AP Coles was working with those families with appropriate letter of response.
- i.** Discussed that it is not DCPS DC practice across district to give community wide communication about student level incidents
- j.** In letter home to 4th grade parents, made aware that allegedly following the incident, staff members were engaged in an unapproved response to that incident, students were inappropriately separated by RACE and a slur was used
- k.** Robyn thanked AP Coles for her response to those situations, and they were able to communicate with 4th grade ASAP. The DEI team went in immediately (the next day) and they observed students to see if they were going about their day as normal and checking throughout the past few days. Since then, Robyn has been assessing the situation.
- l.** Robyn also wanted to acknowledge that the initial communication that stated that the incident was isolated, and it may not have been isolated. Thus, Robyn is coordinating an intentional and robust plan to address all aspects of the incidents.
- m.** Staff and students to learn about restorative process which includes the staff getting training on how to report and respond to alleged bias in classroom.
- n.** The team hopes to provide a more detailed plan with what the response will be in the next 1 week and Robyn plans to be at Friday's townhall.

- o. Space for restorative practice (they will gather information in order to figure out what is happening at the student level regarding racism etc and make a plan). They will look at legal side of things.
 - ii. Partnership with Transcend program which may have specific lessons about race, and to help with restorative practice
- p. They encouraged parents to report incidents or racial/bias to the CARE team for review
- q. A parent asked about consequences for staff and Robyn discussed that a separate team handles consequences for staff, and in her role, she provides adult level support etc.
- r. Parent questions about the incident
 - iii. What is the baseline for how students are expected to respect each other
 - 1. Answer: this is handled at the school level
 - 2. AP Coles, reviewed how the IB curriculum and strong start meetings can fit in here
 - iv. What curriculum do we have surrounding race
 - 3. TBD

xvii. Townhalls on Friday AM, 8:45-9:15 through 10/15/24 to discuss additional concerns for 4th grade parents concerning the recent events

a. Crossing Guard at Kalmia/14th street

- i. Looking into what happened to the crossing guard

b. 1st grade teacher addition

- ii. 1st grade class got additional teacher, so classes are planned to be: 19, 19 and 15 (draft of roster is completed, used formula for gender balance, academic and social emotional data, students with IEP etc to ensure equity)
- iii. Keeping classes together as is for now, until additional teacher is hired/ready to start
- iv. when principal Russel returns maybe 1st grade move into departmentalized setting vs. stand-alone classroom

E. PTO Budget and other financial reminders

- m. Discussed the TAP Awards

- n. Discussed the 180 Fund and made plea for families to donate
- o. Budget approval
 - xviii. Approved; budget was attached in reminder communications for school community to review prior to the meeting

F. Opportunities to volunteer

- p. Room Parent Network: discussed budget
 - xix. Vacancies: (1) All CES classes and (2) 4th grade has 2 positions available
- q. Committee co-chairs
 - xx. Vacancies:
 - 3. Fundraising and grants: 2 positions
 - 4. Curriculum and Staff Support: 2 positions
 - 5. Audit Committee: 2 positions
 - 6. H/W/S Committee: 1 position available

G. Upcoming events

- r. Weed Wrangle Beatification day: 9/21/124 2-4pm
- s. Family Photo Fundraiser: 9/28 and 9/29
- t. National Walk/Bike to school day: 10/9
- u. Parent Chat & Chew: 10/9 8am-9am
- v. Family/Faculty Kickball Game: 10/17 4pm-5:30pm
- w. NO SCHOOL: 10/10, 10/11, 10/14 (SESSA OPEN 10/10 and 10/11)
- x. Fall Fest: 10/20 12p-4p

H. Adjourn