

PTO GENERAL BOARD MEETING
Morningside Elementary School
1053 East Rock Springs Road, Atlanta, GA
Thursday, March 12, 2009
6:30 PM

The meeting was called to order by Clare Richie at 6:48 PM. Clare welcomed everyone, and introduced New NE School Principal, Ms. Yolonda Brown, and shared highlights from her bio.

Ms. Brown said that she is very excited to be the principal of the new school. She stressed that she understands this as not *her* school, but *our* school. Her vision is that the school will be International Baccalaureate (IB) (see curriculum update for more details). She wants to add to the great work of Morningside Elementary (MES) and Mary Lin, but wants build our own school. Everything about opening a new school offers an opportunity to connect to the global world. Ms. Brown is working extensively with the PTO. She pointed out that we all want the same for our kids, and invited the parents to “run with her” to make our school great. We need to sustain the current level of excitement through the summer and first year. She is working to put together a great team of teachers – the only way excellence is possible.

Clare announced that a vote to amend the by-laws would take place at the conclusion of the meeting, and asked for anyone who had to leave early to vote on their way out. Clare then presented a timeline of the work that has already been accomplished to open our new school. She invited all PTO members to join a committee. The PTO board has worked hard to collect a lot of information from parents, and put together a list of priorities to present to Ms. Brown. This list is available through the Yahoo group.

Priorities

- What will the new school open with? Extensive research was conducted to determine what was needed for a high performance school.
- Information Technology
- Transportation and Safety
- School name (this is an Atlanta Public School (APS) driven process)
- Fundraising

Installing a playground was not listed as a priority at this time, because it will not be possible to have a new playground in place before the school opens in August. The playground will remain an “Awareness” issue.

Ms. Brown shared an adaptation of “Oh, The Places You’ll Go” that she wrote for her interview. After sharing her adaptation, she reported on the work she has done so far as she transitions into her role as principal of the new school:

- Schedule: Ms. Brown has scheduled the following times to work on new school business:

- Wednesdays, 1:00 – 5:00 PM (including a PTO executive board meeting, 3:00 – 4:00 PM)
 - Thursdays, 3:00 – 7:00 PM
- Physical resources
 - K-2 will have 16” chairs, tables
 - 3-5 will have 18” chairs, desks
- Media Center
 - All non-fiction books will be aligned with Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)
 - All fiction books will be high-interest; parents will have input on selection of fiction books
 - Ms. Brown has asked for 15 books per student (~6750 books). The average ratio is 10 books per student.
- Extended Day (adding 30 minutes to the length of the school day): Extended Day status is pending. Extended day is part of MES but not Mary Lin. Dr. Patterson is inquiring as to whether extended day is possible; if it is, there will need to be 80% buy-in from stakeholders (parents, teachers, etc.) Other local IB and high performing schools do not have extended day. Ms. Brown stressed that it is important to think through why the new school should have an extended day. Ms. Brown said that she hoped to know if extended day is a possibility sometime during the following week.
- Technology: Ms. Brown met with APS IT and Dr. Gloria Patterson; APS is trying to standardize Information Technology for new schools. Ms Brown has *requested* the following technology for the new school (i.e. these items are not yet approved):
 - Promethean boards in all 21 classes
 - Six sets of hand held Activotes to use with Promethean boards (1 set / grade). One set includes 24 Activotes.
 - Mac Lab w/ 24-26 computers
 - Laptop cart w/ 24 Mac computers
 - 4 computers per classroom
 - Printers (some networked in central locations, some in classroom). Students will have access to printers. These will be heavy duty laser printers (faster than the ink jet).
 - 3 copiers (two general use, one heavy-duty)
 - 30 iPods to pilot podcasts, announcements, etc.
 - Laminating machine (new school may acquire C.W. Hill’s machine, or may purchase a new one)
 - APS IT staff members are trained in the various technologies – they then train the end users.

