



Talented & Gifted School For Young Scholars

Parent Teacher Association

Kathy Fernando
Denada Ramnishta
Co-Presidents

Pamela Simon
Mark Levin
Co-Vice Presidents

Johnae Ferguson
James Vasile
Co-Treasurers

Laura Lampert
Rasheedah Harris
Co-Secretaries

PTA Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, December 18, 2018

I. Welcome & Call to Order

- A. PTA Co-President, Denada Ramnishta, called to order the TAG PTA meeting on Tuesday, December 18, at 6:12 pm in the cafeteria of the Talented and Gifted School for Young Scholars.
- B. Co-Secretary, Rasheedah Harris, made sure parents and TAG teachers signed the attendance sheets.

II. Reading and Approval of the Minutes

- A. Hard copies of the November PTA meeting minutes were distributed.
- B. Grants Committee pointed out that \$1.1 million was not yet received; we've only received \$200,000 so far. Johnae Ferguson made a motion to approve the November minutes with the change; Sheri Simmons seconds. Minutes approved.

III. Teacher Assistant (TA) Update

- A. Regarding the Kindergarten TA, Denanda explained that two new TA's were hired in August, with one resigning in September. Diandre Williams was hired in late October, was cleared on December 7, and started on December 10th. He and the other TA have been sharing each K class.
- B. Regarding the 1st Grade TA, Denanda explained that there's been an ongoing search for a second 1st grade TA since late October, when the budget for the additional TA was approved by the general PTA. There are two prospects interviewing with Principal Cesar this week. We've been recruiting, which is challenging. Many qualified candidates were already hired elsewhere over the summer.

IV. Treasurer's Report

- A. Co-Treasurer James Vasile said we're still underspent in staffing as several school faculty members haven't started working yet. It works out as we haven't brought in as much as yet.

V. Budget Committee

- A. The Budget Co-VP's presented a revised budget and advised the only change was the addition of \$300 in general spending. This addition was proposed because of miscellaneous bank fees. James Vasile makes a motion to approve the budget, Pam Simon seconds. James clarifies to parent that it is basically the same budget previously approved, minus the \$300. The parent proposes an amendment to remove the line for the 2nd TA. Pam explains per our new budget process, for that budget amendment to pass, we need a 2/3 majority. James says considering all of the situations going on we need a decision today. He says he's fine waiting to hear the Fundraising Committee's report, to which Pam says we'll bring it up in New Business. Parent says he will bring his proposal during New Business section of the agenda.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Family Engagement-

1. The Co-VP's were not in attendance. Denada announces they had a Snack & Paint event which was very successful and we want to see if we can do it more often. There was an art instructor and while the children painted some of the parents met at Dear Mama Cafe nearby to socialize and drink coffee.
2. Ski Trip – a date has not yet been set, but coming soon, please be on the lookout for it.
3. iPlay (trip to an indoor arcade/amusement park type place) – Johnae says the bus is sold out but tickets are still available if you want to drive; it will be on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 21st. We encourage folks to carpool.

B. Audit –

1. The Co-VP's were not in attendance. Denada explains that it is hard to summarize without them present but there hasn't been anything new. James Vasile says they are working on reports, but no new information.

C. Communications –

1. VP Rajesh Jayaraman was not in attendance.

D. Enrichment Committee –

1. Co-VP Sheri Simmons said Basketball is under filled and Foreign Language is under filled. We still need parent volunteers. The Debate Team needs a new coach. In addition to Debate, Sheri also deals with Chess. She would need a shadow parent for January and they could start as Coach in September 2019. Your child doesn't have to be in the class; any parent can do it. Denada asked how many spots are filled in Basketball and Sheri said none. Denada said perhaps there is a system problem not showing spots filling, as she signed up on the site.

A parent said she tried several times to get her child into Engineering and did not have any luck. She asked if there's a different sort of link that can be set up for Enrichment, as it's very hard to find on the site. Pam responded that it's been reshuffled on the website. Luigi said when doing it from a cell phone he thinks the "Apply" button was off-screen. Pam said we can have Communications work on that. Denada said we have the vendors but we lost availability of 2 classrooms. Principal Cesar is very restricted, but if we get feedback it really helps us to go to her and ask if we could re-prioritize. There are 12 students for the Engineering class; it's highly popular. Rebecca Yoftahie asked, if Foreign Language is so low why not utilize the space for Engineering? Denada said that is something we can look into. Sheri said parents have until Friday to enroll. James said maybe 1st come, 1st served isn't working; maybe a lottery system would be better. Pam asked if this shouldn't be discussed on a committee level and Sheri asked how we would manage this. Denada said it sounds like James is saying have a pool of interested students and then do a lottery from the pool. Johnae asked about giving priority to students to didn't get in previously, and Sheri said we talk about that. There is a committee meeting tomorrow. A parent asked about sharing/exchanging

rooms with the other school. Denada asked the Parent Coordinator, Mr. Johnson, if he could look into it, and Mr. Johnson said yes. Pam said it's a great idea; Denada said we will follow up.

