

Lab School PA Board Retreat
7/8/2015 Coe Residence

In Attendance:

Sari Weichbrodt

Safi Runesha

Mariana Ingersoll

Sara Skelly

Shipra Parikh

Tracey Quinn

Leny Leung

Shrunali Rai

Patty Jones Seigel

Kim Stolze

Amy Liszt

Nicole Brookens

Amanda Norton

Lena Jessen

Tracy Coe

Cathy Lee

Tina Louie

Sari and Safi welcomed everyone and asked that members introduce themselves.
General:

1. Wufoo for reimbursement...Sari asked that all receipts and requests for graduation reimbursement be submitted one week after the expense has been incurred; otherwise, submit within 30 days. Related to budget and expenses Sari informed all that Brian Lipinski set up an account for the PA to charge room rental expenses, such as Ida Noyes or I House. These charges go through the Facts system and the PA Co-Presidents and the Treasurer must be informed when these charges are being made. Sari mentioned that since the increase for PA dues was approved last year, the Councils will have a cushion in their budgets and should shop around for new vendors for Parent Nights if interested. Pastoral was mentioned as a good alternative to Aramark. It was mentioned that new menu items are available by Aramark this year and that they are being more creative to accommodate gluten free diets.
2. Communication...Sari would like the PA to think more about how to spread the word to the parent body about who we are and what we do. Tina Louie made a comprehensive list of events covering the school year that incorporated all of the Councils. It was suggested that this type of list should reach the parent body so that they know which events are sponsored by the PA. A discussion about how to use signage ensued and everything from the PA pop up sign to the PA tablecloth and the plexiglass 8.5x11 holders were mentioned as easy ways to display the PA sponsorship at various events. Safi asked for opinions around how to tell parents in the Back to School

Welcome Letter where their membership dues are spent. Safi agreed that expressing the work that is done with dues and not going into detail about amounts would be sufficient as well as reminding parents that they are all members of the PA. **[Note: Lab billed the \$50 amount in the current tuition bill and will bill the remainder on the winter quarter tuition bill. I think that means we will have to address the dues increase in our letter so people are not confused. SW]** Speaking of communication, Shrunali mentioned that the ESH method of getting information to parents is still a manual process with too much duplication, particularly if you have children in different grades but the same school. She mentioned that the principal would like to change this. The plan today is to use Garbanzo per classroom. For a grade wide communication one would reach out to the Principals to distribute. Everyone agreed that E-News is not the most effective way of communicating with parents and that many do not read past the title of event posts.

3. PA Meeting Dates/Speaker Series...On Tuesday October 13 after morning drop-off , the first Speaker Series begins with Julie Lythcott-Haims, the author of How to Raise an Adult. Sari asked that the Councils work to promote the event throughout their schools. It was mentioned that a shuttle from ESH to Gordon Parks Arts Hall would be helpful, particularly for new parents. Tina Louie suggested having a parent survey following the Speaker Series to ask about timing and experience. Sara Skelly mentioned that the principals are also very able to help with promotion and will help if asked. Many agreed that taking copies of the book and mentioning the event at Parents Night would be a great way to begin promotion. At ESH, it was said that having signage at the carline would help promote to this captive audience. To post signage in the ESH lobby one would have to ask the ESH Lobby Committee for approval. A discussion began about the possibility of inviting others outside of the Lab community to attend the Speaker Series. Some said that alumni should be invited and some added that the parents of nearby Hyde Park schools should be invited too, and also the U of C students/parents who might be interested. The idea being that Lab would be more inclusive and would have more space at the Gordon Parks Arts Hall to accommodate the additional attendees. Some mentioned that we should charge a fee to attend and others disagreed. Sari and Safi will find out from the school if these ideas can be implemented. November 2 will be the next PA Business meeting in the evening at ESH followed by meeting dates, December 7, January 11, February 1, March 7, April 4 and May 2.
4. Parent Website Status...Patty Jones Siegel reported that the parent website created by Thomas Gaulkin is not ready but requested that each Council appoint a member to be the Communication contact and let her know who that person will be. These contacts would report what they would like to see on the website in their school tab, LS, P, MS or HS. The website will go live by the start of school and will require a password for use. During the week of August 10, a meeting will be held with the contacts of each Council to train them on how to update their school tab information on the website directly.

