



Talented & Gifted School For Young Scholars Parent Teacher Association

Anand Raghunath
Nina Reiniger
Co-Presidents

Jennifer Fiore
Ilaria Mogno
Co-Vice Presidents

Rebecca Yoftahie
Trina Edmundson
Co-Treasurers

Laura Lampert
Rasheedah Harris
Co-Secretaries

MINUTES FOR TAG PTA MEETING

Meeting Date: Tuesday, September 19, 2017
Meeting Time: 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Meeting Location: TAG Cafeteria

I. Call to Order

- A. PTA Co-President, Anand Raghunath, called to order the TAG PTA meeting on Tuesday, September 19, at 6:08 pm in the cafeteria of the Talented and Gifted School for Young Scholars.
- B. An attendance sheet was created and passed around to allow all attendees to sign-in.

II. Committee Reports

- A. **Fundraising** – Namita, Co-Chair said the iPledge fundraising campaign is coming up, it is our biggest fundraiser for the year. She asked the parents to please take a handout. Regarding events, the first week of November (November 3) is Game Night / Date Night for parents. She asked for the parents to give feedback regarding events. Catherine Levine asked if there is a calendar of events and Namita said it's on the website which will be updated soon. The fundraising goal is \$250,000. If interested in joining, please email Fundraising at: fundraising@tagscholarspta.org. Anand Raghunath said for any meetings, check the PTA website. Letters will be going out October 2nd regarding iPledge. iPledge goal is \$170,000, and October 2nd is our official kickoff. You can donate now, and at any time.
- B. **Communications** – Pamela Simon, Co-Chair said their role is to make sure parents are connected with what is going on at TAG. There is a Parent Directory – please go to the website and see the section on how to join. See the monthly newsletters, events coming up, etc. If you already joined, please go to the site and make sure the information is up to date. Update the teacher information for the child and the graduation year. The first meeting is October 11th. We need help with banners and graphics. Contact us if you can help communications@tagscholarspta.org.
- C. **Committees Not Present (Audit and Grants):** – Anand said some people aren't here tonight at the meeting, such as the Audit Committee, and on their behalf they are working on their audits, but he said they need more help if you're interested in joining the Audit committee contact them at audit@tagscholarspta.org. Regarding the Grants Committee, they are not present but on their behalf, Anand announced they apply for public and private grants, government grants, etc. They can use your assistance as well, contact them at grants@tagscholarspta.org.

- D. **Membership** – Co-Chair Jennifer Genuardi said their next meeting will be Friday, September 29th at 8:15 am. There were two playdates this summer for Kindergarten and 1st grade. This year they want to work on new items and outings. Membership has had trips to water parks; we want to arrange TAG apple picking event, etc. Membership would like to cover topics like stress in kids, different workshops for parents, Coffee & Tea with Ms. C, teacher lunches, etc. They want to foster community within our school. Co-Chair Johnae isn't here at the moment, but she is working hard with the management of the class parents. Please sign up for the directory. In the spring, they're hoping for an International Night.
- E. **Enrichment** – Brandee Williams, Enrichment Committee Chair, said they're looking to bring on new programs and initiatives. Emails and flyers will go out in backpacks soon. There are plans for Mandarin, Piano, Chess, Debate. The next Enrichment meeting will be in early October. Check the PTA Website for updates.
- F. **Co-President remarks:** Anand said all of our calendar dates are on our PTA website. The sign-in sheets for tonight's meeting are up front, and there are sign-in sheets for all the committees. They'll be handing out By-laws pages regarding changes. Minutes need to be approved, we'll hand them out now. Co-President Nina Reiniger said we're revising our By-laws; these are changes to keep us in compliance with the Chancellor's Regulations. Anand said look over the By-laws because we will be voting on them in October. Anand requested a motion to approve the minutes. Pam Simon motioned to approve the minutes, Rasheedah seconds. Minutes approved.
- G. **Treasurer's Report** – Co-Chairs Rebecca Yoftahie and Trina Edmundson gave the report. Rebecca said funds were coming in for this year. The balance is \$240,000 and some change. Last year's fundraising plus residual funding that hadn't been spent. We're already started our fundraising Expenses – we've pre-paid money for TA's, for Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grade TA's, and recess support. Enrichment expenses include Theatre from last year which got carried over, TAG wear, and a small bank fee Rebecca said she will dispute. \$188,000 is our working amount.

