

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

The Parent Teacher Association of The Neighborhood School General Meeting

Date: Thursday, March 21, 2019

Type: Monthly General Meeting

Time: 8:35 a.m.

Notice Provided in Advance: Yes

Location: TNS PTA Room

Meeting called to order at 8:40am.

Agenda:

1. Approval of previous minutes
 - Approved.
2. Principal updates
 - State testing
 - Dyanthe discussed changes in state's accountability measures in regards to the NYS tests.
 1. In the past, score data was based only on students who actually took the test. Now, score data includes all students who opt out as well. An opt-out gets a "Level 1" score, which is the lowest. This will only be used to calculate ratings for the school. Opting out of the state tests will not penalize individual students; they will only be recorded as having opted out. Opting out will not impact teachers' ratings; there is still a moratorium on using testing data for this purpose.
 2. Given that around 75% of TNS students opt-out, this new scoring system puts TNS and The Earth School on a DOE list for potential "Targeted support and improvement". Unclear what the real meaning or impact of this is. On April 15, some from the Manhattan Field Support Office and our Superintendent will do walkthrough of TNS. Unclear what they'll be looking for.
 3. DOE officials and NY politicians have come out against this scoring system of penalizing schools with high opt out numbers.
 4. Another change has to do with how the state now groups students into "subgroups".
 5. Dyanthe emphasized that families have the power to make an impact on this issue. Parents have a right to choose to opt-out their children. Parents can voice their objections to the state penalizing schools for this.
3. Presidents updates
 - Jenny attended Mayor and Chancellor Parent Empowerment Forum (a community forum for Manhattan elected and appointed parent leaders. Wed. 3/20 6-8pm. Video of

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forum available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2Gvw8wXkx4&time_continue=3&app=desktop

- State testing and the ratings that went out to schools was one topic (in video at 0:56 mins). After a question was posed regarding the state tests, Mayor DiBlasio responded then DOE responded by apologizing for the mishandling of the letter. Senator Robert Jackson who was present voiced support for opt-out schools and against penalizing schools.
- New York State owes New York schools, 4 billion dollars, 1.9 billion of which to NYC schools. They urged families to reach out to their state senators, state assemblyman and city council members about their frustration over state tests and to demand change in Albany.
- Our CEC1 President Naomi Pena asked the mayor and deputy chancellor what they can do to stop the influx of charter school mailers sent to families and to create a way to opt out of those flyers.
- After the forum, Jenny had a conversation with Dr. Linda Chen Chief Academic Officer about having literacy specialists and/or training at the school to help struggling readers. There was a lot of conversation around equity and excellence for all agenda at the meeting. Her role as Chief Academic Officer is to unify and streamline instructional supports – including professional development and curricular resources and materials – to make rigorous teaching accessible to all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Jenny asked what plans the DOE has in place to address literacy concerns for NYC public school students who need targeted support outside of the traditional classroom environment. Dr. Chen heard Jenny's concerns loud and clear. She agreed, was extremely receptive and transparent. She said there's a literacy program being implemented called S.P.I.R.E in every school and would follow up. Her office both called and emailed the following day and discussed a new program called S.P.I.R.E which was piloted recently in NYC and has proven to be successful. The program was created by an Orton-Gillingham fellow.
<http://www.uft.org/learning-curve/helping-students-dyslexia>
This would address not only parent concerns but ones posed by teacher responses from the SLT differentiation survey about needing more training and support. It's a solution everyone including the students could benefit from. Dr. Chen's office will contact Dyanthe to coordinate teacher training.
- Jenny spoke with Marisol Rosales, Executive Superintendent for Manhattan, Districts 1-6 about both the library issue and getting an AC unit in the kitchen for our hard working staff. She will follow up.
- Jenny spoke with Cary Chen, Superintendent D1 about the library, she said it's up to Darlene (principal of STAR) but she will meet with her and Dyanthe.

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- Jenny spoke with Sydney Renwick Manhattan and Bronx Borough Director at NYC Department of Education about an update on the rodent issue.
- Library
 - Parents from TNS and STAR formed a cross-school library committee and discussed the situation about Cheryl's salary.
 - Jenny mentioned that it was a good meeting, and that she feels confident that STAR parents will advocate for paying for the librarian.
 - Next steps:
 1. STAR parents to add this topic to their next PTA and SLT agendas and to set up a meeting with their principle to find out reasons behind defunding the library and to push for creative solutions.
 2. Cross-school library committee to meet again next month.
 - Thanks to Jenny, our PTA co-president, for organizing and driving this!
- School lunch Update (alternative menu)
 - Recipe for chickpea tagine was flyered and backpacked. Seems to have had an impact: Despite one class being on a trip, we increased orders for that specific dish on 3/13 by 50% compared to the last 3 months.
 - On Monday 3/18, veggie tacos were sold out. Upper grade students went back to the window for seconds. When the kitchen mentioned waste it referred to the quantity of food cooked verses the orders received or actually picked up. It's not clear what amount of food is being discarded. That's another issue, unsure how to monitor since all but 3 classes eat in the classroom.
 - Visual menus: Jenny and Franklin are currently taking photos of lunches to create a visual menu to put in each classroom.
- 4. [Treasurer's report](#)
 - PTA will soon need to start focusing on budget for next year.
- 5. Events updates
 - Auction
 - Given our remaining fundraising goals, we need a successful auction. Families, please buy tickets and bid on auction items and spread the word.
 - Movie night
 - Next movie night is Friday, May 3.
 - Movie to start earlier, at 5:30.
- 6. Committee updates
 - Advocacy
 - First tests will happen April 2nd. Advocacy committee is actively working on educating parents about the tests and their right to opt their children in or out of testing.
 1. Some parents have expressed wanting their kids to have the experience of taking the tests.

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- Grants
 - School engagement: Questionnaire circulated to teachers on 3/15 (responses due 4/5).
 - Applications: Continuing to research grant opportunities.
 - Identified needs: Clear mission statements for TNS and PTA by end of school year.
 - Grant committee could use more help filling out grants.
- 7. Visit from former TNS parent, Ayo Harrington
 - “Spring Awakening” of community gardens
 - There are 53 community gardens in this community board. Lots of associated events, harvest fests, CSAs, etc.
 - On April 14, the “Spring Awakening” takes place. 4 blocks of Ave C will be closed off. There will be pop-up gardens, sandboxes, performances, puppets.
 - Flyers will be passed out at TNS soon.
 - East river park alliance
 - City is planning to close the park for 3.5 years to install flood protection.
 - Community is not in support of this full closure. Wants this done in stages so as not to have such a major impact on residents, schools, bikers, etc. Park is used by many for many reasons.
 - There is a campaign to stop the city from implementing this plan. To learn more about upcoming meetings and how to get involved, email ayoharrington@gmail.com.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45am.