

Shaker Heights PTO Council  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, September 15, 2014

1. **Call to Order** – 24 attendees, 7:03 pm.

2. **Approval of Minutes** of the 5/5/14 meeting

3. **Shaker Schools Reports**

**Superintendent's Report – Dr. Gregory Hutchings**

- Happy to report that there was an exceptionally smooth opening of school
  - This was due to the hundreds of staff members worked behind the scenes all summer to make sure that the buildings were clean and in good repair; that the buses would be ready to roll; and that teachers would be ready to start right away with instruction.
  - He appreciates the PTO members who helped stuff envelopes, and those who helped make the convocation a success. The teachers really appreciated it.
  - Prior to the opening of school, teachers attended 3 professional days where they worked on implementing the strategic plan, core values, and disseminating consistent information in all 8 buildings.
  - The math curriculum is being revised to provide more rigor and continuity, and he has added a third instructional coach to support teachers in grades 5 to 8. The new coach is Jennifer Weisbarth, a former middle school math teacher and Woodbury assistant principal. Over the summer the math coaches adopted a new curriculum, enVision Math and the teachers received training.
- New members of the leadership team
  - **High School:** There is a new position, Dean of Students, created to handle most of the disciplinary cases and lead the creation of a restorative justice program. This will free up the assistant principals to spend more time in classrooms observing and coaching teachers. Mr. Jon Moorehead was hired to fill this position. Mr. Moorehead has had a variety of experiences in secondary and postsecondary education, including a one-year fellowship at Harvard University. Also at the High School, Dr. Bryan Drost was appointed as an assistant principal. He comes to Shaker from the Solon schools, where he was a world language teacher. He has expertise in the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System.
  - **Middle School:** Mr. David Glasner is the new principal. He previously was the principal at a high school in New York City. Mr. Glasner has a bachelor's and master's in history from the University of Pennsylvania and a master's in secondary school social studies education from Teachers College at Columbia University. He has already begun making some promising changes at the Middle School, most notably locating teams together. This reduces student travel time in the halls, improving school climate and teacher collaboration.
  - **Middle School:** There a new assistant principal, Mr. Robert Rea. He is a Shaker parent, and a former middle school assistant principal in Painesville. He has a wonderful rapport with young people.

- **Woodbury:** Mr. Danny Young is the new principal, succeeding Dr. Yates, who retired. Mr. Young started his career as an elementary classroom teacher and moved into guidance counseling before going into administration. With this background, he understands where Woodbury students come from and where they are going. In addition, he is using his expertise in guidance to help create a counseling program at Woodbury. Mr. Doug Myles went from the Middle School to Woodbury as an assistant principal. He went through the same interview process as an outside candidate. They are a great team.
- **Central Office:** They have realigned responsibilities to better reflect their priorities and provide for succession planning. All principals now report to Dr. Robinson. Dr. Stokes oversees academic support services, including special education and instructional technology. They have hired a new curriculum director, Dr. Lynne Kulich, to oversee the development of a cohesive curriculum from kindergarten through high school. There is also a new director of technology and media services, Mr. John Rizzo. He has a strong background in both the management and the application of technology in the classroom. Lisa Scott, the director of human resources, has departed for a human resources position in the Cleveland schools. This is a wonderful opportunity for Lisa, and they will miss her. They have an interim director in the position, and are undertaking a search for a permanent director. This is an important time for recruitment planning, since 25% of the teachers are eligible for retirement.
- State report card
  - The state report card is in the news but should be kept in perspective. It is only one source of information, based on a very narrow set of tests.
  - It remains a complex system with a lot of moving pieces, so it is not always easy to understand where the grades come from. In fact, just yesterday, the state Department of Education informed school districts that one of the measures was being recalculated because of errors.
  - Our students performed about the same on most of the measures as last year. In some cases, results were better, and in some cases not as good. In some cases, our students' performance on the state tests improved over the prior year, but not enough to meet the state standards.
  - There were some encouraging results from the 2013-2014 school year.
  - The four-year high school graduation rate improved from 83% to 89%. They are really working hard to keep students on track and to provide opportunities to accelerate if they fall behind.
  - 99.7% of the district's third graders from last year met the requirements of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee and were able to move ahead to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Shaker seniors' scores on the SAT and ACT are phenomenal – way above state and national averages.
  - In those areas where the report card showed weaknesses, they were already aware of the issue and taking aggressive steps to address them. The recently adopted Five-Year Strategic Plan is aimed at giving every student the full benefit of the opportunities Shaker offers. For example, they know that math is a challenging subject for many students. They have already begun redesigning the

math curriculum from kindergarten through high school to provide more rigor and consistency so that students can master the material.

