

University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Parents' Association

Minutes of the General Meeting

March 6, 2017

Attendance: Zainab Baig, Ekta Joshi, Nickie Brookens, Ann Grissom, Anu Asthana, Tiffany Flowers, Leny Leung, Chandra Grey, Sieglinde Lim, Jelani Frazier, Amy Han, Amelia Klein, Christie Henry, Liz Anderson, Lena Jessen, Nancy Stern, Thomas Gaulkin, Kim Picciola, Andee Stacy, Cathy Lee, Claudia Roeder-Leuz, Colleen Sheehan, Veronica Thigpen, Suzy Nemic, Laura Voss Allen, Val Harper, Patty Jones, Karen Slimmon, Vanessa Copans, Angela Cobb, Amanda Norton, Kim Stolze, Tina Louie, and Audris Wong. Nancy Stern took the minutes.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Co-President Audris Wong began by giving an update on up-coming events. On March 13, the Diversity Committee is having an impromptu meeting with the principals at 6:00 p.m. in Earl Shapiro Hall. At 8:45 a.m. on April 4, Eboo Patel, the founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, will be giving a presentation in Gordon Parks Arts Hall. At 6:00 p.m. on April 4, the PA Diversity Committee will host a panel discussion on "Living our Values: Helping our Children Respond in Troubling Times" in Earl Shapiro Hall. Rites of May, an all-schools event put on by parents, students, faculty and staff, returns this year. Volunteers are needed to coordinate the global café and international booths. There are plans for a new maker fair as well.

Co-Presidents-Elect Review of 2016-17 Accomplishments and Priorities for 2017-18

Beginning at 7:13 p.m., Co-President-Elect Amanda Norton led a presentation entitled "Engagement and Communication: Fostering a Strong Parent Community." After outlining the agenda for the presentation, Amanda referred to a chart showing the organization of volunteers at Lab, noting that in addition to the PA Board, there are PA-sponsored functions, such as Picture Day, the Diversity Committee, Room Parents, Bookswap, the speaker series and Rites of May. There are also parent-led groups, such as Multi-lingual Storytime, Challenge for Success, and affinity group events. Finally, there are events that involve PA collaboration, such as Connections, LabArts, admissions, and the health fair. Amanda noted that this school year, we had 399 unique volunteers. She also provided a breakdown of volunteers by school. Amanda then reviewed the kinds of opportunities open to parents who would like to volunteer.

Co-President-Elect Kim Stolze then reviewed the 2016-17 areas of focus, including new parent introduction, ongoing community-building, parent education and advocacy, volunteer outreach and empowerment, and strengthening the PA board. She reviewed the accomplishments of the Co-Presidents, Audris Wong and Tina Louie, in each of these categories.

Kim then outlined the challenges and opportunities of the PA with respect to finance, referring to pie charts that showed the expenses of the PA by category and revenues of the PA by category. The primary challenge with respect to finance has been timeliness and follow-up with reimbursements and grants. Kim suggested that the Treasurer continue to encourage council members to continue to submit reimbursement requests in a timely fashion, set aside time each month to work through requests after big events, budget all-school events together with event chairs, and follow up with teachers to ensure that grant funds are used and documented.

Kim then reviewed the challenges and opportunities with respect to communications. Primary challenges have been generating interest among parents in E-News and labparents.org, capturing compelling content and photos for labparents.org, and increasing cross-council collaboration to drive student/parent interest in PA events.

Kim then reviewed the aims and accomplishments of the Diversity Committee for 2016-17. Kim noted that this month, the Diversity Committee will provide an opportunity for parents to learn about each division's diversity efforts. Next month, it will host a panel discussion with professionals who have experience talking with children and adolescents about difficult subjects related to diversity. More generally, the Diversity Committee serves a liaison role between parents and the school on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Kim then reviewed the accomplishments of each council in the areas of new parent introductions, community building, education/advocacy, volunteers, and strengthening the board.

Kim then set forth the priorities of the Co-Presidents-Elect for 2017-18, which are

- continuing to improve the new parent introduction process
- maintaining momentum on community building
- empowering councils and volunteers
- advancing diversity, equity and inclusion
- strengthening communication
 - between PA and parents
 - between PA and administration
 - among councils.

The plan of the Co-Presidents-Elect is to act as conductors empowering the councils and other board members, rather than being deeply involved in all aspects.

Amanda then stated the importance of being thoughtful about funding things that underscore our values as a community. For example, the PA funded the purchase of kente cloths for the MLK Day assembly, which will be used for many years to come. Amanda spoke of her experience as a volunteer and how it allowed her to meet people she wouldn't otherwise have met, enriching her experience at Lab. Kim then spoke about her time at Lab and how it has inspired her to volunteer. This is her last year at Lab.

Amanda and Kim then thanked Audris Wong and Tina Louie for their contributions as Co-Presidents. Audris then spoke briefly about her and Tina's efforts on behalf of the Parents' Association.

Questions and Answers

Beginning at 7:46, there was an opportunity for members to ask questions. In response to a question, there was a further review of the slide illustrating the PA's expenditures. There was a discussion regarding grade level events. It was suggested that establishing a structure and tradition for these events will make them easier to plan. For example, perhaps all grade-level events for Lower School should occur on the same day.

There was a suggestion to educate parents about pathways to solve certain issues or to accomplish certain objectives. It was noted that next year, there will be a pilot program for an event-management system that should facilitate planning events.

It was noted that the speakers sponsored by the PA are a valuable part of its program.

Kim Stolze suggested that the councils leave a month-by-month to-do list for their successors.

There was a question about the election process, which Nancy Stern, Secretary-Elect, answered.

There was a suggestion that communications be improved regarding issues of interest to parents that are not specifically PA-initiated.

There was a discussion regarding the need for a channel to bring new ideas to the board.

There was a request that someone take minutes of the parent-to-parent meetings and a discussion of the attendance and structure of parent-to-parent meetings.

It was noted that volunteers are needed for the health fair.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.