III. **Budget Committee:** Budget Co-Chairs Eric Crump and Ananda Chaudhuri gave the report. On the TAG PTA website where it reads "About TAG PTA," go there and you can see the updated Budget. Our role is to take the funds and put them back into programming to fund initiatives. Citywide Gifted and Talented process is treated the same as a regular school in terms of funding. The DOE doesn't give anything extra. Shared inquiry and the Latin program are funded by Administration. The PTA funds many things we want for our children/school. Such as Physical Education support; Music teacher for K – 3; Chess; Debate and so much more. We figure out who needs what and where we as the PTA can help. Just to re-cap, where we ended last year – this budget was approved by the general assembly in June, it was about \$172,000. You see (from the handouts) there is a surplus. We can keep the surplus, as we are a non-fiduciary entity.

We've taken much time over the summer to discuss how we can put that surplus back into the school sooner than later. We've decided we'd like to add more to the Membership line, towards items such as Teacher Appreciation Night, Parent Appreciation, counseling, more enrichments and another TA for 3rd grade. So we at TAG will then have TA's for Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade.

A parent asked who came up with the ideas, and Eric confirmed it was the Budget Committee, PTA Executive Board, with TAG's Administration's input. TAG's Administration expressed interests for another TA for the 3rd grade, as it's a testing year. A parent asked if the PTA thought parents this year may feel differently now that the science teacher isn't here, now that there is no teacher for a science class. The parent asked is someone else coming in to replace Ms. Bernstein as the children were learning hands-on science with her and parents want this for their children. Eric said we've discussed that with Administration. He pointed out that TA's would cost less than a full-time Science teacher and we need to take that into consideration. Ananda said we encourage input this year for next year's budget. A parent, Catherine Levine asked why the decision was for another 3rd grade TA instead of a second Kindergarten TA and Eric said it was a collaborative decision; Administration felt 3rd grade could benefit more than Kindergarten. K has one already and 3rd grade doesn't have one at all and reminded her 3rd grade is a testing grade.

Eric stated Administration requested a \$13,000 increase for a Music teacher. TAG's PTA previously funded a part/time Music teacher for grades K – 3. Principal Cesar is reviewing resumes; and they'd like more funding to secure and sustain a music teacher on a full-time basis. The amount the PTA already contributes would increase from \$22,000 to \$35,000. The \$22,000 was comprised of \$17,000 direct fundraising and a \$5,000 music grant, and we'd like to increase this and allot the \$22k to TAG as requested for this new music teacher. With this new music teacher, there will be more in-curriculum music classes during the week and an afterschool music program for our TAG students.

\$9,000 for an Enrichment Coordinator. Enrichment requires parent volunteers from 2 – 5pm but it's very difficult and we don't have enough parents. We need 2 separate individuals to coordinate for Chess, Debate, Math, Mandarin, Theatre, etc. We currently have one Enrichment Coordinator, we're asking for a second one to cover other days and activities as needed.

\$7,500 increase on the Physical Movement line. \$2,000 for STEM. Parents have been asking for those two things. The Physical Movement line was much smaller than what they were looking for so we feel we need to add to that. Mr. Haitram (middle school science teacher) would oversee the STEM program. Moving up and graduation ceremonies for 5th and 8th grades, an increase of \$1,500 and \$1,000, 8th grade graduation package.

Catherine Levine asked for a breakdown of the \$2,000 for International Day. Jennifer Genuardi from Membership explained that it will be in the spring, it will be in conjunction with the fundraising committee, meaning it will be a fundraiser but we need the money as a start-up. They'd like to do a Teacher Appreciation event quarterly instead of once a year. They need money toward picnic events, etc. They'd like to do workshops for anti-bullying, wellness programs, anti-discrimination, etc. for parents. Catherine said she was involved with the Fundraising committee for 7 years (chaired and co-chaired for 2 of those years) and they always relied on donations (from parents and businesses). She suggested having families bring in food, decorations, etc. She said they were always given \$1,000 a year for their budget, now they are asking for another \$3,600 and she said it seemed excessive. Co-Chair Johnae Ferguson said for their first membership event, they stayed in budget and barely had enough for bagels and such. If donations don't come in they'll have a haphazard event. She said they as a membership committee can't charge to fundraise so they are looking to a partner with fundraising committee on some events.

