

SHEPHERD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Minutes of Local School Advisory Team meeting of OCTOBER 10, 2012

Present: Sherilyn Pruitt, chair; Mark Pattison, secretary; Kesha Pendergrast, Lisa Connor (via conference call), parent representatives; Nancy Ulba, Joele Michaud, teacher representatives; Robyn Brooks, staff representative; Carl Bergman, community representative; plus Jamie Miles, principal.

Introductions: Asked by the chair to mention something good about Shepherd since the previous LSAT meeting, among the things members mentioned were the energy of the students, better order inside the school as students gather, the presence of the Safety Patrol, Fall Fest including Girl Scout members from the neighborhood who helped out at various activities, the partnership with the Kennedy Center, and the sponsorship of the school by both the French and Spanish embassies.

Minutes: Michaud moved, Bergman seconded approval of the September meeting minutes. Motion carried.

LSAT training: Bergman and Pruitt said they attended LSAT training. Pruitt said she felt DCPS could have just sent the slides. The only correctible flaw in our work she said she could see was to distribute an agenda in advance of the meeting.

Safety: There is no permanent crossing guard as of yet. An emergency backup has been dispatched. The assigned guard has been sick with no replacement assigned. Police officers have come to oversee the situation. Shepherd parent Nashwa Beach is keen on improving the traffic situation. She contacted Jennifer Heffernan from D-DOT; Heffernan did an assessment the morning of Oct. 10; she had conducted an assessment of dismissal in early June 2011. Ward 4 Board of Education member D. Kamili Anderson has also advocated on Shepherd's behalf. Pendergrast said she has used D-DOT's "Ask the Director" feature on its website to ask the director about traffic safety at Shepherd but has received no reply; it was advised that she block-and-copy her message and keep resending it, adding "second request," "third request" and so on. Bergman said he would contact the director of Congregation Tifereth Israel about the possibility of Shepherd parents using the 8-10 parking spaces behind the synagogue in the mornings. We (no assignment given or accepted) will ask D-DOT to remove the morning rush-hour parking prohibition on northbound 16th Street to create more parking. Ms. Holt, the director of the Safety Patrol, has researched costs for Safety Patrol ponchos, activities and rewards. Pattison will use the neighborhood listserv to seek volunteers to place cones along 14th Street for mornings and afternoons, as well as "ticketing" cars and drivers. The ANC 4A (first Tuesday of the month) and the PSA 4-01 meetings (second Wednesday of the month) may be good sources for volunteers from the community.

Reading: DCPS Chancellor Kaya Henderson, in a meeting last month with the principal and other school leaders, was impressed with Shepherd's improvement in reading and wants the school to reach 90 percent proficient or advanced this year. There are three specific goals on the "Get Caught Reading" Campaign draft distributed at the meeting. The intent is to match students' love for reading with performance on the final TRC assessment. The principal has been

using the Mustang to make parents aware of a reading focus strategies through a weekly series. There will be a lunchtime reading club once a week starting with the fifth grade. At Shepherd, there is currently only a 3 percent gap in reaching achievement between boys and girls; the gap had been much larger. The school's Early Readers program for students in K-2 will expand to grades 3-5 and will be held Mondays and Wednesdays 8-8:30 a.m. Three volunteers have been identified, but more will be needed. Pendergrast will investigate the possibility of bringing DCPS/MPD fingerprinting equipment to Shepherd, or using some acceptable alternative, to make volunteer recruitment easier; volunteers will still need to undertake a TB test. Students will get the word at a Nov. 9 pep rally featuring "The Tub." Another way to pursue the goal is to get celebrity readers. Bergman said he would get in touch with Carolivia Herron, a children's book author. There were questions about how one quantifies both reading and comprehension. Ulba said she had a book-report sheet that could be used if there were general agreement at the school with it. Each grade will have its own goals. Pattison, in his capacity as president of the Friends of the Library for the Shepherd Park branch, offered free books from the used book room to students who have read books. The principal agreed to be the target of marshmallow throwing if students met their book-reading goals, and to be made into a human sundae if the 90 percent proficiency level were reached.

Spanish teaching: The Spanish teacher, Senorita Martinez, returned to Shepherd Oct. 8 after an absence of a month and a half. She is conducting assessments of students' Spanish fluency and comprehension. Rosetta Stone has been installed in the computers in the computer lab to split the fourth- and fifth-grade students' classes, which can grow too large for any one teacher to handle. The question arose of how an additional language teacher would be funded if one could be hired.

Recess: The question arose over the withholding of recess or badly behaving students. The principal noted that such a thing is a last resort. Halfway measures have included walking during recess or even exercising in the principal's office.

Reading, part two: Giving away books could be a good incentive to get students to read. Can parents go through bookshelves to donate books now "too young" for their children? Pizza Hut has a "Book It" program. Reading Is Fundamental has books that Shepherd has acquired before. Scholastic has a monthly book club catalogue that a few teachers are pursuing, although still a minority of all faculty. Shepherd has a Scholastic "e-code" for teachers' online Scholastic orders that parents may be able to use.

School website: The issue was raised about old and no-longer-relevant photos on the school website. Pattison said he would get in touch with a PTA officer to obtain a thumb drive which has photos from events early in the school year to freshen up the home page and to put a picture at the bottom of each page of the site. The goal is to get this done by the end of October.

Reading, part three: A visual display is needed in the school to track the reading goal that is chosen. While ice cream scoops was an early favorite, Michaud was visualizing a sundae concept which she could make. It would be posted between the library and Ms. Gibbs' classroom.

TV Turnoff: Pattison reported 37 members thus far in the TV/Video Game Turnoff Club. Last year there were 54-55 members. Photos have been taken of most students, and their pictures will appear on a bulletin board between the library and the 14th Street doors.

School funding: Pattison reported that Bianca Bostic, the PTA president who is an ex-officio member of the LSAT, stated her belief that the D.C. PTA is the better arm to advocate for increased school funding. It was noted that the District is anticipating a \$140 million surplus for the current fiscal year. What percentage of the District's budget goes to DCPS, and what percentage of \$140 million would that entail?

Academic: Ulba reported that things are already in place for the Spelling Bee, first with classroom bees before moving on to a school bee for qualifiers. The GeoPlunge materials have arrived and she is working with Ms. Thomas. The competition date is Jan. 9, and Shepherd will have three teams competing. She is also in contact with NOAA for a class-wide science fair for K-2 and individual science fair for grades 3-5. There was much favorable comment on the GeoPlunge cards.

LSAT Survey: There was a brief review of the survey. The goals for the Academic Enrichment priority were discussed and activities are underway such as the book clubs, GeoPlunge, Spelling Bee, and Science Fair to increase student knowledge which will be measured by standardized tests. The next meeting will include a discussion on Community Engagement and Culture and Climate, the two other expressed LSAT goals for 2012-13.

Librarian: Bergman said there are six librarians at Congregation Tifereth Israel and that he will urge them to help out some at Shepherd.

Kickball: As the sport needs a coach, Pendergrast said she would ask one of her kickball teammates if they could coach a coed Shepherd team.

Fundraising: Pendergrast suggest the concept of "do-nothing fundraisers" that have had some success in Virginia schools she knows. Parents commit to giving money rather than to all the busy work of gift-wrap and chocolate sales. She added that a collection of parents of first graders have started a "Class of 2024" and want to enlist the PTA's help in creating restricted funds dedicated to pre-identified uses. The tactic is used frequently, the principal agrees with the concept, and the topic is expected to surface at the next PTA meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting will be held TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, at 4 P.M. at the school.

Respectfully submitted,
Mark Pattison, secretary
Local School Advisory Team