

## **SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **Minutes of Local School Advisory Team meeting of APRIL 8, 2015**

**Present:** Eve Lotter, parent representative, Beverly Johnson, teacher representative; Tia Holt, Washington Teachers Union representative; Rosalyn Brooks, staff representative; Carl Bergman, community representative; David Trimble, PTA president; Mark Pattison and Kesha Pendergrast, supplemental representatives; Clarence Lusane and Erika Turnipseed-Webb, guests; plus Jamie Miles, principal, and Angel Hunter, assistant principal.

**Minutes:** Pattison moved, Trimble seconded approval of the March minutes. **Motion carried.**

**Global Road Safety Week:** “Safe Kids Worldwide” packet passed around. This will be celebrated May 4-10. Shepherd has been asked to serve as a focal point for this observance. Shepherd will structure the program in a way that is beneficial to the students. Bike to School Day may be moved from May 6 to May 4 as a result. The school might be in line for safety helmets for those students without one. Pattison offered to help. The subject was to be brought up at the PTA meeting, also on April 8.

**Budget:** The principal outlined the results of the budget appeals to D.C. Public Schools. Shepherd opted for the plan that puts more bodies in the school. The goal will be to find new employees who can specialize in an academic subject, but be handy and available for non-academic parts of the school day.

**Enrollment:** The principal went through enrollment grade by grade.

Pre-K/3: All seats were offered, 245 enrolled, 15 were matched, 10 accepted, all in-boundary.

Pre-K/4: 161 enrolled, but a mistake was made somewhere along the line, because 38 were accepted, while Shepherd already had 16 from current families. If necessary, a third classroom will be opened, although this could delay plans to have a second pre-K/3 classroom. It is possible the “bubble” could work its way through fifth grade, as had two previous bubbles.

Kindergarten: 90 enrolled, 25 accepted based on pre-K students moving up.

First grade: 83 rerolled, 2 accepted.

Second grade: 61 enrolled, 7 accepted.

Third grade: 44 enrolled, 1 accepted.

Fourth grade: 43 enrolled, 2 accepted.

Fifth grade: 30 enrolled, 3 accepted.

On May 1, the “letter of intent” is scheduled to be mailed to current families. It’s expected back by June 1.

Shepherd’s current enrollment goal is 325; after renovations are done, it should go up to 350, which will entitle the school to more funding.

**Parental concerns, largely regarding student behavior:** This item took up the bulk of the remainder of the meeting. This included playground activity, cars coming into the playground, threats, injuries, and substitute teachers. Issues and themes that were brought up during the discussion included:

There was a sense that no process was in place, and that communication to parents was not being handles. The principal said they would try to be more diligent and mindful about which substitutes come to work in the building, and what they're told to prepare for their day. If something happens with a student and the school knows about it, the parents will also be told about it. Threats to "kill" are a reflection of our society, as children use the language they hear. Students, when interviewed about one particular incident, said there was no threat issued to the entire class.

Could Shepherd take a more pro-active approach to the subject instead of a reactive response?

Incidents can create an adversarial relationship rather than a collaborative partnership.

A student need not be the direct object of a threat to be traumatized by it.

Without redress or restorative justice, children are left with few options to cope – and they just can't walk away from the problem by not going to school.

The situation stalls Shepherd's potential for greatness.

Ms. Liggins, the school counselor, went in after each of the three major incidents and interviewed students, but there was no class-wide discussion of any incident. The presence of a social worker at the school come 2015-16 can help.

Shepherd might not be as good at communicating as it likes to think it is.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel.

A look at programs – how can we engage students ahead of time?

What is the forum for parents to have these issues raised? Do parents know it could be the PTA? The LSAT? The principal's "chat and chew" morning sessions?

Are the "Essential Agreements" still up and visible? Or would it be just visual clutter?

How is anything reinforced?

Are substitutes briefed before the day starts?

Student teachers do not get any training in conflict resolution.

The name of Andrew Whiting was given as a potential resource. He is Coordinator, Special Projects, Strategic Staffing, Human Resources, Office of Human Capital, DCPS. Phone 202-671-2828, email [andrew.whiting@dc.gov](mailto:andrew.whiting@dc.gov).

The second and third grade recess is the busiest. That said, there have been fewer than five fights. Disputes range from “It’s mine,” “it’s my turn,” “I want the basketball,” or WWE-style wrestling.

“Passport to Peace” is part of International Baccalaureate.

The impact of an incident lasts longer than the intent that brought it about.

There is the tension that things that are not OK to do during school time are OK to do after school while on school grounds, at least according to the children’s parents.

It was suggested that this be part of a professional development day program, especially if there is one left on the school calendar, because children tend to get more active and less focused with the onset of warmer weather. If there are no days left, then it should be part of the process during the one week before the start of classes where teachers report back to school.

The “Shepherd Way”: Be responsible. Be respectful. Be safe.

Shepherd gets students from all eight wards and at all grade levels, and, by extension, all manner of family backgrounds.

We are all responsible for one another.

Perhaps this should be part of the start-of-the-year parental contract parents are expected to sign.

Are there consequences for not heeding the essential agreements and going back on what was signed in the contract? Some students act as if they know nothing can be done about them.

Ms. Johnson’s last second-grade class had a lot of fighting. Ms. Liggins and the social worker did small groups and role-playing.

If there are no consequences, what about the withdrawal of privileges, like certain rotated classroom roles?

Can the PTA look at this as an issue?

Can parents who agree to volunteer at Shepherd be trained?

What are next steps? Potentially: reinforcing the Essential Agreements and making them apply to parents; a PTA role in this for getting parental buy-in; get subs who know the Shepherd Way. It’s something that needs to be done from Day 1 at school.

**Testing:** Trimble advised the LSAT about a planned meeting at Wilson High School on PARRC testing.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting will be held WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, at 4 p.m. at the school.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark Pattison, supplemental member