E. Fundraising Committee –

1. The Fundraising Co-VP's were not in attendance. Denada reads the Fundraising Report and advises we're now at \$85,000 raised with 17% of total participation, which is 44% less than last year. This time last year we had raised \$152,000. Co-Secretary Laura Lampert asked if the deficit was more from less participation or less money donated; Denada said her understanding is we're behind in participation. Johnae said last year iPledge was started a month earlier. Pam said that week to week, the money brought in is less. Johnae asked if there were tracking mechanisms in place, and Laura asked about the numbers regarding parents volunteering their time.
2. Denada said many of the numbers are reflective of our current non-profit status and some parents are waiting for their workplace's corporate matching programs. We are waiting day by day to hear from the IRS. She said based on conversations, let's not discount that parents will donate. Johnae asked if parents will donate if we don't have 501c3 status by the end of the year, because we will be losing programs, we will have to cut programs. Denada says yes but she thinks people will still donate. There is also less communication than last year. It's unlikely that past March we'd see more money coming in, as we'd have the Gala, etc.
3. A parent asked why there haven't been more reminders. Denada responded that we've been encouraging the Fundraising Committee to keep at it; we're having a meeting with them this Thursday.
4. A parent said at another school, over \$20,000 in Christmas trees sold outside of the school with parent volunteers. The profit was \$18,000. If TAG has a good relationship with the community that would affect how much comes in. She said the school she was speaking of does a School-palooza; it brings in another \$20,000. It's just teachers and parents, they do food, they do a playbill. These are examples of going outside of the walls of the school. Denada encourages her to come to the next Fundraising meeting and voice that in the forum of the meeting. The parent says another big thing is Mother's Day. We could do a one-day Saturday sale in the yard. Denada said she'd very much encourage her to get involved. The parent said she went to a Fundraising meeting and looked on the calendar and nothing was there for future Fundraising meetings. James said Fundraising only listed until December on the calendar, and that they should be putting up the new dates soon.
5. A parent said there was confusion because it looked like you had to donate \$100 for Dress Down Day. Another parent asked if we could find out how many people gave to iPledge already and how much was given toward the Dress-Down day, and Denada said we should look into that. A parent said in the budget process last year we saw iPledge donations decreases as the grade goes up toward 8th grade. He hopes we can rectify that. Denada said we do have the option to spread the donation over each month to make contributing more convenient for some. A Parent agrees it would be a good idea to fundraise outside of the school.

6. Johnae urges parents with these suggestions to volunteer to be Project Managers. James said Fundraising is the most time-consuming and more hands would help. It is stated that all of the committees need Project Managers, and a parent wondered why the Class Parents weren't tapped for this. Johnae said she will suggest to Fundraising that we have we have parents who signed up to be Class Parents but didn't get the spots, to tap that resource and try to have them as Project Managers. Denada said especially for the Auction – we need Project Managers and volunteers for that. Sheri said there is a difference; Class Parents can do a lot of the work from home, but Project Managers have to be hands-on. Denada said there was a Kindergarten Mixer for parents, which resulted in \$10,000 toward iPledge. Rasheedah led the effort in Holiday Grams and we'll provide a full report. We need a team for a successful Gala which starts in April and we need people to help us find vendors, and items to donate from local businesses.
7. Denada said there is an expense change request in Fundraising. Rasheedah explained that if you look at the handout, in the past things were different and parents were pouring in donations. The past 2 years we had to spend more than we've ever had to spend. Fundraising failed to notice the line only showed \$93 in expenditures for Holiday Grams and that is incorrect. We'd like to raise the line to \$600; that doesn't mean they will spend it all. We'd like to be able to reimbursed for the money we spent ourselves, if necessary. Johnae asked if that line items is coming from somewhere else; Rasheedah said she asked Fundraising to move money around within their Fundraising Budget. Pam advised it doesn't make sense to request more money from the general PTA funds when fundraising has a \$7,500 budget; the VP's should adjust their budget accordingly first. Denada said it's not clear if this is incremental to the Budget or they have to shift amounts. Johnae said TAGwear is zero on the budget which is incorrect. Rasheedah asked if we can do a partial vote. James moved to increase Fundraising Holiday Grams by \$507 since we already have the \$93 approved, the \$507 will take the total line of expenditures approved to \$600. Laura seconds. A Parent counters, saying he'd take it directly from the Auction Line. James said we should communicate it to the Fundraising Co-VPs. Pam said they should be responsible for their own things, we cannot decide for them. Rebecca said she didn't see why we're micromanaging. Johnae said it's part of the Chancellor's Regulations to approve the budget for the line items. The 7th grade IT Tech teacher gives thanks for the generosity of \$25,000. Denada said she agrees with James' proposal; some parents have already put money out. VOTE: Denada repeats James' proposal to increase Fundraising Holiday Grams by \$507. 16 votes for; 0 votes against; 1 abstains. Vote passes. Parents removes his counter-proposal.

