

Abernethy PTA Community Meeting Minutes, 9/27

Attending: Fillard Spring-Rhyne, Heather Spring-Emert, Kirsten Isaacson, Hanna Nesper Newell, Heather Hull, Karen Liao, Sara Albert, Joyce Chow, Amanda Cort, Wendy Combs, Gretchen Kilby, Julia Silverman, Leslie O'Connor, Corinna Horsell, Ericka Morgan, Bill Morgan, Carrie Richardson, Dawn McNeill, Cassie Louie, Cressa Schuster, Katrina Cloyd, Justin Cloyd, Tracy Sawyer, Stephanie Hart, Craig Stack, Beth Burns, Sean Matthews, Jami Haaning, Carolyn Duran.

Carolyn Duran calls the meeting to order at 6:36 pm.

Ericka Morgan makes a MOTION to approve the minutes from the June, 2018, community meeting. Gretchen Kilby second. Motion passes unanimously.

Co-President's Report: Kirsten Isaacson

- Scholarships are available for those who would like to join the PTA.
- Two new PTA committees — advocacy and equity/inclusion will be working closely together, since they have intersecting goals and priorities. A representative from the Abernethy PTA attended the Joint Committee on Student Success meeting on 9/27 to speak about the need for stable and equitable school funding. If you are interested in joining this committee, contact Joyce Chow or Beth Cavanaugh.
- Mini-grants will be returning this year, to fund smaller projects to improve the lives of students around Abernethy. We are looking for a chair to take ownership of this committee. There will be support from existing board members and others.
- The chili cook-off is a great community event that also still needs a chair.

Principal's Report: Heather Hull:

- New kindergarten class opened 9/24. Welcome to Tammy Rebischke who comes from Laurelhurst Elementary!
- With the addition of the new class and increased PE requirements, there is a third gym teacher, Mary Lloyd, who will be in the building on Wednesday afternoons. To accommodate all the kids and the extra time, there will be some doubling up in the gym, and the teachers will be getting kids outside as much as possible.
- We also added a new third grade teacher before school started, Alyssa Edenstrom, a new half-time music teacher, David Hall, and Elaine Chin and Liza Springgate are job-sharing in third grade. Ms. Chin is also doing literacy and math support in grades 1 and 2.
- Fifth grade remains crowded, but numbers are worse elsewhere in the district. Kids are taking assessments right now, and as results come in, teachers can see if they need to request extra resources/help at that grade level, but that is not anticipated.

New Business:

- Question from Amanda Cort, about high sugar levels in school lunches, particularly in juice and chocolate milk.
- Reponse from Heather Hull: Nutrition services is its own department at PPS. They have been working to minimize the ingredients, do more local produce and meat products. They have been traditionally open to feedback about the menu. They have made changes, but it is tricky for everyone that doesn't want things like chocolate milk, there are those that do.

Public Forum, For presentations on Class Size and School Funding, please see attached slides/documentation.

Class Size: Hanna Nesper Newell and Julia Silverman

- There is a difference between class sizes agreed to by the Portland Association of Teachers and the class size thresholds put in place by the district. PPS's class size caps are significantly higher.
- Abernethy's class sizes at grades 1 and 2 would have been much higher (from 23-24 to 28-29) if not for PTA/foundation spending for the 2018-2019 school year. We also funded 1.5 instructional support positions and .25 for our librarian.
- But an ongoing topic of discussion for this year will be how much FTE we can pay for. Costs are going up, and there is a significant percentage of Abernethy families who are concerned that we are buying our way out of problems while others don't have that luxury.
- What can we do? Advocate for better school funding at the state level. Watch the district's forecasts for class sizes at Abernethy (coming in the spring) and make sure they are accurate. And figure out other ways we can support staff without paying for full-time employees.

School Funding: Carolyn Duran and Craig Stack

- Most of the PTA's funding comes from fundraising, (Tour de Ladd, Annual Appeal, Auction in the Spring, Fun Run) then the garden afterschool program, minimal amounts from Spanish and basketball.
- Thirty percent of whatever we fundraise is redistributed to poorer schools, because that is a way to make it somewhat fairer, so it isn't just rich schools that can buy extras. Still we get to keep way more of it, as the maximum that is distributed to any school is about \$40,000. We get to keep \$200,000+.
- We also have lots of community events, like holiday shoppe, spring carnival and chili cook-off, that are just focused on community building.

- Abernethy is one of just three schools in PPS (the others are Forest Park and Lincoln High School) that raised enough last year to fund more than 2 full time employees. There are different opinions about this. Some people in our community believe we need to reduce our fundraising and purchasing of FTE so that Abernethy parents will be more motivated to fight for better school funding. Others say we should still be able to help our own children, and others to a lesser extent, while we try to fight for more funding. This will be an ongoing conversation this year.

Equity and Inclusion Survey Results: Sahra Rosales-Perretz

- Significant takeaways from last spring's survey include that families at Abernethy are acknowledging that racism exists in Portland, but are not sure how they can help. Courageous Conversations on Race is developing programming around this.
- Some survey respondents felt that they did not fit into social norms and expectations are at Abernethy, citing socioeconomic status, and felt socially excluded.
- People appreciate the content on racial and social justice offered in the classroom to upper grade levels, more work needs to be done for the primary grades.
- We will be providing resources for parents to have those age-appropriate conversations with their students.
- Heather Hull: We will be getting a big shipment of culturally relevant titles from the district, starting next week.
- In October, the community meeting will highlight a guest speaker, Astrid Castro, who will speak on how to talk with kids about race.

Announcements:

Tour de Ladd: Bill Morgan and Carrie Richardson:

- New online pledging system is up and running. Online participation waivers are going great, but online pledging is lagging a little behind. About 240 kids have sent out online pledges, and they have sent out over 600 requests for pledges. We have already received \$19k.
- We need more volunteers!
- There will be no prizes for kids who get the most laps and/or donations.

Eco-School Network — Rachel Willis:

- We support parents who are interested in spearheading sustainability projects, to make school green and healthy — we can help do the legwork and connect them with other parents. More info at ecoschoolnetwork.org

(No adjournment, as meeting flows into Board meeting.)

