

NEW NE SCHOOL PTO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
WITH PRINCIPAL YOLONDA BROWN  
1631 La France Drive  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
Wednesday, March 4, 2009  
3:00 PM

Members Present: Yolonda Brown, Clare Richie, Guido Sacchi, Elizabeth Ross Lieberman,  
Steve Fazenbaker

Invited Guest: Mary Stouffer (Transportation and Safety Committee Chair)

Clare began the meeting by offering a timeline/background of the formation of the PTO. She said that there is a lot of energy and excitement among the new school families, and the PTO was formed to take advantage of the interest as well as provide organization so the work of the parents would be supportive. Clare formally welcomed Mrs. Brown to the PTO Board (the Principal serves on the Executive Committee) and asked Mrs. Brown to name a teacher representative to the PTO Board, as appropriate given the teacher hiring process. She gave Mrs. Brown a binder containing the names of the PTO board members and committee members, and other PTO Board materials.

Mrs. Brown remembered a question asked during her interview: "How will we get to trust you?" She thought it was a good question and wanted to answer it for the PTO board. Mrs. Brown promised to say what she means, and mean what she says. She believes in being very forthright, open and transparent. Mrs. Brown would like to establish and maintain a mutually trusting relationship with the parents. Like the parents, Mrs. Brown wants this to be the best school possible. Her main request is that when receiving requests from the PTO, she would like to be given a sufficient amount time to work on her response. She will find the answer to requests, or recommend a contact to deal with the request.

Mrs. Brown also mentioned that the new school (Principal and teachers) will adopt a vision statement as well as a mission statement (using the PTO draft mission statement as input) to guide all efforts at the new school to do what's in the best interest to children, teachers/principal, and parents.

Mrs. Brown asked those present to share their expectations/thoughts and these were offered:

- Because of frequent turnover of principals at MES over the past 5 years, in addition to a rapid rise in student population and the deep knowledge base of the parent body, sometimes the leadership roles and responsibilities have been blurred; we envision a strong principal who will take charge and will let the parents know where to help.
- It is a priority for new school PTO to have open communication to ensure that everyone share the same knowledge.
- We understand that the parents don't run the school, the principal does. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the parents have very high expectations that need to be addressed.

- We need to understand expectations during transition period, and what can be expected from Mrs. Brown during the current school year. At a minimum, we would like Mrs. Brown to attend PTO board meetings and general meetings.
- We need the principal and parents to stay focused on the students, rather than being consumed with projects. We want to feel like this is a community school, with strong leadership from the principal.
- Many shared their common desire for open communication, mutual trust, and cooperation to solve problems.

### Transition Schedule

Mrs. Brown will be working on New NE School business on Wednesdays from 1:00 – 5:00 PM, and on Thursdays from 3:00 – 7:00 PM. The PTO board (and invited guests) will have a standing meeting with Mrs. Brown on Wednesdays 3:00 – 4:00 PM. This may become a bi-weekly meeting in the future. Mrs. Brown’s schedule (working for new school on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons) is a matter of public record.

### Teacher Interviews

Mrs. Brown stated that on March 6, only the 16 current MES teachers with the least seniority will be interviewed. The interviews will be conducted at MES to allow for minimum interruption of the school day. Interviews of other applicants (including MES teachers who are voluntarily applying to the new school) will be conducted on March 13. Mrs. Brown stated that she met with the Mary Lin faculty on March 3 at 3:00 PM during their weekly staff meeting, and she met with the MES faculty on March 3 at 3:30 PM. *Update: All Morningside Elementary School Veteran Teacher Volunteers were given the opportunity to interview on March 6, 2009 so they will not have to attend the March 13, 2009 District Transfer Fair to interview for the NNE school.*

Extended Day -Mrs. Brown shared historical information about funding and approval of the Extended Day program. She is consulting with Dr. Gloria Patterson (Executive Director, School Reform Team 3), and with the district, to determine the possibility of Extended Day for the new school.

### Teacher Profile

Most PTO members who expressed an opinion felt that the teacher profile could be discerned from the PTO Draft Mission Statement; the only other request is for Mrs. Brown to consider hiring teachers from MES/Lin to ensure a measure of continuity for students entering the new school. Ultimately, hiring teachers is the prerogative of the principal.

PTO Priorities (supplemental handout/separate document)

Mrs. Brown informed us that she is having meetings with all the various departments to get her up to speed on the latest developments.