A dad thanked the Board for their considerations. He asked what didn't make the cut and what the trade-offs were in regards to this proposal to spend the surplus funds. Ananda said the main trade-off was the second TA. Eric said beyond that it's just larger amounts for all of these things. A mom said science is a fundamental thing, kids already have music once a week but not separate science, she didn't agree with that. International Day seems it could be more voluntary, and you're asking for \$7,500 extra when Mr. Wong has half the amount of kids as last year. She said you should ask all parents and not just the Budget committee for their input. Ananda said the in-curriculum science program for this year takes a lot of time and planning with Administration; it's good for subsequent years but nothing to go into effect now. Membership is asking for a lump sum for a variety of things and we're giving them flexibility. Brandee Williams clarified that the \$7,500 is not for Mr. Wong, it's for after school Enrichment. Funding for Chess, Mandarin, etc. Some parents want dance, martial arts, etc. We need support in bringing 30 – 40, students whose parents don't have money for all of these items. We'd be paying for tournament and registration fees, uniforms, travel expenses, etc. Brandee said yes it's a stepping stone and she can't guarantee it will all happen and if it doesn't, the funds go back into the budget. We're trying to see what programs we can put the money into. A parent asked how we can sustain all of our programs, or what if we don't have the same funds next year for the TA's? We have to get these things up and running, first and will work to sustain the successful ones. Trina Edmundson asked if we're voting per line on this budget proposal; Eric responded that we'd like to vote for the entire package.

Vice Principal Dascal spoke regarding in-curriculum items. He said we get input from parents. Ultimately Principal Cesar and Administration have to make decisions in the best interest of the students. He announced that "All of our teachers are science teachers". They teach science, math, and social studies. Pull-out science classes are supplemental to do more of a hands-on approach to go hand in hand with regular classroom learning. Our K – 4 teachers will continue to do a tremendous job. It is inaccurate to say we don't have science teachers or that we're not teaching science. A father asked, again, what is the trade-off? Mr. Dascal said with Ms. Bernstein (our former science teacher), it wasn't a regular cluster program. Anything we have will take away from other programs. We have Early Music, Technology, Latin, Chess and some other things other schools don't have.

- IV. Principal's Announcements:** Principal Cesar stepped up to piggy-back off Mr. Dascal's comments and took the opportunity to speak to the general membership. She said welcome back to all the parents and a big welcome to all the new parents. She stated, now that Mr. Wong has half the gym – we are sharing the gym with the Esperanza school. Now they're not using it so we have to fund the whole bill. Something had to give. Either pay him or he ends up with 60 kids in the gym at one time. Mr. Dascal added that now Mr. Faulkner also teacher the 4th graders the recorder, now. He's over-scheduled but the 4th grade students can get 2 days a week of the recorder. We've been hiring a substitute teacher who's been doing 6 periods a day. Nobody's going to really lose anything. We're relieving the pressure of the upper-grade teachers. Principal Cesar said there are union mandates, government mandates of how many periods they can do, and we have to be in compliance with the Chancellor's Regulations. Our K -6 teachers are licensed to teach every grade. 5th and 6th grades have a dedicated Science teacher, and in 7th grade they take the Science Regents. A mom said we need to get more parent input, she suggested a survey for parents. Kindergarten parent Luigi Kapaj said he'd like to add that we should have had input for this year; he's just hearing about this science trade-off right now. Eric said to vote now with the knowledge that if approved, we can get the

ball rolling, and anything can be revised. We're voting to add it to the budget so the committees can get things moving, but things can be changed. We're voting for the proposed increase. This is our (parents') money, not Administration's money. Sara Coates wanted to vote per line item on the proposal and Eric stated that's not the process. She replied that she's pretty much voting for some items she doesn't agree with and she doesn't think this will do well.

Eric asked all in favor of the amended budget package – 30 voted yes. 9 opposed. 4 abstained. Package passes.

- V. **SLT:** Mr. Dascal clarified that he is a mandated participant, not the leader. The next SLT meeting will be Tuesday, September 26th at 5:45pm. There will be voting for new officers. The primary goal of the SLT is to work on the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). A parent asked if the science issue can be discussed there and Mr. Dascal said no; it can be discussed but ultimately the decision lies with Administration. A parent said it was alluded to in a Town Hall meeting. Principal Cesar said decisions made regarding staff don't have to be passed through the SLT. K – 6 teachers are certified science teachers so it's not a major change.

