

## **SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### **Minutes of Local School Advisory Team meeting of OCTOBER 8, 2013**

**Present:** Kesha Pendergrast (parent), chair; Mark Pattison (parent), secretary; parent representatives: Kamilah Martin-Proctor, Keith White; teacher representatives: Robin George, Elizabeth Guldin, Nicole Pethtel; Washington Teachers Union representative: Tia Holt; Robyn George, staff representative; plus principal Jamie Miles (via conference call).

**Excused:** Carl Bergman, community representative.

**Absent:** Renee Hamer, teacher representative; Sherilyn Pruitt, PTA representative.

**Minutes:** Pendergrast moved, Pattison seconded approving the minutes of the September meeting. Motion carried.

#### **Survey Feedback**

Copies of LSAT members' responses to the LSAT survey were distributed and discussed.

**Math:** Could a Math Club be started? The school currently employs ST math and First in Math, which includes Kindergarten. Parents are interested in doing a math club for grades 3-5 in the evenings using the Singapore Math model. Students work in small groups independently, and compete against each other and other schools. The principal is looking for other schools to compete against. Odyssey of the Mind is another possibility.

**Extracurricular activities:** The Spelling Bee, GeoPlunge and the Science Fair are still happening as planned. The staff, the principal acknowledged, is slammed. What's missing from this picture, is the parents. The Science Fair is a case in point. Parents who had committed to helping bring exhibits to NOAA and set them up did not make good on their commitments, which resulted in staff time being used to do this work. Parents could also be used to tabulating Science Fair stats and judging the entries. There's a six-week window for the science fair. Last year 25 students needed some extra adult support to get their projects done.

**Principal Sundaes:** This will be revealed early in November. Two events are being planned, and the principal is currently talking with parents.

**Creativity Energy Contest:** This is sponsored by the company for which Keith White works. The first prize-winning student gets a trip to Hawaii A winner in every state, including D.C. The school gets \$2,500 if their student wins. This typically rolls out in December. The project must relate to energy conservation.

**TV Turnoff:** Enrollment forms have appeared in the Mustang and are on the rack. There was one instance where a student who joined the club did not get her due in the Mustang, and that seems to have repeated this year. We'll continue to advise parents to submit forms in the PTA mailbox; if it's submitted directly to the teacher, it could very well get lost amid a large stack of papers.

**Curriculum Nights:** They will look different than those held in the past. The tentative schedule calls for November, January and March Curriculum Nights, although they are subject to change based on timeliness of planning.

**Mad Science:** There were 20 requests for Mad Science to come back. And it probably will. It was unclear as to who paid for it, the school or the PTA.

**Community Engagement:** Pattison was asked to send the Mustang to the Shepherd Park listserv. Pendergrast said it was time to reach out to the larger community. The question remains: What is the best way(s) to do so?

It was suggested that a concerted effort be made to reach out to businesses, churches and synagogues. Supermarkets would be good places to post school activities. Libraries, too, including Takoma and Petworth. We should invite other schools to our events. We should also make use of our representatives on the D.C. council and our Advisory Neighborhood Commission representatives. We should also have an active presence at the Shepherd Park Citizens Association meetings.

Pattison was asked to post regularly to the Shepherd alumni pages on Facebook.

The survey had a seemingly contradictory claim of great parent community feeling, but a sense of non-transparency. Various theories posed as to why this may be so, among them the greater number of out-of-boundary parents who have less time to get involved, the carpool and dropoff system which leaves parents in their cars and not engaged with each other, and the sense by some out-of-boundary parents that teachers treat their children slightly differently. There was also the concern expressed that when things "happen" at Shepherd, one doesn't know where to go to.

Lack of teacher involvement was also discussed, including the sense that the PTA acts more like a "PA" (parent association), and that the one teacher who served as a PTA officer was thought of more as childcare for the other officers' children, and seeming lack of consideration of having a teacher actively serving on the PTA board. Discussion continued in this vein before the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mark Pattison, secretary  
Local School Advisory Team