

LPA minutes
September 20, 2012

An officer's meeting is held prior to official LPA meeting. Kerry Williams, Trista Jones, and Bill Stoddart were in attendance.

Officer's Meeting:

Officers discussed the agenda for this meeting, and chose an icebreaker activity. It was agreed that board discussion would end by 11:55 in order to greet people who arrived at the start of the meeting, and that in-depth discussion of issues should be dealt with after the meetings end at 1:00 in order to get parents out on time. Kerry would commit to stay a half an hour after each meeting to address issues needing more attention, and other officers would make themselves available when they could. Trista suggested that if a secretary wasn't found soon we should just set up our monthly meeting for the second Wednesday at noon as it has been for the past couple of years and find someone who could attend at that time slot. Proposals submitted by the staff were reviewed, and it looks as if all projects submitted will most likely be able to be funded, but a small group will be convened to look over this in more detail.

LPA Meeting:

In attendance:

Kerry Williams, Trista Jones, Suzy Rea, Randy Walthall, Kristin Taylor, Laura Kuntz, Myriah Marsh, Craig Lee, Bill Stoddart, Misti Davis, Beth Antonopulos.

Kerry Williams, Co-Chair: Welcome and introductions, with each parent saying their name and the grade(s) of their students. Then an icebreaker activity in which we as a group reacted and responded to the quote, "The trouble with being a parent is that by the time you are experienced you are unemployed." Kerry went on to talk about LPA being here to ease some of the anxious feelings we as parents have, and offered to hear any suggestions of what the group could do to be even more supportive.

Randy Walthall, Principal: Mr. Walthall updated the group on Olweus, the bullying prevention program adopted by the District and being implemented over this school year at Longfellow. It is a community-wide approach to how children treat each other. There was a three hour training this summer with all of Longfellow's staff and two parents, and there will be continuing training this fall. If you're interested in knowing more about Olweus, you may go to www.violencepreventionworks.org or just google Olweus and their official website will come up. Research shows that most students believe that adults know when bullying is happening, when in reality 85% of bullying is not seen by adults. This leads to children feeling that it's a jungle out there and that they need to fend for themselves. One key factor in addressing bullying is to talk about bullying behavior without identifying people as "bullies." We need to break the cycle of labeling children, and we need to recognize what bullying for what it is, for not every conflict is a bullying situation. On the website, the following definition is given: "A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on

the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself." This definition includes three important components: 1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that involves unwanted, negative actions. 2. Bullying involves a pattern of behavior repeated over time. 3. Bullying involves an imbalance of power or strength. Mr. Walthall will need help in addressing bullying behavior as he works to sort through many types of student conflict.

Misti Davis, Longfellow Parent: Went to the initial Olweus training. As a former teacher and now as a parent, she found it very helpful to learn about the program. Having been on both sides, she now sees as a parent the side she was not aware of as a teacher. Something she sees as being very important is to be able to differentiate between conflict and bullying. She wants to be able to tie into parents getting more involved.

Randy Walthall, Principal: Mr. Walthall then answered questions about the roll-out of the program at Longfellow. He said that the key is to educate before the situation starts and to do a lot of work around the role of the by-stander. At this time, teachers have started talking about the Olweus approach in the classroom, but that they still need to decide on a unified response before a full launch of the program. A key piece will be class meetings to help students recognize bullying, process the situations that arise, and figure out what to do about it. For community connections, a new website will allow crimes to be reported to local law enforcement anonymously, and one area covered is bullying. The website is wetip.com.

Suzy Rea and Kristin Taylor, Fundraising Committee: We are changing the fundraiser a bit this fall. The history is that as long back as anyone could remember, Longfellow sold Sally Foster wrapping paper and gifts. Then three years ago, the fundraising committee decided that they wanted to offer local products. They signed up with Harvest Montana, which sells produce and food from local farms and businesses, and put together their own catalog of artistic items and called it Montana Artists. The switch to local products, along with a stronger emphasis on direct donations, brought in an equivalent amount of money. Last year, LPA polled parents and found that they liked the selection of merchandise for the fundraiser, but no one wanted to do all the work it entailed to run it from the ground up. To continue offering local arts and crafts work in a more streamlined way, the fundraising committee decided to try a one-day, on-site, shopping bazaar with a community component. This cuts out catalog costs and processing time, and offers a new way for parents and others to support the school. The bazaar will take place on Friday, October 26, from 2:00pm-6:00pm. One of the advantages to this approach is eliminating the pressure for students to go door-to-door selling things, so the committee is going to make an effort to post flyers around town to advertise. Along with the bazaar, there will be two other fundraising pieces going home to families. One is the option of making a direct donation, and the other is Simple Gifts. Simple Gifts is a fundraiser started by a Longfellow parent, Eleanor Barker, that takes donations to help children worldwide by providing things like clean water, healthy food, and medicine to those who need it. Longfellow receives 40% of each gift. Simple Gifts can be done completely online, and there's no product to be distributed. Kristin asked about how proposals for the spending of the funds raised would be handled this year, now that

we've asked for ideas BEFORE the final tally is in. We discussed the plan to have a small group look over the proposals and prioritize the projects we'd like to fund. Those will then be announced in the fundraising materials to inform students and parents what they will be working toward. Discussion ensued concerning how we would be able to commit to partnering in a Spark Grant before we have a final tally of how much was brought in by the fundraisers. Beth suggested that, if LPA has a savings account or other way of setting aside money to be sure to cover a "match," then we could feel confident going forward. Many points were considered, and in the end it was decided that we would try this new timeline for 2012 and see how it goes. The small group looking at proposals will include the Treasurer so that a reasonable budget and financial cushion can be determined. Marketing of the fundraiser will state the amount we are hoping to earn so that we can purchase specific things for the school, but nothing would be guaranteed. If we happen to outdo ourselves in terms of money collected, we can have another look at ideas for spending in the spring.

Kerry Williams, Co-Chair: Kerry invited everyone present to make suggestions on possible topics we want to get more information about this year to be presented at LPA meetings. There was a sheet of paper made available and some ideas were recorded, specifically having the Superintendent present information, Thrive and Love & Logic, overcrowding in the District and plans to deal with that, the PEAKS program, making connections with Sacajewea Middle School, Safe Routes to School and traffic issues, and construction updates for the improvements passed in the school bond. Thanks to all who attended!

Meeting adjourned 1:15p.m.