

May 29, 2012 School Council Meeting

Lace Campbell, MJ Jensen, Mary White, Patricia Bradshaw, Mark Gardner, Victoria Harris, Adam Manacher, Bersabell Yeshitla, Mike Frutkoff, Jessica Daniels, Amy Stein, Ross Benson, Damon Smith, Greta Hardina, Pamela Massey, Emily Dexter, Fran Cronin, Chandra Banks, Abdul Abdullahi, Robell Gebeyehu, Nahum Mesmer, Bile Yassin.

Following introductions, Emily Dexter reported on the CSAG (Cambridge Schools Advisory Group). She and Lace have been attending. The group has not played as strong an advocacy role as hoped for, but plans for next year will focus on developing parent and family engagement. Jessica added that the Cambridge Kids Council has also announced a focus on parent and family engagement.

The last day for School Council nominations is May 28 (next day). It appears that four of the six parent seats are open and there are approximately six parents interested. An important expectation is regular attendance at the monthly meetings. Parents who will miss three or more meetings are discouraged from becoming a representative. Mark Gardner replaces Mary White as the parent rep from the C-PAC. It was not resolved whether Lace will continue to represent the Arts Council. Jessica volunteered to contact FOCA and FoCRLS to ask if they wished to send a representative.

Jessica has discovered that more rewriting than expected will be needed for the Parent Handbook. Two parents volunteered to assist her in this task.

Chandra Banks, School Mediator and co-chair of the Mental Health Sub-Committee of the Healthy Child Task Force, reported on the efforts of members (especially student members) of the committee to increase public awareness of the Cradle to Prison Pipeline Campaign. In addition, male students, participated in training for justice circles. Student members present included Abdul Abdullahi, Robell Gebeyehu, Nahum Mesmer, and Bile Yassin. They presented an overview that indicated the increased chance that a person will go to prison based on key factors: poverty, poor reading skills, school suspensions and race. They presented graphs that revealed a much high percentage of black boys and Latino boys receive out of school suspensions, both nationwide and in the Cambridge Public Schools. The Children's Defense Fund is providing transportation and lodging to the boys who facilitated justice circles to their national conference in Cincinnati, OH this July.

Under the topic of Follow-up Plans for Open House and parent-teacher conferences for next year, Mr. Smith announced that he was continuing discussion into the summer to review feedback and goals. Until the plan is further developed, the dates for these events will be determined later than usual. He reviewed an initiative offered through the Boston Public Schools: Boston Parent University (BPU) that provides an assortment of trainings and workshops for parents to better support their child's progress in school.

Workshops vary from "review of math basics" so parents can help kids with homework to "how to talk to your teenager." Workshops are offered in different languages. This program could be considered on a smaller scale to offer to CRLS parents. He suggested that interested parents could volunteer to participate in discussions this summer to review the best options for involving and engaging parent involvement.

Amy reported that the School Council was asked to be a co-sponsor for a summer city-wide reception for our new principal. Invites are limited and will be restricted to parent representatives.

Our last meeting of the year is only 2 weeks away, on June 12, as school ends June 18. A few parents are reporting on information gathered on the topic of class ranking and how it impacts students' college applications. In addition, please come ready to suggest and discuss topics/goals for next year (parent engagement, school policies that impact a "school to prison pipeline," sponsorship of a school/community movie such as last year's "Race to Nowhere," etc.). For parent reps, please nominate yourself or another willing rep for School Council Co-chair.