

## Citywide Parent Council (CPC) Meeting Notes

October 21, 2014 6-8 pm

### ***Meeting Goals:***

- Discuss core BPS district issues parents want to address
- Understand the power, role and responsibilities of the CPC
- Build relationships among parents across schools

### ***Attendance:***

- 17 parents & grandparents representing \_\_\_\_ schools
- Michele Brooks, Asst. Supt. Of Family & Student Engagement (<http://bpsfamilies.org>)

***Next Meetings:*** Tues 11/18; Tues 12/16. All meetings are from 6-8 pm at the Title I Training Center (BLA High School), 445 Warren St, Dorchester 02121

### ***Narrative description of meeting***

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#### **• Introductions**

- How this meeting came about
  - Last year's BPS Parents Group on Budget did a lot of work. Wanted to segue into something more formal
  - Desire to work with many more parents and many more schools
  - Heshan (Curley parent) learned about the CPC and contacted Michele Brooks on how to go about resurrecting it
- Overview of today's meeting expectations
  - Spend some time getting to know who's in the room; talk about the district wide issues parents want to advocate on; understand the history and potential of CPC

#### **• Warm Up Question**

*Each person introduced themselves, the school(s) their student(s) attend, and gave a word to describe being a BPS parent right now & why they chose that word*

- Responses included new, frustrated, bloody-minded, confused, conflicted, devoted, advocate, old, proud & challenged
- Overall, most parents were frustrated and disappointed. Most could acknowledge there are moments of happiness; some felt their current school met their needs but were worried about what middle and high school options would be like
- Parent responses are the very reasons we are here today—to acknowledge and build on the strength and successes; to use all channels open to us to work on some of the challenges of being a parent/guardian in an urban public school district

- **Mini Concentric Circles**

*Quick pairing exercise that allowed parents to meet one on one with other parents and have very brief but meaningful conversations. The questions were:*

1. What is one hope you have for one of your school-aged children this year, and why is that important to you?
2. When you think about your child's school, what's one thing you love, one thing you'd change—and why
3. What's the biggest issue facing BPS and what can parents do about it?

There were no report backs from the conversations. The intent was for parents to begin connecting one on one with three other meeting participants. The individual conversations allowed for a richer discussion in the brainstorm.

- **Brainstorm**

*Participants brainstormed on the “Issues BPS Parents Face”; the ensuing discussion and dialogue allowed us to narrow down this brainstorm of issues into key ones.*

*Participants identified Budget, Equity, School Culture, School Quality, and Facilities as priority issues, along with others in bold face below. Since many topics could be grouped together, these five seemed like the logical categories to list all others under.*

### ***Issues BPS Parents Face***

#### **Budget**

*Understanding where the money comes from (federal, state, local), how the school department uses it, and how to advocate for more funding and better allocation of funds*

- Top heavy Admn
- Connected to so many other issues that parents identified

#### **Equity**

*Exhibiting fairness across the programs, models, and strategies used by schools. Every school does not need to have the same things, but needs to have the same end result: every BPS school as high performing and high functioning. For example, see <http://edglossary.org/equity/> for a deeper explanation.*

- ACW (advance course work)
  - Creates a “brain drain” when students who test into it leave their current school to attend ACW at another school. At the other school, they are kept within their ACW co-hort and don't have a chance to mix with other students in the school unless it's in a specials, gym, or lunch.
  - Creates added transitions into new schools for the student
  - Why do some schools have it and some not? Why aren't all schools geared to teach at this level?
  - Creates budget loss for the school who does not have ACW and has students leave their school to attend another one for ACW
- **BPS structure**

- Exam Schools
- Failing Curriculum
- **Superintendent**
- Transportation

### **School Culture**

*Things that impact how the community within a school (includes students, teachers, staff & families) functions and feels*

- Apathy
- Bullying
- Disconnect between family & community
- Inner city violence. Some of our neighborhoods have higher incidences of violence. This may impact the behavior in school of some students who live in these neighborhoods.
- MCAS/PARCC
- Parent power
- **Safety**
- **Testing-** too much of it, and too often

### **School Quality**

*The things that make a school attractive to students and families, and have a direct and positive impact on student achievement. Includes things like teachers, academics, curriculum & instruction.*

- **Fear for middle/high school options;** feeling that there is a lack of quality options for students past the 5<sup>th</sup> grade; even more pressing for high school
- Teacher Tenure
- **Teaching**
- **What makes a good school?** Can we answer this, and plan with this in mind?
- Recess- would like to see it mandatory, and longer in length
- Tracking

### **Facilities**

*Physical space and layout of our schools*

- Older buildings & design doesn't fit how schools are used now
- Would like to break the K-8 schools into separate elementary and middle school buildings
- Low tech; buildings aren't designed to take advantage of many high-tech options; basics such as not getting wireless into all classrooms

### **Miscellaneous**

*Issues that do not fit into the above categories, but were mentioned by participants as an issue*

- Open-Minded
- Immigration
- Disjointedness
- **Redistricting**
- Communication

- **History of CPC 15 min**  
Michele Brooks gave an overview of CPC, including some history and responsibilities. Participants asked her some questions.
- **Next Steps 10 min**
  - Long Term vs Short Term Strategy
    - Need to finalize agreement on the key issues coming from brainstorm
    - Identify our long and short term strategies
    - Determine the action steps needed to start impacting the issues
    - Quick Wins:
      - Parents can evaluate their school’s principal in the end of year school climate survey; let’s get higher response rates on this
      - Aim to have 100% of schools have some functioning School Parent Council (SPC)
  - Need to formalize the CPC structure (Executive Comm, Board, etc.)
  - Need to have nominations and elections for the CPC Executive Committee and Board
    - Heshan and Sapna are in interim leadership roles until this happens
  - Sub Committees
    - Will need some, including ones to look at the structure of CPC, work on each of the core issues identified and agreed upon
  - Upcoming meeting dates: Tuesday 11/18/14; Tuesday 12/16/18. Meetings are from 6-8 pm at the Title 1 Center/BLA building at 445 Warren Street,
- **Summary & Evaluation**
  - Reviewed accomplishments of the meeting
  - Group Shout evaluation: 7
    - Participants evaluated the meeting on a scale of 1 (did not meet needs) to 10 (exceeded expectations). They verbally gave their number; 7 was the average.
    - Comments included feeling good to meet a diverse group of parents who care about these issues; wished we had more time to dive into the brainstorm discussions.