

**United Parents Group Executive Board Meeting – February 9, 2009**

Attendees: Paula Barvin, Jim Butt, Cherie Leather, Samantha Garrett, Beverly Fries, Colleen McHugh, Kate Darwin, Christa Sywulak-Herr, Deb Mulligan, Sherry Hazelwood, Rhonda Feder, Karen Irgang, Kimmy Brennan, Emily Reich, Maureen Boland, Tina Viletto, Greta Bynin., Alexandra Drobac Diagne, Beverly Norward, Linda Roeder

**Welcome & Approval of Minutes:**

Paula & Jim welcomed all, then motioned to approve the January 2009 minutes. Sherry Hazelwood asked that a correction be made in the January minutes. The minutes incorrectly refers to the “Reading Rocks” program at Glenside Elementary School, when it should reference the “Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program. The minutes will therefore be corrected.

**Treasurer’s Report:**

Sherry Hazelwood reported that the UPG had several financial transactions this month, including babysitting costs, TAP donations, and money for the March 5, 2009 workshop. Thus, the current balance is \$2,388.16 in checking account, and \$788.05 in the Money Market account.

**Presidents’ Report:**

Jim stated that the administration (Dr. Keifer) would like to have a “closing” meeting with UPG to discuss the Strategic Plan. Dr. Keifer spoke at the first UPG meeting of the year and he feels it would be helpful to close the year with a review of the district’s accomplishments thus far. The group welcomed this and the meeting agenda with Dr. Keifer will be set for June.

Jim stated that we have yet to select topics for the March and April meetings, so suggestions were offered including;

- A meeting with Dr. Bavi to review facilities issues
- A meeting with Sue Tischler to update parents on t he new Reading Curriculum
- A meeting to discuss improving communication within the district
- A meeting to continue the discussion on Universal Acceleration at CHS.

**PTO Sharing:**

Cheltenham High School:

- The Touring Ensemble Showcase will be held February 18, 2009 at Stretton Hall.
- Sweeney Todd will be the musical this year.
- TAP awards will be held April 1, 2009
- There will be a 2 hour delay at CHS this week because of PSSA testing.
- The girls lacrosse team is sponsoring a Casino Night fund raiser later this month.
- The Touring ensemble will host a fund raiser at Marco Polo restaurant on February 23, 2009.

- The Lady Panthers Basketball team district playoffs is on February 14, 2009.

Cedarbrook:

- Cedarbrook will have a school dance on Friday, February 13, 2009.
- The Cedarbrook school play, "Oklahoma" will be held March 19-21, 2009

Elkins Park:

- The EP MLK Day of Service was a huge success
- EP is sponsoring a "Pajama Day" to help raise funds for the garden project.
- EP held Bingo on Friday, February 6, 2009.
- The garden Project fundraiser will be held on April 19 at the Cheltenham enter for the Arts.

Myers:

- Myers held a Silent Auction, (the main PTO fundraiser) on March 7, 2009 and it was a smashing success , raising about \$5,000.00 for the PTO.
- Meyers also had a very successful MLK Day of Service
- Illustrator, E.B. Lewis, was featured at Myers "Author/Illustrator" day and was a great success.

Wyncote:

- MLK Day of Service was well attended and a huge success.
- Wyncote also featured illustrator, E.B. Lewis, at their "Author/Illustrator" event.
- Wyncote PTO announced they would be canceling "Science Night" originally scheduled to be held in March, and instead will be organizing a "Science Movie Night".
- Wyncote's evening custodian, Darla, was tragically killed in an automobile accident on Saturday, January 31. 2009.

Glenside:

- MLK Day of service was extremely successful.
- Glenside also arranged to have E.B. Lewis as the featured speaker for their "Author/Illustrator" event.
- A few Glenside PTO members organized a school play called, "The Magic in Me" which was held on February 5 & 6, 2009 and was a big hit!
- The PTO organized a school assembly featuring a magician that was well received by the students and faculty.

Cheltenham:

- The PTO held a very successful movie night on January 23, 2009.
- The PTO is sponsoring a "Donuts with someone you love" event on February 19, 2009.
- They will also be sponsoring a lollipop sale for Valentine's Day.
- The Grade 4 music ensemble will be held on March 2, 2009.

**Winter Workshop:**

Jenny Brantner was not in attendance, but Jim reported that the Drug & Alcohol Workshop to be held on March 5th.

**Spring Workshop:**

Carol Trotman was also absent so Jim gave a brief update on the spring workshop. The topic of this workshop is “Restorative Practices”.

**Guest Speaker:**

Speakers this month included Kevin Burke, Vice Principal at Cedarbrook and Christine Zubairu, the Vice Principal of Elkins Park School. The two guests provided the UPG with a progress report/update on the Middle Years Strategic Planning. They presented updates on the following areas:

*Walk Throughs:*

Both schools have administrators walking through each classroom, every day.

*Data Review:*

At EP, teachers and administrators analyze data through the use of PSSA scores, 4-sight tests, and “Study Island”. At Cedarbrook, teachers and administrators also review 4-sight data, PSSA data, and data from Study Island. Cedarbrook also offers teachers, “instructional focus of the month meetings”.

*Professional Development:*

EP holds biweekly team meetings for it’s faculty. It also ensures that Professional Development Days are relevant. Cedarbrook is emphasizing the “Professional Learning Community” where teams of teachers organize to study standards, curriculum materials, and student data to ensure high student achievement and best practices among faculty.

*School Climate:*

EP has instituted a “no bells” system that allows for greater flexibility (i.e. longer Math and Reading/Language Arts periods). Also, the bell-less system has positively impacted the congested hallways as students change classes at different times throughout the day, not all at once. EP has also extended homeroom to 30 minutes each morning and each homeroom as 2 adults assigned to ensure that all students have contact with a faculty member each day. Cedarbrook has instituted a “Culture of Honor” and the faculty has begun being trained, and has begun using restorative practices methods when dealing with behavioral issues.

*An Advocate for Every Child:*

At EP, one team meeting per week is dedicated to a family meeting. The meeting includes teachers, administrators, family members and students, who gather to create and action plan for the student.

At Cedarbrook, regular team meetings are used to review student’s progress.

Once the presentation concluded, a few questions were asked. Both Kevin and Christine agreed that both schools are merely beginning the process of change and that more enhancements to the Middle Years practices & policies will evolve over time.

Misc. Announcements:

Christa Sywulak-Herr was asked to share a review of a lecture she attended at University of Pennsylvania School of Education titled, "Gap Gazing: Is It Doing Us More Harm than Good?" The lecture was given by Rochelle Gutierrez, Associate Professor in Latina/o Studies, Mathematics Education, and Curriculum and Instruction, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Christa stated that the lecture was quite interesting though she had hoped the professor would discuss methods focused on reducing the Achievement Gap, which she did not. Rather, Gutierrez "questioned the usefulness of excessive focus on the single issue of the achievement gap, particularly to the exclusion of others. Among the dangers she sees in this focus include offering little more than a static picture of inequities, supporting deficit thinking and negative narratives about students of color and working-class students, perpetuating the myth that the problem (and therefore the solution) is a technical one, and promoting a narrow definition of learning and equity."

Meeting adjourned.