

DRAFT Until Approved by UPG Board

**Minutes of UPG Meeting
September 3, 2009**

Attendees: Jim Butt, Paula Barvin, Sherry Hazlewood, Sefanie Aycox, Liane Sher, Andrea Bozzi, Diane Simms, Marlene Dencker, Christa Sywulak-Herr, Julie Cohen, Sarah Putterman, Darlene Davis, Rhonda Feder, Karen Irgang, Lisa Anelettie, Marcia Slowly, Michae; Slowly, Adrienne Byrd, Judy Heath, Tee Tolliver, Janine Pratt, Cherie Leather.

Welcome and Approval of Minutes

Jim Butt, Co-President, opened the meeting at 7:15 PM. While there were a significant number of parents at the meeting and all schools were represented, there was insufficient number of UPG voting members to approve previous minutes. Minutes will be posted on the UPG website. Jim also highlighted the number of vacant board positions, including Treasurer, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and a number of UPG representative positions. All parents are invited to join UPG to help sustain our role in the district.

Treasurer's Report

Sherry Hazlewood reviewed the final budget report from last school year and presented a proposed budget for the coming year. There being no quorum the budget was tabled. One area of concern was the babysitting budget from 2008-2009 exceeded the amount budgeted. The proposed budget eliminates babysitting for 2009-2010. Further discussion will be needed on this topic. There is money in the proposed budget for one parent workshop. We were able to have two workshops last year as we did not have one in 2007-2008 school year. PTOs are reminded of their annual contribution requirements of \$350.00 per school.

Guest Speaker

Dr. Darlene Davis provided a very thorough review of the District's planned activities related to their ongoing execution of the strategic plan. She stressed the commonality of goals between the District and UPG -- the result of ongoing monthly discussions and the end-of-year joint strategic planning meeting in June.

The Academic Assessment Plan portion of the District's Strategic Plan is required to have sections related to math, reading, graduation rate, and attendance. The District chose to add sections around the topics of the Achievement Gap, Community Partnership and Middle Years. All of the strategic plans are posted on the District website (www.cheltenham.org). The District is using the Strategic Plan as a working document.

Achievement Gap: In promoting achievement for all, the District has goals of: no drops in performance for the high school racial subgroups and increasing the number of advanced students. High expectations all students, including gifted and special ed students. Preliminary PSSA data shows more proficient students and the number of advanced students is growing. Results should be posted next week. The results of the 2009 PSSA testing showed that Cheltenham had the highest gains of any district across Montgomery County, and Cheltenham was included in a recent Philadelphia Inquirer article on the PSSA results. CHS was noted as the school with greatest gains at the high school level.

Regarding student voice, the District is engaging students on quality and pride in a Cheltenham diploma. The District is really trying to listen to students and have them take greater responsibility for

learning. Students spoke to teachers at the first In-Service this year telling them how much of a difference they had made.

Universal Acceleration (UA) is in place for 9th grade students. Cedarbrook sent a very high percentage of proficient and advanced learners to the 9th grade class.

Regarding the achievement gap, there remains a dedicated achievement gap committee in place which has worked hard on performance indicators. She also noted that there was no evidence of an achievement gap in 3rd grade test results.

Community Partnership: Regarding community partnership, the District is working to expand university partnerships and may develop a relationship with the Princeton Review. Cheltenham students are accepted to a wide range of universities and Dr. Davis will be seeking to provide a list of those colleges for parents to see. The list is fairly consistent from year to year.

The District continues to express interest in improved energy use and environmental responsibility. They are focusing specifically on a reduction in the use of paper, especially for Friday folders, as well as an increasing the use of email for parents. However, to improve communications, they will be instituting a monthly newsletter for a more consistent form of communication to the community.

Middle Years: Regarding the Middle Years strategic planning, the District continues to believe that many of the tenants developed during the Middle Years Summit in 2007 are applicable district-wide. Emphasis is on use of the Restorative Practices model and implementation of the climate survey discussed. No Place For Hate, Rainbow of Friends, and other anti-bullying efforts will also continue. Efforts continue to increase student voice at all levels.

