

Parents Association Meeting Minutes

11/13/15

1. Second Grade teacher Jessica Kulick and (from Episcopal Community Services) Doris Rajagopal, Leslie Ross, and Alicia Cooper on **Darby Community Dinner** at the Darby Mission.

- St. Peter's School community members, faculty and families, ages 12 and up are hosting a Darby Dinner on Tuesday, December 1st from 5:30-8:30 p.m. We are seeking volunteers to cook and bake in advance of the dinner (you do not need to attend the dinner itself), and volunteers to help serve the meal, socialize with guests, and clean-up at Darby Mission. Please indicate your availability and if you are able to drive a carpool from SPS to Darby Mission. Please sign up here: <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10coe4faba629a7f85-spscommunity> - <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10coe4faba629a7f85-spscommunity>

- St. Peter's and ECS have an established relationship. Lower school comes for MLK day service. During the year, SPS students are assigned an elder pal and make greeting cards. Around Thanksgiving, students make leaves for the ECS "Tree of Thanks."

- Darby Project: Darby was first location when ECS decided to work beyond the Philly borders. A program was created to hold community dinners, which now serve 60-100 people, twice a month. The dinners are volunteer-run.

- Darby is 25 minutes out of the city, towards Havertown. It is okay to cook and drop off at SPS. For those volunteering at the dinner, there will be a carpool and caravan from SPS.

Parent question: Is this opportunity open to other volunteers or only SPS families? All volunteers are welcome. EPS is also looking for volunteers for other dates.

Parent question: Where is food drop off? In the SPS basement kitchen. If cooking, please provide for about 80 people.

Parent question: Can kids volunteer and/or attend? Children 12 and over can serve. Children under 12 can attend. There are children in attendance.

Parent question: Is there anything on which the dinners are usually short? There is never enough dessert! Brownies are highly encouraged and a very popular item! EPS is not usually short on hands on volunteers.

2. Kindergarten teacher Julie Brady on **Philly Foodworks Farm Share pick-up** at SPS

- SPS is now a pick up site for the Philly Foodworks Farm Share.

- Boxes from Philly Foodworks are from local farmers or farms elsewhere with connections to local farmers.

- Online registration is available. Share boxes arrive every Tuesday afternoon and boxes can be returned for recycling and reuse. Boxes come by size or by choice of items. There is produce, cosmetics, etc. Recipients receive an email a few days prior to delivery regarding content of upcoming share.

- Article about Philly Foodworks on Philly.com:

http://www.philly.com/philly/food/20151112_Philly_Foodworks_adds_tech_ingenuity_to_link_farms_to_tables.html

Parent question: Is everything organic? Philly Foodworks does not claim that all of their items are organic. There are many qualifications for something to be claimed as organic.

- Find out more about Philly Foodworks here:

<http://phillyfoodworks.com/>

- Sign up for farm share here:

<https://csa.farmigo.com/join/phillyfoodworks/csa#Step=1>

3. Kindergarten teacher Jesse Cronin-Connelly/Drive Chair Kathy Ochroch on the **supply drive partnership** between SPS and the Eliza Shirley House

- Jesse and Kathy are developing a full calendar for all of the drives in order to minimize confusion and maximize participation.

- What is planned so far (details on all to come):

November: Pajama drive.

December: Darby dinner/drive for Taggart school/ toy drive for child advocate support center

January: MLK day donations and service activities/Ronald McDonald House readathon

February: Joy of Socks drive

March/April: Faculty Philabundance volunteer night (one took place in October). This may also be a family night.

May: Supply drive for PAWS/May 20 "Day without shoes" (for students to think about what this means) and shoe drive/3rd grade & EPS program

Ongoing: Food cupboard drive, which is now the new garnet v. gray competition

Not finalized: Working with the Eliza Shirley House (short term transition housing). This may entail donations and activities (i.e. story times for kids so parents can go on job interviews, etc.). Students will go there for MLK day.

- Any ideas and suggestions welcome!