F. Grants Committee -

1. There is a proposal to update a student bathroom. In February we have to put in a proposal for Capital Funding and we're meeting with the Manhattan Borough President's Office.
2. Recently we heard back from Cooper Union which is interested in exploring opportunities in TAG. The next Committee meeting is January 3rd at 8:15am.

VII. SLT Report

- A. James Stark, the SLT Chair, said members met last week and approved new By-Laws. We discussed different ways to promote the CEP (Comprehensive Education Plan). Schools are initiating the Mood Meter, which was developed by Yale, regarding Socio/Emotional Intelligence. Vice Principal Dascal is working to implement this. Sometime during the year Principal Cesar will try to do a Parent Seminar.
- B. We welcomed our student representative, a 7th grader, in joining the SLT.
- C. We discussed potentially having a seminar regarding selecting a high school. It would be helpful for 6th, 7th, 8th grade parents to understand more.
- D. Book Buddies – 5th grade students spend an hour a week helping assigned Kindergarten students to read. Rasheedah asked if our SLT binder lives with Mr. Johnson in his office, James Stark said yes.

VIII. Principal's Report

- A. Vice Principal Dascal said Principal Cesar and he wish you all happy holidays.
- B. Mr. Johnson said Sanjana and Armand Allam are 7th and 2nd grade brothers whose father was diagnosed with Stage 4 lung cancer. He's the breadwinner of the family, the mother only speaks Arabic and is very distressed. They qualified for EBT. Medical should kick in, in January. As Administration it is a sticky situation, but if somebody wants to help we certainly can connect you with them. Even if you just kept them in your thoughts and prayers. Denada said she knows were an educational community, and she's also happy we're a close community; she said she thinks it is something we should take on as a group and figure out how to proceed as a community.

IX. New Business

- A. Denada said there is a proposal from the floor to remove the funding from the 1st grade TA who has not yet been hired. She said she feels we need more input from the Budget Committee before we do this. The Parent said this was highly contentious last year. Ultimately the decision was to not have the TA. Then there was enough of a surplus early this year that it wasn't going to take away from the Budget. Looking at this year, we're \$67,000 short of where we were last year. This is money that should be set aside so we can maintain next year's programs. Denada said that money gets locked in for this year. Luigi said this is moving a line item. Pam said theoretically it makes sense to her but a) this could set a precedent; what happened last year is why we have a budget process now and b) she wonders if the money saved from the TA's and other items starting late would make up for it. Luigi said it probably saved about \$15,000. Rebecca said when we get closer to the end of the year, who's to know if there won't be a big boost to iPledge. Luigi said he thinks we need to protect ourselves. Denada said she thinks we should hear from the Budget Committee; their meeting is Thursday. Pam said she feels like we're going to get to the numbers we're looking for. Luigi said we already have a 1st grade TA shared between two classes. Denada said it was already voted on and passed. We should have the full picture, not going by line items. There is a budget process with the two co-chairs and a team of people; she wouldn't vote one item out in isolation. A parent asked if it's possible the TA wouldn't be hired until February; James Vasile said maybe during that time Budget can do an assessment.

B. Denada said to shift the money right now could be premature:

1. Communications are going out less.
2. We are waiting on the 501c3 status.
3. People don't know how behind we are.

We will see how much in Fundraising came in by next month. Luigi said the Budget isn't a secret; we could send something out showing what it's needed for.

VOTE: A Parent proposes to reallocate \$19,928 and put it toward things needed. 3 votes for; 7 opposed; 5 abstain. Proposal not approved.

Pam said their Budget meeting is Thursday; please voice it there.

Jimmy asked if we could do a forecast of January, February, March. It's hard to put these numbers together and know where we stand.

- C.** Mood Meter – Rasheedah said the initiative is a work in progress. She passed out handouts as an introduction, and to let parents know about it. She said she took a District 4 Parent Workshop, a 4 to 5 hour workshop. Laura said she's interested in learning more; she first saw the Mood Meter poster in the school office and thought it was a very good chart to quickly understand mood and actions; she is glad there is an initiative behind it. Rasheedah reiterated this handout is just for their knowledge, to understand it more. TAG's staff is still slowly being properly trained on this program, it will take a while before all teachers and classrooms are fully equipped and implementing these modules. She tanks everyone for attending and asks them to continue to attend and wishes everyone a great holiday break.

X. Adjournment

- A. 7:53 pm - James Vasile motions to adjourn the meeting. Laura Lampert seconds the motion. Meeting is adjourned.

Minutes submitted by:

Laura Lampert, Rasheedah Harris, TAG PTA Co-Secretaries

Minutes approved by:

Pamela Simon, TAG PTA Co-Vice President, At Large