- The state report card is a narrow measure. The district is publishing a report called “Measuring What Matters” that looks at many dimensions of quality that the report card does not touch – such as college admissions, fine and performing arts, and the many awards and accolades our school and students receive.
- “Measuring What Matters” also contains a synopsis of the new Five-Year Strategic Plan. This plan will guide their work through 2019 and is already being implemented. It was developed by a 44-member committee with broad representation, including several parents. Both are available on the website, and “Measuring What Matters” will also be mailed to all residences in the district. He encouraged everyone to read it to get the full picture. And he hopes that we, as leaders in the community, will become familiar with both documents so that you can respond confidently to questions or misinformation about the schools.
- The public is also invited to learn more about dimensions of school quality on September 30 from 6:30 to 8:00 in the Shaker Heights High School Large Auditorium. This is the first event in our new Family Engagement Series co-sponsored with the PTO Council through the new Family Engagement Center. Speakers will address various ways to measure school quality, along with overviews of the state report card, changing state requirements, and the District’s strategic plan. A question and answer session will follow.
- Innovative Center for Personalized Learning
  - The Family Engagement Center is part of the Innovative Center for Personalized Learning, which opened two weeks ago in the lower level of the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Community Building. He is very grateful to the City of Shaker Heights for providing the space free of charge and he is also grateful to their donors for supporting the renovation of the space and acquisition of learning technology.
  - The IC is considered a satellite of the high school and they are developing it in phases. At the present time, about 25 students are enrolled at the IC, taking online courses with face-to-face support from certified tutors. Next year, they will be able to serve more students who want to take courses online that are not offered at the high school or do not fit into their schedules. These could be Advanced Placement courses, required courses, or perhaps a language that is not offered.
  - The Family Engagement Center has an office at the IC, which is very well located to be a gathering place for all Shaker families. They are very grateful to the PTO Council for its support of this effort. He and the staff have been working with Tracy and Jeff to develop the programming for the Family Engagement Center.
- Questions and Answers
  - Q: Who are the kids currently using the IC center?  
A: These are students for whom the large high school was not a good fit with their learning needs. For example, students who reacted to the structure by becoming defiant, a pregnant student, or others who were not successful in a traditional high school setting.
  - Q: Is the Family Engagement Center for younger children also?  
A: Yes, they hope to have resources for pre-k to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students and families.

Q: Are there vocational options now at the HS?

A: They have always offered it, but through the Tri-Heights network. Vocational education is now referred to as CTE, career-technical education. The IC is not for CTE. There are currently 77 Shaker High School students enrolled in CTE courses.

### **SHTA Report: Matt Zucca**

- Thanked everyone for their support
- There are 34 new teachers in the district, and they are trying to “shakerize” them.
- The teachers very much appreciated the 3 days of professional development before school started, especially with the new curriculum and support staff.
- The teachers also loved the convocation.
- During the first month of school, teachers are working on relationship building with their students.
- However, there are many assessments as well. Not all of the assessments are from the state, some are district placement tests.
- Dr. Hutchings added that they work on how to present all these tests to the students to minimize their anxiety over the tests. They need to be in compliance with the state, but they don’t want testing to take over the mission of the schools. He also spoke about the need to remind teachers not to stress over the tests. No teacher has ever been fired because of scores on a state assessment.

#### • Questions and Answers

Q: What is the length of the PARC, it seems long?

A: They are still figuring this out. The assessment calendar is completed so that teachers can plan accordingly.

Q: How can we get the state to pay attention to our view that there is an excess amount of testing required?

A: Now is the time to influence law makers by making our views known. Dr. Hutchings has been selected to serve on the State Superintendent’s Advisory Committee, so he will be able to voice our concerns.

