

PTO general body meeting 5/20/26

A. School Update with Principal Russell

a. Prioritizing climate and culture at SES

i. Age appropriate discussions at all levels

1. School leadership met with Transcend coach and design team and developed in classroom inclusion strong start meetings

- a. Components of strong start meetings: greeting, community building, purposeful partnering, goal setting, breath and focus, well wishes
- b. Making sure every strong start has focus on “inclusion” by sharing what it means to use as a school community
- c. Blending goals with IB learner profile of the month: “communicator” by focusing on active listening and respect. Also focusing on purposeful partnering and goal setting.
- d. School wide strong start assembly 5/26/26

2. 5th grade lesson: “helping everyone feel safe being themselves” took place on 5/15/26

- a. Partnered with the Chiron project and included scenario based lessons where students discussed how to handle situations. Also, students worked to create kindness posters

ii. Parent Education and Engagement

1. Supports for adult learning and engagement

iii. Sustaining safety and belonging

1. On 4/28/26, SES administration participated in a building walk with the “sense of belonging team” which looked at SES culture to see what was missing and what we can do better.

- a. We have strong relationships and positive climate
- b. Positive reinforcement and responsive treatment
- c. Effective transitions
- d. Established systems
- e. Culture of belonging

2. Next steps

- a. Consistency across spaces
- b. Refining transitions and routines
- c. Active monitoring and presence

b. Staffing update

1. Positions offered include: STEM, library, SPED inclusion, PE
 - a. Parent Question: What grade are teacher vacancies for? Principal Russell (PR) commented that things aren't finalized yet as she anticipates that there will be movement within the building.
 - b. Parent Question: Was Ms. Scott offered the librarian role? Principal Russell commented that the position was offered, but acceptances are still pending. Only able to offer soft offers at this time.
 - c. Parent Comment and then Question: 3rd grade will need another teacher. Will there be internal candidate or external candidate?. PR commented that there was internal interest, so the process is ongoing.
 - d. Parent Question: are any of the offers that are pending, given to internal teachers. Principal Russell said, "yes"
 - e. Parent Comment: It has been known that Ms. Scott was not offered the Librarian role, which is extremely concerning.
 - f. Parent Question: On the teacher vacancy, parent asked which grade levels are affected by the internal movement. Principal Russell responded that currently, we have a 3rd grade teacher vacancy and interviewing for that position.
 - i. Parent asked for clarity. Clarity provided: so at this time, the teachers in upper grades are staying, but things can change over the summer.
 - g. Parent Comment: we will need more transparency re decision about Ms. Scott who is beloved to the community.
 - i. Another parent(p) asked "should we be discussing personnel matters".
 - ii. PTO leadership relayed that there is red tape and limits to what can be discussed, but as parents are key stake holders, we hope that information can be shared, particularly how internal candidates are assessed. PR responded that all internal candidates

are granted an interview, early on with the personnel committee.

- iii. Follow up parent question: how much weight does an internal candidate receive? PR responded that a large consideration is given to our internal candidates.
- iv. Lastly, PTO leadership, said we truly will not know who is leaving until the end of the school year or over the summer. Everything is tentative until school year starts.
- h. Parent Question: Can you share which stakeholders are on the personnel committee. PR response that WTU members vote for who is on committee
- i. Parent Question: Did every candidate have a full panel interview?. PR answered yes.
- j. Parent Comment: I hope the decision re: Ms. Scott can be reconsidered or pivoted into a new role.
- k. Parent Question: It was amazing to get a staffing update before the end of the year, last year. Can we anticipate something similar this year. PR responded that it is the plan to at least announce the homeroom teachers for next year
- l. Parent Question: When will we be notified when outstanding acceptances come in? PR responded she will update as we go in newsletter, or via staffing announcements.
- m. Parent Question: A parent noticed that a person from DCPS was on, so if PR can not answer, maybe DCPS person can ie Stephanie.
 - i. Stephanie(DCPS) said she cannot discuss Ms. Scott hiring process. If teachers want to share if they accepted a position prior to public knowledge, that is ok too. Its not fair to Ms. Scott to discuss her hiring process on the call.
- n. Parent Comment: I'm not interested in knowing details about specific employees, I am interested in policies regarding hiring etc.

- o. Parent Comments: Ms. Scott said she was not extended position for the library.
 - i. Parent Comment : At the last PTO meeting, I remember PR saying that everything was done to bring Ms. Scott back, but offer was extended to someone with no elementary experience.
- p. Parent Comment: There has been a lot of trust broken. There have been lines/boundaries broken which is result of broken trust. We are all key stakeholders and we all want communication in an appropriate way.
- q. Parent Question: Rather than asking question which can't be answered, PR can you share your thoughts about the trust that has been broken, concern for continuity and relationship with teachers who know our kids for a very long time and your plans and commitment to us, the community. PR responded she does her best to collaborate with community and at time she will disagree, but just know that decisions are made with best interest of all students in mind.
 - i. Parent comment: it will be hard for this community to accept this.
- ii. Remaining vacancies
 - 1. Teacher vacancies-pending the move of other teachers
 - 2. Math instructional coach
 - 3. SPED Aide
- iii. Broader questions about how internal candidates are considered etc.
- iv. PTO will plan for a June PTO meeting to hear updates regarding staffing.
- c. Enrollment is going ok.
 - i. 62% YTD (252)
 - ii. Goal of 90% by June 2nd (378)
 - iii. 100% by June 18th (420)
 - iv. If you have enrolled but haven't heard anything yet, please check your parent portal. We are 160 student enrollments from our full goal. Ms. Offor sent "frequently seen mistakes sheet"
- d. Yearbook update [not addressed at the meeting]
- B. Guest speaker: Hayley Lofink Love "Lets talk about delaying social media and smartphones and building digital literacy"

