

Citywide Parent Council (CPC) Meeting Notes

November 18, 2014

6-8 pm

Meeting Goals:

- Agree on core issues for CPC for this year
- Begun discussing action steps
- Review initial draft of engagement policy
- Continue building relationships among parents across schools

Attendance:

- 17 parents & grandparents representing 16 schools
- 3 BPS Office of Family and Student Engagement staff (<http://bpsfamilies.org>)

Next Meetings: 12/16, 1/20, 2/24, 3/24, 4/28, 5/19, 6/16. All meetings are from 6-8 pm at the Title 1 Training Center (BLA High School), 445 Warren St, Dorchester 02121

Narrative description of meeting

Introductions

- Who we are & how these meetings come about
- Overview of today's meeting expectations
 - Review and agree on prioritized issues from last meeting; determine action steps

Warm Up Question

Each person introduced themselves, the school(s) their student(s) attend, and responded to this question: "If you could have any skill- natural or supernatural- what would you want and why?"

- Responses included being super organized, power to heal, bringing peace, equitable resources across district, persuasion, time machine, hover.
- Talked about how the amount of things we want to accomplish in our personal and professional lives is vast- what's really do-able with our mere mortal skills?
- Recognize the talents that are among us as a whole in approaching district issues.

Review Prioritized Issues

- Reviewed the "Issues BPS Parents Face" brainstorm from last meeting (attached at end of these notes) and the way in which they are now organized; updated the list to reflect comments from this group
- Got consensus from group on the 5 overarching topics- budget, equity, school culture, school climate, facilities

CPC Updates

- Motion & vote to have a formal parent seat on the Superintendent Search Committee (passed). Individual SPCs from as many schools as we could reach in the week after this meeting endorsed the letter. While the CPC represents all SPCs, participants felt the letter could hold more weight with the additional mention of individual SPCs' support.
 - A letter was sent to the School Comm. Chair and the Mayor requesting the parent seat; unsure what will happen since the School Committee approved the members of the Supt. Search Comm on 2/26/14. CPC was late in figuring this all out, but wanted to send the letter and try to get a formal BPS parent seat. (Nancy/Perry, Kenny/Clap, Heshan/Curley volunteered to draft letter)
 - Believe SPED PAC already has a member on the Committee, and students are being involved in the question formulation
 - Asked Michele Brooks to speak with John M. and Michael O'Neill.
 - Click [here](#) for the 11-17-14 Search Comm meeting notes
 - Visit <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/1363> to see who is on the Superintendent Search Committee
- Will have formal elections at Dec meeting for formal CPC positions
- CPC has a seat on the nominating committee for new members to the Boston School Committee. Need to figure out who's following up with this
- CPC is the nominating body for the 5 parents who sit on a joint steering committee who oversee all SPCs. Superintendent nominates 5, Pres of BTU nominates 5, and there are 2 students for a total of 17 people overseeing the SPC. Who can verify this information and work on making it happen?
- How can we move up the timing of parent conferences so that there is sufficient time for families & students to address issues? (*Heshan brought up the issue*)
- Reminder—SPC reps here today, please share this info back with your own SPCs!

Review Engagement Policy Draft

- Presented by Michele Brooks, Asst. Supt. Of Family & Student Engagement

Small Groups

Participants gathered into small groups based on the 5 topics covering the "Issues BPS Parents Face". Again, these topics are: Budget, Equity, School Culture, School Quality, Facilities. A 6th group was for the CPC Organization. Each group was asked come up with 1 or 2 specific action items they want to work on within this topic, and why.

Report Backs

Each group was to report back its action items. I've listed the names of the people who were a part of each group. This doesn't mean this is the only area they are interested in, or will continue working in this area. It's just to note who went where at this meeting.

Small group discussions & the large group report back were longer than expected, which is good. My notes are a little spotty. Also, no clear decisions on consensus of issues or action steps to take were made.

- **Budget Group**

(Heshan/Curley & BLA, Kris/Mendell, Barbara/Hale & Snowden, Mary/BTU, Sarah/Alighieri Montessori, Nancy/Perry)

- Want parents to be educated about the budget process
- Become the formal lobbying arm of the CPC; get together with other budget decision makers (school comm, state gov't) and work on this issue starting NOW- i.e. not waiting until the school budget gets released in late Jan/Feb.
- Work on specific issues that impact the overall budget such as enrollment projections & lottery timeline
- Encourage internal audits, systems management of BPS
- Move away from WSF (weighted student funding)

- **Equity**

(Karen/Mission Hill, Beth/BLA)

- How do we define who gets what?
- Some schools have a strong fundraising parent base that supplement the school budget while others do not. How would equity apply here?

- **School Culture & Climate**

(Jeanette/?)

- Need to increase parent involvement

- **School Quality**

(Claire/Perry, Kristin/JFK)

- Follow up on the school principal survey that is a part of the year-end survey going to all families. It's already a tool that's out there- we can work to increase responses
- Very connected to school culture & climate issues; engagement of students/families/teachers impacts school quality
- Fear of middle & high school options; feel a real lack of quality choices for families

- **Facilities**

(Nancy/Perry, Sarah/Alighieri Mont.)

- Closely tied to budget issues
- Many buildings need moderate to significant updating
- Want to have new buildings built as well

- **CPC Organization**

(Heshan/Curley, Kenny/Clap)

- Reviewing of by-laws, figuring out what formal positions need to be filled
- Nancy/Perry & Sarah/Alighieri Mont. are interested in CPC leadership roles
- Other issues:
 - Write a simple grant to finance childcare, food, translation, and the cost of hosting a web page for us from the Schott Foundation
 - Establish a communications committee
 - Work on getting BPS to give us the names of every other rep they know of
 - Establish point person (perhaps through Michele) to coordinate the CPC to meet with the Superintendent and the School Committee and Rahn Dorsey the Mayor's education advisor (we are suppose to meet with them 4 times a year!)

Next Steps

- Upcoming meeting dates are 12/16, 1/20, 2/24, 3/24, 4/28, 5/19, and 6/16
- Long Term vs Short Term Strategy
 - Need to identify our long and short term strategies & then determine the action steps needed to start impacting the issues
- Aim to have 100% of schools have some functioning School Parent Council (SPC)

Summary & Evaluation

- Reviewed accomplishments of the meeting
- Group Shout evaluation: 8
 - Participants evaluated the meeting on a scale of 1 (did not meet needs) to 10 (exceeded expectations). They verbally gave their number; 8 was the average.

“Issues BPS Parents Face” Brainstorm¹

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

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
- Includes testing

Equity

Exhibiting fairness across the programs, models, and strategies used by schools.

- 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**
- Testing
- Transportation

(Visit <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/4240> to read what BPS is doing about opportunity and equity)

¹ Initial brainstorm was at Oct 2014 meeting; results were reviewed and fine tuned at Nov 2014 meeting

School Culture & Climate

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

- Apathy
- Bullying
- Disconnect between family & community
- MCAS/PARCC
- Parent power
- 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.
- **Leadership development of teachers and Adminstrators**
- **Safety**
- Teacher support, mentoring
- **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 5th grade; even more pressing for high school
- Teacher Tenure
- **Teaching**
 - What happens to the art of teaching when there are so many rubrics and tests? How can a teacher become better at the craft of teaching?
 - What kinds of supports and mentoring can we have for teachers?
- **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
- Training, for administrators and teachers

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