4. Karen Edelstein, Consulting Psychologist/School Counselor, explains **Student Support and Learning Support Programs at SPS** and takes questions

- This agenda item has been postponed.

5. Headmaster Shawn Kelly: brief **updates** on building purchase, etc.

- SPS is working on building a recording studio on the art side of the basement (working with Milkboy Studios). The goal is for this to be a real studio with real equipment for students to learn on.

- There is a plan to renovate the art side of basement and connect the art side and the Underground.

- On Wednesday, November 11, there was a fire drill. Fire drills are seen as part of the curriculum. During the fire drill, one of the stairwells was blocked, which teaches students to think critically and quickly in order to teach that situations change and it's important to learn to think and react. Drill time with added obstacle was 2.5 minutes!

- Athletics: Soccer and Cross Country season has ended. There has been much conversation with students regarding heart & pride, which resulted in new wins. Cross country runners from SPS who had never finished began to finish in top 10 of their meets. These new programs are giving kids opportunities. Winter sports will be fencing, basketball, and possibly wrestling. Spring sports will be track & field, tennis, and possibly ultimate frisbee.

- Lemon Run (for Alex's Lemonade Stand): 70+ ran from SPS. There was a great sense of community. Agreed that we should continue to do these kinds of activities together as a school.

- Building update: The church is committed to selling the building. Still meeting re: negotiations and there is a hold up with L&I and all parties are working to resolve issues. We will close during the New Year. Owning the building will allow for major work (from window replacements to basement renovation) and once the purchase is final, a plan will develop regarding how best to move forward

- Fundraising: We do need to give to the broader community but SPS has needs too. There is a current appeal for annual the fund, which goes towards operating budget items (i.e. \$77 a day for electricity). Tuition does not cover all.

- There is a current initiative regarding working with faculty on understanding themselves individually—i.e. Myers Briggs tests. There was a test that summarized each faculty member's 20 character traits through VIA Institute on Character (<https://www.viacharacter.org/www/>). When teachers work to understand themselves, they can teach students to do the same.

Parent question: Regarding fundraising—How do we best talk to our children about fundraising opportunities (what they mean, what is their cause, who they benefit, what is the context)? SPS needs to work on these issues internally. Are there opt in or opt out opportunities and what to do about marketing to our children? Does community engagement always have to be fundraisers? What are causes and how can we learn and understand more about the organizations and make the right choices to participate or not. There needs to be broader conversation at school about philanthropy—and how to be smart about it.

Parent question: Can we create a calendar or list of pretzel sales and bake sales and can we monitor how we fundraise and celebrate (And does fundraising always have to involve food)?

Diane to make list for next meeting so we can discuss further. A larger conversation needs to be had about these internal and external fundraising programs. This will be added to an upcoming agenda.

6. Holiday Sale and Events update from Holiday Chair Sibyl Lindsay/Communication and Events Coordinator Dena Hillison

- This year's holiday sale will be somewhat different than previous years. Firstly, there is a new name: Holiday Hooray!!

- Saturday hours will remain the same (the possibility of shortening hours was discussed, but determined that there are still shoppers close to 7pm) but Friday hours may begin at 2pm instead of 3pm which may give parents more opportunities to shop and/or volunteer before school dismissal.

- Santa will visit during Holiday Hooray and there will be photo opportunities with Santa as well as a non-denominational Winter Backdrop for families who prefer that. There will be additional festive activities and treats TBA, with the main difference from the past few years being that the event will not be specifically a breakfast. The funding that we received in previous years for the breakfast is no longer available this year. We think this year's version will be even more fun. Stay tuned for more news and volunteer opportunities.

7. Auction update from Auction Chairs Rachel Iannotti and Ann Louise Markham

- The auction will take place on April 8 at the rooftop ballroom at The Pyramid Club. SPS is the first to host large event in this space.

- The theme will be Mad Men.

- Save the Date cards will be sent right after Thanksgiving. Working on committees.

- There will be a revitalized way to approach donors and corporations.

- Volunteers needed. There will be more information forthcoming. Suggestions welcome!