## **4. Unit Sharing**

- **High School:** The first PTO meeting went well. They had a teacher panel who spoke about how to be successful in school. They also hosted an activities fair and ice cream social for 9<sup>th</sup> graders that was well attended.
- **Middle School:** The new principal is doing amazing things, and has instituted a number of changes, including the Pledge of Allegiance, and not being able to leave class during the first or last 5 minutes to maximize instructional time. The first PTO meeting is tomorrow, and he will be there speaking about what is different and why. The Raider Run is a new event, billed as a fund- and friend-raiser. The PTO recognized that there were few opportunities for community-building at the middle school. They have 313 students signed up so far, and 19 corporate sponsors. They worked hard so that the sponsors don’t overlap with the efforts of the Red and White. The proceeds of the run will go towards technology.
- **Woodbury:** no report
- **Onaway:** The first PTO meeting is Wed., and will include childcare and dinner, in the hopes of increasing participation. The PTO is paying for food to be brought in.

- **Mercer:** The opening events went well, with good participation. Staff participated in the ice bucket challenge at the ice cream social, and this was a bit hit.
- **Lomond:** They are focusing on getting parents signed up for the new e-newsletter. They held a Father's Walk, with 150 participating. Fathers walk their children to school and have breakfast when they arrive.
- **Fernway:** The High School basketball team came to their opening picnic, and this was a great success. They are planning on having more programs with their meetings, and hope to have more volunteers this year. The upcoming meeting will have a program on transitioning to school.
- **Boulevard:** There was a problem with how the Playworks program was communicated to parents, but they are working on fixing that. The used book sale is coming up. This is a popular fundraiser.

## 5. PTO Council Reports

### **Treasurer's Report: Chandra Bowling**

- She went over this year's budget, noting changes from last year and explaining line items.
  - The units pay the PTO council to support the levy. The amount is based on building enrollment. The council then sends the money to the PAC Levy.
  - Communication is a new line item to pay for Constant Contact. The buildings will not pay for it, as originally thought.
  - Under educational enrichment, this year there is no amount allocated for teacher grants because no one applied for them last year. A discussion about this followed, raising the issue of whether or not Council should revamp the teacher grants program because some of the schools have less money for teacher grants.
  - Under outreach, Council is no longer giving money to After Prom.
- The motion to pass the budget passed.
- The bank balance is \$6,605.

### **Communications: Susan Vodrey**

- All PTO newsletter editors received training on using Constant Contact.
- The deadline for inclusion in the family directory is approaching. A higher proportion of families have responded this year than last year.
- There are 6,300 contacts for the newsletters, and we have a higher than average open rate, which means more parents are opening the email newsletters.
- Webmasters for all units have been trained. She encourages all units to post PTO minutes, budgets, and information about upcoming events.

### **Educational Enrichment: Karen Yusko**

- Although she has no budget, she will get the unit VPs together to discuss their tasks.

### **Financial Management: Audrey White**

- She is meeting with the units to share information about fundraising.

### **Outreach: Sarah Divakarla**

- They sold 860 tickets for Red Raider Day, gave out 50 prize bags.
- Mr. Smith, the Director of Student Affairs, formerly known as the Registrar, sends lists of the new families to each school, and wants to have a meeting to discuss what more can be done with the new families.
- October 13 is Tour Your Schools Day. This event needs more advertising, suggesting to parents it is a good time to visit the next school their children will attend. They also need to reach out to the preschools more.

**Parent Education and Advocacy: Dyann Whaley and Chris Ivary**

- They are meeting with the unit VPs to share ideas.

**Nominating: Jennifer Goodall and Lynne Green**

- They offered their thanks to all the volunteers. They are excited for this year helping to place people into PTO volunteer positions that fit their strengths and interests.

**President's Report**

- All VPs should bring the unit VPs and Presidents together to share ideas.
- A group will be formed to follow up on the testing concerns raised during the reports given by SHTA and Parent Education and Advocacy.

**6. Old Business:** none

**7. New Business:** none

**8. Adjournment,** 9:02

**Next Meeting: Monday, November 3, 2014, 7 pm, SHHS Lower Cafeteria**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jodie Herbst