

## **City Wide Parent Council (CPC)**

**Initial Exploration meeting hosted by Asst. Supt. Michele Brooks 9-29-14**

In attendance: Kristin Turner (parent, Samuel Adams), Sherman Zemler Wu (parent, Mather), Carolyn Lomax (parent, Murphy K-8), Debra Brendemuehl (parent, Lyndon), Heshan Berents-Weeramuni (parent, Curley K-8), Michele Brooks (BPS Ass. Supt, of BPS Engagement), Kenny Jervis (parent, Roger Clapp), Sapna Padte (parent, Lyndon), Mary Battenfeld (parent, BLA), Teofilo Colombo (parent, East Boston HS), Mary Pierce (parent, BTU Pilot), Kristin Johnson (parent, Mendell).

Minutes submitted by Sapna Padte and Heshan Berents-Weeramuni

### **Background**

The Citywide Parent Council (CPC) is the avenue to get parent voice into discussions with the BPS district Admin level. It is the district level advisory body to the Superintendent and Boston School Committee.

Each BPS school has (or should have) a School Parent Council (SPC). All parents in every BPS school, regardless of their particular type, belong to that school's SPC. The SPC brings all parents in the school community together to support the school and advocate for quality education.

(See <http://bpsfamilies.org/families/parent-councils/77-school-parent-council> for more info)

Each SPC elects members to the CPC; these elected members represent the parent body on a citywide basis and develop strategies to address district wide issues and concerns. The CPC is the SPC for all schools.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the CPC was a very strong body, and was originally mandated as part of Judge Garrity's desegregation ruling in the early 1970s). For example, the CPC has held widely attended and impactful events such as the Powerful Parent Summit.

The CPC also provides a member to sit on the School Committee Selection panel.

BPS also provides contact information of every SPC member from all schools they have that information to CPC members in order to help organize and communicate across all schools.

Over time, especially with the stripping of funding, and with a lack of adequate funding from BPS, it weakened.

Michele Brooks said she will ask Hatty McGuinness, a former heavily involved BPS parent, to come and give other parents a historical overview.

### **Current**

We are looking at re-activating the dormant CPC, with the intent of pulling together parent voices to hold BPS accountable on core issues. Parents did this in an ad hoc fashion from Feb-June 2014 in regards to the budget cuts. The CPC has been a more formal way to connect parents from a larger swath of BPS schools to district wide issues.

### **Issues Parents are Concerned With**

We talked a little bit about what some of the issues are on a district wide level. Below are some of them.

- Transportation
- School quality, encompassing both academics and learning environment/culture; for some, more pressing in middle and high schools
- Budget & Resources
- Accountability of individual school leadership, accountability of district-wide leadership
- Sharing best practices across schools

### **Connecting Individual Schools to a CPC**

It was recognized that parent engagement varies from school to school. Some have active SPCs and can easily elect members to a CPC. Some have no such group in existence, nor even know this is something they can and should do, while others are somewhere in the middle.

In talking about how to outreach to the 128 BPS schools, Michele suggested working through her Office of Student and Family Engagement. She has a network of liaisons, engagement specialists and student engagement specialists whose role includes build relationships with schools to get a sense of where they are at regarding family engagement.

There is 1 liaison for the high schools, and 6 liaisons who split the K-8 schools among them - mirroring the Network Supt. model.

Her suggestion was to figure out which schools have active SPCs, and which schools have active parents regardless of SPC status. Then, invite these parents in on the ground floor of resurrecting the CPC. (Obviously invite all parents, but put extra effort into outreaching where there already is parent engagement to get the CPC up and running.)

### **Short Term Strategy**

- Get a diverse group of parents representing a variety of schools together to talk about district wide issues

- Figure out a small, core group of issues that parents want to advocate on (though we kept this vague because parent would know what these core issues are, and what are considered to be core issues arrived at by parents across Boston - see below).
- Figure out the CPC structure, looking at what exists currently, and what, if any, chances would better reflect today's citywide terrain.

### **Concrete Steps to Implement this Strategy**

Michele Brooks has undertaken the following commitments as initial steps to get the CPC back out of its recent dormant state:

1. The Office of Engagement will approach each of the 7 Network Superintendents to communicate with their Principals to make sure their individual SPCs elect a CPC member. Where schools do not have active SPCs, the Principals will be asked to identify parents who are able to serve the rep function.
2. All BPS Family Engagement Liaisons to all SPC elections at each of their schools will facilitate the election of a CPC parent rep. Liaisons will also be used to identify potential parents if the SPC in a particular school is not robust enough.
3. A prominent announcement will be placed on the splash page of bpsfamilies.org;
4. Will speak to Lee McGuire to have a piece on the Superintendent's weekly email about the rebirth of the CPC with contact details. (This way, it will help parents get the message if Network Superintendents or individual Principals are unable to communicate with their parent bodies.)

### **Next CPC Meeting on Tues 10-21-14 at 6 pm**

Outreach to parents as stated above to attend this meeting to start talking about the need and impact of a functional CPC and begin identifying core citywide issues.

We decided going forward the CPC will meet **every third Tuesday of each month at 6pm** at the Title 1 Center, 445 Townsend Street, Dorchester.

### **Miscellaneous**

Below are topics that came up in the discussion, tangential to the CPC conversation

**Translation services.** Each school can put aside \$1K to \$2K out of Title 1 funds for translation services when each school has a parent-wide discussion on the budget. Some schools use that \$ to provide childcare while parents volunteer to translate.

**501c(3).** CPC has established a 501c(3) - a non-profit entity schools can leverage for their own fundraising needs if schools do not have their own.

**Lyndon PTA.** The Lyndon has a PTA as opposed to a SPC. (PTA is a membership driven group while SPCs are free to all.) Need to figure out how to use this vehicle to then elect a CPC rep.

The Lyndon's PTA meetings are open to the entire school community, and about half the parents who attend are not paying members. In their by-laws, all parents who attend the first meeting can vote in the SSC (School Site Council) elections, thereby electing parents for the open seats. It can be straightforward to open the same process for CPC elections. There are no events, meetings, etc that are exclusive to only PTA members; the only thing PTA members can do that non-members cannot is vote at the end of the school year for the new PTA board.

***BPON.*** The Boston Parents Organizing Network is a membership based 501(3c) non-profit that organizes parents to advocate for education issues. See <http://bpon.org/about-us/> for more info.