- **Transportation:** transportation is a high priority, and Ms. Brown is working hard on this issue. She has made contact with the transportation department; she is collecting input from the PTO and is looking forward to working with the transportation committee. Ms. Brown will make sure transportation issues are as perfect as they can be when school opens, and will adjust along the way. Transportation needs to be as smooth and effective as possible.
- **Mission Statement:** Ms. Brown is committed to developing a mission statement with full buy-in from all stakeholders, so that we are all “moving in the same direction.” Developing the mission statement will be on hold until the new school staff is in place, but the process will be completed before the school opens. To select teachers for the new school, Ms. Brown relied on the PTO mission statement, and recommendation letters from parents.

Other updates

- **School Name (Clare):** this process is driven by the APS board. The APS board met in March 9 to begin the process. The board will appoint a committee, and the community will review nominations. The next APS board meeting will be on April 13th, and the hope is that a name will be recommended at that time. More details are forthcoming.
- **Fundraising (reported by Lynne Kushner):** A capital campaign will begin soon. A letter will be emailed, describing various levels of giving and recognitions. We want to capitalize on the excitement of opening a new school; this is not uncommon for new schools to do. A “Spring Fling” is being planned for May, as a fundraising and community-building event. It will be an afternoon/evening family event. Successful fundraising will take both personal giving, and connecting with local businesses. Capital campaign fundraising goal is \$50,000.
- **Teacher Hiring Process (Ms. Brown):** MES teachers were interviewed on March 6, and offers were made on March 11. Interviewing will continue at the transfer fair on March 13, and the out-of-district transfer fair on March 24. Hope to be fully staffed by the end of April. There are 21 teaching positions at the new school. Ten classroom teachers have been hired from MES; 11 positions are still open. Three MES specials teachers (music, gifted, Spanish) have also been hired.
- **Curriculum (Ms. Brown):** the curriculum has not been selected yet. Curricula must meet Georgia Performance Standards. Curriculum will be selected by the principal, teachers, and district. Foreign language in K-5 has been proposed. Research is being done on the various programs at MES, Mary Lin, and other schools. Input from parents is welcome.
- **International Baccalaureate (IB) Curriculum (Ms. Brown):** Ms. Brown has already stated that she would like to explore the idea of the new school being an IB school. In order for this to happen, there must be 80% buy-in from stakeholders. The conversation about this should begin now. If we decide to become an IB school, the three year application process for IB would begin in the 2010-2011 school year. MES and Mary Lin both use Core Knowledge as their curricula.
- **Registration:** MES and Mary Lin have both agreed to register new school students (rising 1st graders – rising 4th graders) as part of their own registration

- processes. Rising Kindergarten students will register at the MES Kindergarten campus. Information for rising kindergarten registration is being shared with area preschool programs, and MES and Mary Lin will refer inquiries to the MES Kindergarten campus. Also, the APS website has proper forms and information. Ms. Brown will supply supplemental forms needed for new school registration.
- School Gym: there is no gym on the school property. APS is working on an agreement with Druid Hills United Methodist Church (DHUMC) to use their gym. The gym is scheduled to be renovated, and will not be available until October. This means that we will have to be creative when planning for Physical Education, etc.
 - Uniforms (Clare): There needs to be 80% buy-in to institute a uniform policy. We are trying to decide uniforms are feasible for the first year of school. There is a lot of interest in uniforms among the parents, so we will continue to explore.

Clare announced that we did not have a quorum to vote on by-laws changes. She then opened the floor to questions:

- School building: Ms. Brown said that the building is on schedule, and she is not worried about it not opening on time. Even if it isn't 100% complete, it will be ready to open by the beginning of school.
- Recess: recess will be part of the school day; details are still being worked out.
- Chair sizes: there was discussion about whether 16" chairs were the appropriate size for kindergarten students.
- Class size and Student / Teacher ratio: Anticipating an average class size of 66 students per grade level, K-3; smaller 4th grade class size.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Fazenbaker