### Physical Resources

- Furniture – decision was made to go with larger chairs for K-2, as they tend to outgrow the smaller sizes. K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade will have 16” chairs and tables; 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>

grades will have 18" chairs and desks. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be outfitted in anticipation of their arrival in 2010. In addition, each classroom will have a teacher desk and chair, a round table, one or two oak storage cabinets, and other tables. The art room will have butcher block table tops, and 18" stools.

- There will be one preschool PEC (Program for Exceptional Children) classroom at the new school. It will be located near the kindergarten. Children in the PEC are ages 3 – 5 (and are from the SRT 3 district). PEC children will go on to kindergarten within their district or on to other programs at other schools. . The PEC students will be arriving in a PEC bus so Mrs. Brown is trying to locate the classroom in close proximity for easy entry/exit. More information on the Program for Exceptional Children can be found on the APS website under Parents & Students, then under Student Services.
- Media Center: All non-fiction books will meet Georgia Performance Standards requirements (K-5). All fiction books will be high-interest. Parents will have an opportunity to look at the list of books, and to suggest additional titles. There will need to be a cadre of parent volunteers ready to help put together the media center very soon after the Certificate of Occupancy is issued (tentatively July 15) and the furniture is delivered. This is because vendors do not always help stock the books into the media center. All media orders will be placed, but will be held until delivery can be made late July/early August once furniture is put in place. Mrs. Brown is trying to secure 15 books per student. Standard is 10 books per student. (Planning capacity is 450 students; therefore the goal is to acquire 6750 books.) Media specialist will be responsible for selecting periodicals, and this should happen in May (i.e. media specialist needs to be hired by May). The media specialist will guide the parent volunteers in how the media center is to be organized. (Note: The PTO Resources Committee currently has a Media/Library subcommittee. The PTO Board will work with this subcommittee to take on this project and recruit more volunteers).
- All resources in the current kindergarten campus of MES will return to the MES main campus.

### Curriculum

Mrs. Brown will select curriculum in concert with the faculty, guided by Georgia Performance Standards. Parents may offer suggestions concerning curriculum, but the principal and teacher team will ultimately make the decisions based on their experiences and familiarity with different curricula. The option of daily instruction in foreign language (Mrs. Brown does not want to limit the offering to only Spanish) is being explored. Mrs. Brown prefers daily foreign language in K through 5 (which would be state funded) rather than only for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders (which is APS funded). Also need to consider the master schedule when mandating daily foreign language instruction and scheduling art and music. Mrs. Brown has explored the curricula offered at MES, Mary Lin as well as Morris Brandon and Sarah Smith. Note: The PTO Board will develop a process for soliciting and compiling parent input on curriculum to be shared with the principal.

### Information Technology

Mrs. Brown generally agreed with the PTO's priorities and the model suggested for information technology. She shared that the lab would have a 24-computer layout, and that there will likely be 4 computers in each classroom. Mrs. Brown's objective, consistent with the PTO's recommendation, is to have Macs in the lab and PCs in the classroom, as, among other considerations, it is important to expose students to both platforms. Mrs. Brown also agrees with the PTO's priorities around active boards, teacher support and training, and availability of service. PTO recommendations around Promethean boards in each classroom and the idea of having a portable laptop cart, to be used in classrooms when extra computers are needed (for each child) were also discussed. She is getting more information from APS about their proposed plans and will report back to the PTO. Mrs. Brown was meeting with the APS IT staff after this meeting and was pleased to have the PTO input on information technology.

### Transportation

Transportation priorities were discussed (see accompanying document). Mary Stouffer gave a short background on transportation at MES, and then addressed almost all the points on the agenda, but there was not enough time for discussion so Mrs. Brown will follow up with Mary Stouffer over the next week.

### School Name

Cecily Harsch-Kinnane is responsible for overseeing the naming of the new school. Mrs. Brown approved of Clare Richie following up with Ms. Harsch-Kinnane on the school naming process and timing.

### Fundraising

Mrs. Brown is generally in favor of fundraising efforts getting underway. She was excited about the possibility of children painting tiles to be placed in the school as a way to create a legacy display. She is also planning on attending the Earth Day event on April 25. Note: Specifics of the fundraising activities will be discussed at our 3/11 PTO Board Principal meeting.

Next PTO meeting with Mrs. Brown will take place on Wednesday, March 11, 2009, at 3:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Fazenbaker