8. Assistant Head of School Matt Evans leads a discussion on **evolving homework policies at SPS.**

- We have discussed homework over the past few years in small groups and in relation to the ongoing need to be more efficient with our curriculum. The value we place on completing work in the past was a driving force for teachers to feel compelled to get more done, thus the need to extend work home.

- We are looking at the goals of our curriculum:

More engagement

More projects

Not creating busy work

Not needing to “Cover” material
Differentiation in content and challenge
Creativity in assignments

1. We wanted students to maintain an expectation of work at home, but to not be disengaged due to busy/ boring or easy homework.
2. We asked our teachers to think differently about what work goes home and what work is done at school
3. We asked our teachers to think about how much work was done by parents at home and how that could change.
4. We combined topics and created themes to connect homework in meaningful ways.

This led to an increase in engaging work and a decrease in total amount of work, in some cases. Even if the workload was the same, homework would be better since it is not boring for the students.

- We have been discussing Homework at Faculty Meetings this year and the role of parents for the younger ones. We read an article that talked about the 5 Hallmarks of Good Homework:

1) Purpose: For example--in spelling, students write the words 10 times or write sentences OR What about: Write the words, trace them, spell them out loud, use letter tiles, make a puzzle? Homework needs to be purposeful to each child.

2) Efficiency: What does a diorama really teach? What does a student “Learn” from such an exercise? How about having a “science” paper count toward English?

3) Ownership: I never heard a student not doing “her” work; it’s our work she is not doing.

4) Competence: ZPD (Lev Zygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development): The zone of proximal development, often abbreviated as ZPD, is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help.

5) Aesthetic Appeal: If it is a photocopied sheet with 50 math problems on it... it is boring, visually and in practice, (and useless.) Fewer problems with room to work and show it is more visually appealing and more inviting.

- Students need to freely communicate to teachers when they struggle, when it is too hard or easy, or if they do not understand why it has been assigned.

- We sent an article from the Inquirer to our parents and gathered Feedback: (In no particular order) 11 responses from the Community have been summarized here:

Too much, Not enough, good variety, not the same homework every night, reduction is good, kids are too stressed, too much going on outside of school to do it, generating a stamina for their HS experience, happy medium, do away with it, but keep reading each night, good level with some more challenging to keep them working, homework is necessary, but a balance is important, homework is beneficial, unless it leads to stress.

One quote from a parent reply:

“Thank you for sharing this article with us, and for asking for parent feedback. We are not big fans of homework— unless it’s reading... How do we opt out of nightly homework while still preparing the kids to be ready for it when they hit a high school in 9th grade that has a heavy nightly workload? I would hope that focus and good study habits better than any nightly worksheets might do. Not homework for homework’s sake but rather thoughtful preparation that allows the kids individual responsibility for figuring out how to organize their minds, and their time, to achieve their goals. We are happy with the noticeable shift toward less homework this year!”

- Curriculum ideas/possibly upcoming evens and activities: Makers fair for 5th-8th: may include business, robotics, medicine innovations, material arts, youth entrepreneurship; Shark Tank product development; Curiosity fair: like a science fair but not just about science, students would present to the teachers; Ted Talk concept

Parent question: More assignments coming by email, but sometimes they come in too late (after sports practice, after dinner, etc.). Is there a uniform time limit? Teachers need to be responsible for that. There needs to be balance between teacher and family needs and boundaries on each side (so students and parents aren’t emailing teachers too late as well).

9. School store is not out of devo office anymore-it runs seasonally online. Closes today, 11/13.

Future PA Meetings (all take place 8:30-9:30 in the library)

January 15, 2016
February 26, 2016
April 8, 2016
May 20, 2016

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or would like to be on an upcoming Parents Association Agenda, please email us at:
parentsassociation@st-peters-school.org.

Archived Parents Association Minutes can be found at <http://st-peters-school.org/parents/association/>

Thank you for all you do.

Daisy Fried and Jennie Kerson Pritzker
Parents’ Association Co-Presidents

Gigi Lamm
Secretary