The plan is to also use Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook and Instagram. Information about the parent website will be included in the Back To School Welcome Letter.

5. Parent Night Status... Shrunali reported that ESH Parent Nights will be Nursery 9/9, Kindergarten 9/8 and Primary 9/16. She mentioned that because these dates used to combine schools, the cost of providing food for each event is much larger. Some thought that it was unnecessary to have too much food and that a smaller amount is sufficient for these events or that she may be able to ask the Principals to split the cost with her. ESH new parent orientation will be 9/2 or 9/3. LS new parent orientation is 9/3, 9:30-10:30 followed by a 3rd grade scavenger hunt and new parent lunch. LS Parent Night is 9/17. MS new parent orientation is 9/3 and Parent Night is 9/10. The MS will not be holding a Fall Fest or Back to School BBQ as in years past. HS new parent orientation is 9/3 and the Parent Night date was not reported. Kim Stolze mentioned that the HS will not be passing out popsicles again this year as they did not get great feedback.
6. Volunteers were requested for the ESH carline for the first two weeks of school. Those interested should contact Shrunali Rai. Also volunteers were requested for mentor families for new parents and to contact your Council reps to volunteer.
7. Councils...Safi and Sari asked that the Councils please report to them the dates of their first Principal meeting so that they can try to attend. They are willing to attend subsequent meetings if requested or necessary.
8. Draft Budgets...Sari will email the draft budgets to each Council. She asked that the Councils work to stick to the dollar amount in the end even though spending could be fluid from event to event within the Council event lineup.
9. Graduations...Tracy Coe suggested that there be 1 or 2 parents on the MS Council involved in Graduation and that the Gordon Parks Arts Hall poses new questions about how to manage the ceremony. She requested to meet with the CoPresidents to discuss this more fully at a later time. Kim Stolze reported that the HS graduation went smoothly apart from placement of the More cupcakes which will be changed for next year.
10. Teacher Grant...Sari requested a volunteer to spearhead the Teacher Grant Process and write a new letter. She mentioned that this year's letter may not have been sufficiently clear and so the quality of the grant proposals was lower than expected. She was hoping that the funds would give teachers a chance to try something new in the classroom and to not be a gap filler in their budget for supplies. She mentioned that it should be used for more innovative ideas. This volunteer would be asked to come up with a draft of a letter, that it be concise and clear and use examples of good ideas. Amanda Norton volunteered to spearhead the teacher grant process. The plan is to have a draft letter for the teacher grant by teacher planning week and the spending deadline for the grant to be April 15th.
11. Refreshments for planning meetings... Sari and Safi asked if we should have a spending cap on different planning meetings or if we should allow people to use money out of their total budget. The committee suggested that we no

longer offer refreshments but consider acknowledging volunteers in a different way (ex: have names of volunteers acknowledged on the school website). Sari and Safi also suggested inviting all volunteers close to the end of school year for an appreciation event.

12. Fundraising... Bizaarnival has been doing very well and will be getting an increase on their budget. In the past Rites of May did not have a specific budget, for this coming year, the co-presidents suggested to the Rites of May committee to submit a budget plan to the Treasurer. The Rites of May committee will have a meeting with Sari and Safi to have a further discussion on this. We will be selling books at the speaker series again this year.
13. New ways to further our mission-brainstorming.... Status of Spiritwear: Cheryl had expressed interest in being in charge of the Spiritwear. Sari reached out to her and she is still working on it and will let us know in a couple of weeks. Providing more opportunities for parent interaction: High School had a great idea last year of getting different groups of parents to go to different restaurants during "restaurant week", we will try this again this year and hopefully open it up to the whole school. Lena also suggested organizing group theater outings at a group rate. The committee also suggested to the co-presidents to talk to Robin about having coffee with parents (especially new parents at the high school level).