Academic Rigor and Relevance: Regarding Rigor and Relevance, the District is working with the College Board (developer of the SAT test) to expand the use of Pre-AP courses with a focus on increasing the number of students taking AP courses in High School. The hope is that every student will take at least one AP class.

Graduation Rate: Regarding the Graduation Rate, 98% of students graduate on time with 100% graduating within one year. While important, this is not a major challenge for the District as compared to other districts, hence they chose to add other topics to the Strategic plan. 94 percent of students attend college, per the recent Philadelphia Magazine article. There will be a review of the GPA and Class Ranking system in the coming school year.

Reading: After an extensive effort by Jeanne Rauch to evaluate and pilot new reading programs, teachers have been trained and the new program will be implemented this year in grades K through 6. They have will be extending their walk-throughs to include "look-fors" on the new reading program.

In developing a Professional Learning Community in the schools leadership team meetings at both the school and District level are regularly scheduled, Core Extension will continue in the elementary grades with lessons learned from last year being applied across the elementary schools.

Dr. Davis stressed that all of their initiatives are not just based on whims, but on research.

Math: In math the District is continuing to use benchmark testing to study trendlines. The schools are using Study Island and expanding use of technology. Dr. Davis also mentioned Wellness as a major priority for the District. Cheryl Horsey will be restarting a Wellness Program to promote healthy foods and snack. With the departure of Jane Best, they are reviewing the gifted education programs.

After Dr. Davis' presentation, Jim Butt reviewed the proposed Operating Plan for UPG. Many of the issues and concerns identified in two strategic planning meetings for UPG last year have been adopted by the District, which is a strong indication of the validity of the issues and the importance for parents to stay engaged on the issues.

Discussion

Discussion ensued wherein concern was expressed about the following issues:

1. The degree of support provide to 5th grade students after the transition to EP. The concern being that there is not enough supervision provided to prevent bullying and to provide the necessary help to students who feel out of place in the new school. [Subsequent to the meeting, Jim Butt spoke to Carol Nejman, principal of EP, who expressed support for engaging UPG on these concerns and indicated that they had implemented a new set of norms or guidelines for student behavior. These norms are being distributed to EP parents and students now and will be made available to all soon.]
2. Music program is starting sooner and expanding across the District. Efforts should be made to have it consistent across the Elementary Schools.
3. As there is no State budget yet Special Education Funds are not yet here.
4. A question was raised in the Middle Years Report regarding the two school structure (5-6 Grade and 7-8 Grade) and whether the District had considered further the idea of having two 5-8 Grade schools. Dr. Davis mentioned that it is the norm to mix things up every year and also cited financial and practical issues with the two buildings.
Follow up on the MY Summit shows notable changes at CBK and EP is same as it was 4 years ago.
5. A question was raised as to whether teachers shared techniques that they have found are effective and Dr. Davis cited Team Meetings where teachers share what works and what has happened that is good.
6. A question was raised about the reading curriculum and whether Sync was only used for gifted and challenge students...students will be taught using whatever tools they need including Sync. Regarding the reading curriculum, not much choice is built in for independent reading but teachers encourage students to balance the curriculum with personal choices for independent reading.
7. Regarding school climate and bullying at the Elementary School level...No Place For Hate is not the bullying program used by the District. It is the umbrella of values held by the District with regard to school climate. Restorative Practices is used at EP, CBK and CHS. The Elementary Schools have their own program developed by the counselors. A parent recommended that a review of the Elementary School Bullying Program be done as it is the opinion of many parents that it is not working.
8. Use of profanity was brought up as an issue.

9. Other school climate issues included:

- individual needs of students and parental choices
- not enough eyes – not enough adult supervision
- transitioning of kids from holding their hand to young adulthood
- school climate and academics are NOT separate issues

Jim Butt adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will be October 1st at 7pm in the Administration Building.