- a. She is the mother of Murch 4th grade daughter and kindergarten son. She is not a subject matter expert, but a mom.
 - b. There is momentum regarding re-thinking giving children smartphones too early
 - c. A group of 10 parents at Murch started the discussion and there are working groups at Lafayette, Janey, etc.
 - d. Was going to give overview of impact of social media on mental health.
 - e. Hosted a film, screenagers
 - f. There was only 15min left, so she said she will share the deck and resources ie WhatsApp group, and we can have the full presentation in the fall
 - g. She recognized that the school community needed more time to discuss Ms. Scott. Thus, she yielded her time.
- C. Conversation returned to discussion re: Ms. Scott.
- a. Parent comment: The school is disappointed that Ms. Scott was not offered a position given the love the community has for her. She is a cheer coach, she does the assemblies, and the black history performances.
 - b. Ms. Scott spoke, and was tearful. She revealed that she tells the students to speak even if their voice shakes. She relayed she was not picked for library position as it was felt she didn't support literacy initiatives for student data. The conclusion was reached without any observation of her abilities over the last 4 years. Ms. Scott said that parent(p) mentioned that the situation seems personal, and she can't speak to what he meant by that, but in her opinion it hits the nail on the head. She does believe the circumstances around that decision are disheartening and difficult to understand. In the same way the community is asking question and not receiving answers, she is experiencing the same. Ms. Scott thought SES would be her forever school. She recognizes the important of being in a school where her contributions are valued not just by students, parents, or colleagues, but specially administration. at this time, it is not in her best interest to remain at Shepherd. She loves us all and she is forever grateful to have been a Shepherd Mustang and that is all she wants to say. She thanked us for the opportunity to address everyone and thanks to everyone who tried their best an spoke up on her behalf. She asked that the children are not told . She wants to tell them and can't handle a month of crying as he already spent 4months crying.
 - c. After Ms. Scott spoke, a parent announced that PR left while Ms. Scott was talking.
 - d. Parent comment: the community loves and adores her and she asked how the community can support Ms. Scott in this new chapter and what that may look like.

- D. Parent Question: asked to see if Staphanie(DCPS) was on the line. PTO president said that the community is grieving a loss of a good teacher at the school. Ms. Scott reviewed 48 teacher appreciation nominations. Stephanie(DCPS) said she wanted to commend Ms. Scott for her work as she sounds like a true gem to the Shepherd community. There are specific avenues that one can advocate. Recommend leverage personnel committee and WTU rep. Stephenie was referring to the staff member to leverage those avenues not the Shepherd community
 - a. Parent comment: this advice was not good as parents have done everything in their power and we are still here in the same position.
 - b. Parent Question: asked Stephanie(DCPS) if she paid attention on this call that that the parent community couldn't get information about simple answers regarding hiring policies etc.
- E. Parent Question: What happened to Dr. Plenty. Pto leadership shared that we have invited her to every single PTO meeting and she declined to intend.
- F. Parent Comment: A 1st year parents jumped in because they have had a tough year, and every time she jumps on the calls, she feels like she is in community. She misses her old school. Kids deserve going to school and enjoy learning. She has not received response from administration on her concerns. In addition, she is still working on getting 504 planned ironed out, even though she walked into the school with said plan.
- G. Parent comment: Parent with older kids said that those older kids didn't not love Ms. Scott's predecessor.
- H. Parent comment: Parent wanted feedback for what the evaluation criteria is for principal and what they need to maintain to keep their jobs.
- I. Stephanie(DCPS) said she was taking notes and she will follow up with DCPS leadership. She dropped her email in the chat.
 - a. Parent comment: every time that something happens external supports are brought in, instead of administration having a plan to address it. There is not the skill, desire, eQ to engage.
- J. Parent comment: Its evident DCPS has failed this community and this school. There has been no progress or change.
 - a. Parent comment: Parents done have the luxury or appetites to wait for dcps.
 - b. Parent comment: Admin has lost the respect of the parents
- K. Parent comment: we have to say the quite part out loud "It feels like this feels like retaliation" It feels like a punishment for a teacher that was vulnerable.
- L. Stephanie(DCPS) can discuss with the Chancellor and Dr. Plenty to facilitate conversation. Stephanie(DCPS) wants a list of things that have not been addressed to facilitate follow up. PTO requested that Stephanie(DCPS) send her list to PTO inbox and

the PTO will add to it. Parent requested to have a real open town hall with engagement and openness to concerns.

- M. At closing, PTO leadership requested that Ms. Scott share the news with the students, not the parents.
- N. Overall-→Shepherd community needs full force and real change. Enough is enough
- O. **The below was on the agenda but we were not able to get to those items.**
- P. Gala Fundraising result
- Q. Beautification project
- R. School supplies for next year
- S. Important Dates and upcoming events
- T. April Tap winner
- U. PTO/LSAT election results: 2026-2027
- V. Financials
- W. Q&A
- X. Stay Connected