PTA Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2014

Present: Mary Murray, Naomi Cooper, Nelia Flores, Marcela Serritos Aguilar, Tami Gianacos, Stephanie Rutledge, Elissa Flanzer, Wayne Herzog, Julene Conner, Jennifer Joseph, Gabriel Sheffer, Neel Blair, LaQuita Hester, Josie Clark, Eileen Gray, Sandra Scott, Kris Baldassin, Ruben Rolon, Anne Sheeran, Nina A. Bowman, Lindsay Zaccara, Molly Laster, Dave Seawell, Liz Gillespie, Pete Intravartolo, Karen Rosenberg

**I. General Questions and Comments**

FOH PTA President Mary Murray opened the meeting with an invitation for general questions and comments.

Member question: Does joining PTA obligate you to have a role in the PTA?

Answer: No.  It just shows you are a member.  You can pay to join or you can apply for a scholarship.

Member comment: We have funds to paint a mural but it has not yet been planned.  The planning and painting are designed to help build Hawthorne community and the mural itself aims to help with traffic calming.

The initial count for walk-a-thon fundraiser exceeds $12,000.

Member question: What happened to the grant for fruits and vegetables we had last year?

Principal Scott responded that Hawthorne doesn’t qualify for this grant anymore because we no longer have 80% of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.  (The number still exceeds 70%).  We should look for new funding sources for this.

**II. Special Education At Hawthorne**

Parent Naomi Cooper introduced herself and the topic of Special Education (SPED).  She is involved in the Seattle SPED PTSA and has participated in meetings of the SPED Advisory Committee.  She explained that Seattle SPED is under a corrective action plan with the state for failing to fulfill their legally mandated requirements to support students who need SPED services.  She has additional information for those who are interested.

Naomi and her two children have had productive, supportive experiences at Hawthorne and she praised Hawthorne’s administration and teachers.

Eileen Gray discussed the importance of the larger Hawthorne community understanding the SPED context, services, and needs.  She introduced Wayne Herzog, a ten-year veteran of the district-wide SPED office.

Wayne provided an overview of special education.  Before 1970, schools were allowed to segregate, suspend or refuse to serve kids with different needs.  Legislative changes led to current priorities that (in theory) emphasize mainstreaming kids where possible, offering services close to a child’s home, and providing appropriate discipline structures.  Wayne outlined processes used to determine eligibility for services and defined key terms that guide SPED service delivery.  Please see attached presentation for further details.

SPED PTSA member Ann Sheeran explained that SPED-qualifying children are the only ones who are federally mandated to attend the school closest to their homes, but this does not always happen in Seattle.  SPS continues to have “SPED ghettos,” schools that have disproportionately large numbers of SPED students.  This is a capacity management issue that needs to be fixed and a violation of federal law.

Wayne clarified that the SPED department does not determine where SPED programs are housed.  He explained that the system is also not a hospitable environment for SPED staff.  During his decade with SPS, he has seen many strong staff leave due to burnout and other issues.

Tami Gianacos, Hawthorne’s Resource Room spoke about her role at Hawthorne.  She works with children who are primarily in general education classes but require support in targeted areas.  She estimates that she works with 1-2 children in each general education class.  She tries to work with children in their classes whenever possible (as opposed to taking them out of the classroom).  This year Tami works with 17 students; last year she worked with 26 students. Instructional Assistant Debbie Cavitt also serves these students.

Hawthorne has two stand-alone classrooms for students identified as having emotional or behavioral disabilities (EBD).  The two EBD classroom teachers, Julene Conner (K-2) and Elissa Flanzer (3-5) spoke about how they work with students in their classes.  Each teacher has 10 students in their class.  They emphasized that they use a team approach, working with students’ families and a variet of professionals to come up with an individualized education plan (IEP) for each student.  Their goal is to support students so that they can be successful in the general education classrooms.

Although we have two classrooms for EBD students as well as other students who have identified emotional and behavioral issues, Hawthorne does not have its own school counselor.  If the Hawthorne community wanted to advocate for a school counselor, Wayne suggested speaking with the Executive Director of SPED, the Superintendent’s Advisory Group, and the SPED steering committee.  General discussion of how to support SPED students and families, as well as how to educate general education families on SPED issues.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30.  Next meeting: November 19, 6pm