VI. **Principal's Agenda:**

1. Opening of School
 - a) Things went smoothly, supplies went well and teachers were excited
2. Curriculum Night
 - a) 337 families attended, it was well-attended
3. NYS Schools Account
 - a) Sign up if you haven't already. Mr. Dascal said two years ago NY began providing accounts for families. You can see state test scores, other info. Ms. Bruno has your temporary log-in info to sign up for your account.
4. Assessments
 - a) The 2016-2017 school year assessments were phenomenal. We're able to focus in on the things the students are able to master. Principal Cesar said there are data-driven assessments, data from students. Mr. Dascal said grades 2-8 do Rally assessments to mirror NYS assessments. Teachers are really able to focus in on needs.
 - b) K-2 will start performance tasks soon to figure out growth.
5. Bussing
 - a) Principal Cesar said they're arranging for 3 people from the Office of Transportation for tomorrow's 8:30 am Town Hall meeting in the library.
6. Communication
 - a) Mr. Dascal said if you're not getting communications (email, robo-calls) it's important to contact Ms. Bruno at mbruno3@schools.nyc.gov. – any major event will be posted on the website: www.tagscholars.com

7. Ms. Sun / Ms. Zarinelli

- a) Principal Cesar said Ms. Sun is coming back in November. Because of the storms, our substitute teacher, Ms. Zarinelli, had to go back to her home in the south to assess the damage to her home. Due to these unforeseen circumstances, there is another substitute covering for Ms. Sun's class now, Ms. Sun is still involved with the substitute teachers. Mr. Dascal said fingers are crossed things will work out for Ms. Zarinelli.

8. Technology Teacher

- a) Principal Cesar said we are still looking for a Technology Teacher. She said all the eligible tech teachers are taking the Wall Street jobs. We've interviewed people but they weren't up to par for TAG. If you know someone who has the skill-set let us know. It's better to find a good match than to settle. Good news: Ms. D'Abreu is coming back Tuesday to fill in and help TAG with their tech classes until we hire our permanent tech teacher.

9. K – 4 Music Teacher

- a) Mr. Dascal said we're in the process of hiring a new Music teacher. We've gathered resumes and are doing interviews. Principal Cesar said part of the problem is people don't want to work part time. That's why we lost Ms. Revi. It is also a mandate – DOE will pay for x amount of clusters for x amount of students. They don't give enough. She said if we could find a way to have an extended day it would be perfect. We had everything and fell to #22, which is not the place to be in a Gifted & Talented school. With a 6 hour per day schedules, we can't get everything in. She thanked the PTA for having these Enrichments. She said we'll have the school open Saturdays but we can't get more time in the school day.

A mother said last year with the teachers we had, science in the classroom and it was taught more on worksheets, not hands-on. She asked if there was a plan to provide regular science teachers. Principal Cesar said we have many materials in Ms. Bernstein's old classrooms and closets. As soon as we get done with assessments we'll go through it.

A parent asked about extended days, and Principal Cesar clarified that we have to share the building with two other schools.

A parent asked about the uniform change. Mr. Dascal said we're a very inclusive school. We received an email from DOE that our uniform policy wasn't in compliance. Principal Cesar said the color change distinguishes the upper grades from the lower grades. It's a way to identify our students from a distance. Upper grades wear navy so to distinguish the upper from lower grades, we changed lower grades to gray. Trina said Principal Cesar makes a valid point. Luigi asked why uniforms were necessary. Principal Cesar said it's like the saying you dress for the job you want. Mr. Dascal said when our students are in uniform they're completely different. Luigi said it was a result of the contrast. Mr. Dascal said when the students are in uniform they're all about business. Principal Cesar said people were in agreement, students weren't competing and it eliminates all of that competition in clothing, of who's wearing what. That was part of the decision. Another parent said the uniforms were a good idea. Luigi said in a learning environment such as this you'd expect the students to be in control of themselves. The uniforms are regimental; it's a military thing.

Emails and meetings

- A) Principal Cesar said if you email Ms. Bruno for something and you don't hear back in 48 hours, let us know.
- B) Eric said there are three important meetings being held at TAG next week (week of 9/25):
 - a. Tuesday, September 26th at 5:45pm: SLT meeting – all can go, only SLT members can vote.
 - b. Tuesday, September 26th at 6pm: Forum on DACA: Hosted by District 4 schools and District Community Education Council as well as the NY City Council Speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito.
 - c. Wednesday, September 27th in the evening – District 4's Community Education Council (CEC) – we have two TAG parents who are on council.

By-Laws review

- A) Nina said the by-laws will be available on-line for review. Rasheedah reiterated, the By-law changes have been handed out, they will be available to review on line, please review them b/c we will present the revised By-laws in the next General PTA Meeting (October 3rd) and will vote to implement them.

VII. Adjournment

- A. Luigi Kapaj motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 pm. Co-Secretary Laura Lampert seconded the motion. Meeting is adjourned.

Minutes submitted by:

Laura Lampert, TAG PTA Co-Secretary (dictation, re-typed and submitted via email)
Rasheedah Harris, TAG PTA Co-Secretary (reviewed, revised and finalized via email)

Minutes approved by:

Nina Reiniger, TAG PTA Co-President