



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, January 15, 2019

I. Welcome & Call to Order

- A. PTA Co-President, Denada Ramnishta, called to order the TAG PTA meeting on Tuesday, January 15, at 6:13 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 December PTA meeting minutes were distributed.
- B. Denada made a motion to approve the December minutes; Co-Secretary Laura Lampert seconds. Minutes unanimously approved.

III. Election of Co-Vice President for Communications Committee

- A. Communications VP Rajesh Jayaraman is looking for a Co-VP to join him. He explains responsibilities of the position; maintaining website, updating content, emailing communications from committees, reminders, Monthly Newsletter, creating flyers. There are 4 committee meetings through the school year; the next is in February. Responding to Luigi Kapaj, he wants a Co- to work with him as he is the sole VP. Marco Tomaschett volunteers and explains that he helped design the recent re-design, worked on research for the school survey, helped develop the Parent Data system, integrating the Mail Chimp database with the PTA website. He says he would like to help Rajesh and divide responsibilities. Denada opens the floor for additional nominees; there are no others.
VOTE: Those in favor of Marco Tomaschett as Co-VP for Communications: 24 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstains. Vote passes.

IV. Principal's Report

- A. Principal Cesar greeted the parents and gave congratulations to the first grade students and teachers for their successful "Design a City" project. Personnel from the MTA and Second Avenue Subway were there; there's been a lot of buzz. She said this is an initiative that G&T schools use and it is proven to help them (Project Based Learning initiative).
- B. Data Driven Instruction across all grades – Principal Cesar said we are not married to a specific curriculum; it is to find out what the students *don't* know;
 1. Results of assessments help teachers to craft lessons.
 2. These results show "Craft and Structure" questions are challenging to our students, and they are 40% of the State test. "Inferences" is a difficult concept across the board. Principal Cesar is planning Coffee & Tea with Ms. C assessments, including 3rd grade parents testing assessments to see what is expected.

- C. CSESS – Students from Harvard University are teaching select 7th grade students. Responding to Trina Edmundson, Principal Cesar said the criteria to get into the program was student interest and teacher recommendations. Students were asked, not forced to go. It was for 8 days after school.
- D. Chancellor Carranza attending CEC Board Meeting – on Tuesday, February 12, 2019 at 6:00 pm.
1. Principal Cesar encouraged parents to submit questions, including questions regarding the plan to eliminate the SHSAT. Also, we need a good space for our school, autonomy and flexibility. It's healthier for our kids and more beneficial.
 2. Phys Ed teacher Mr. Wong is going for training tomorrow to supplement his skills.
 3. Book Buddies – The Book Buddies program is starting; 4th graders partner with Kindergarteners.
 4. Give Kids a Smile Day – Friday, February 1, 2019 beginning at 8:00 am
 - a) There will be a Parent Presentation in the auditorium at 8:30 am.
 - b) Dentists will be examining students, and will provide a small video to the students. They're having 5th and 6th graders design a video to help teach the younger grades about taking care of their teeth. 7th and 8th graders will develop a curriculum.
 5. Revamping of Poor Richard's Park has been approved
 - a) The project includes fencing to allow TAG students to use the playground.
 - b) Drainage issues in the Lower Yard are being discussed.
 - c) Makiko (PTA Grants Co-VP) explained that the entire project is \$5 million; not sure how much specifically is going toward the playground. They are following up with the Manhattan Borough President's Office to try to increase the amount; they want to meet with Principal Cesar regarding where the fence should go. Principal Cesar says we want at least a 6-foot fence. A parent says there's a community movement to remove fences from playgrounds. Denada said it is a cross-collaboration of Family Engagement and Administration. Principal Cesar said each year we apply. This should start in about 8 months. Eric Crump said there is a 3-year window from the start of the actual design, but the money is approved and that is the biggest hurdle. Our kids will have access to the extension because our portion is on the 2nd Avenue side. A parent said P.S. 198 has a similar situation of a public playground attached to their school. Her other child goes there and she could bring pictures.
- E. Q & A
1. A parent asked why Kindergarten lunch was changed to 10:30 am, as students are coming home ravenous. Principal Cesar explained that their lunch was at 11:15 am; now they're eating at 10:45; first they're going outside to play, then they come in and wash their hands and then eat. They weren't assimilating to going/being outside with the older students. It's noisy in here, we have Kindergarten through 5th grade. She said sometimes she plays music; it's better now. Regarding personnel, at least 4 – 5 people are teaching them, encouraging them instead of personnel spread out with all of the grades. They give them assistance with their coats, starting to eat, throwing out their trash, etc. They have approximately 25 minutes to play outside. Sometime before the end of the year we'll infuse them back so they're used to mixing again with the older students for when they are in 1st grade.
 2. Makiko said there's an estimate of \$1.3 million to fix the drainage problem in the lower yard from City Council and School Authority.
 3. A Class Parent asks the policy on digital devices. Vice Principal Dascal said information was sent out in the beginning of the school year. Principal Cesar said the students are not allowed to use the

digital devices during the day; cell phones, iPads and such are for before and after school. The policy is no cell phone use during the day. If there's an emergency we'll let them go in a room; sometimes a parent only answers their child's phones, not calls from school.

V. SLT Report

- A. James Stark said the SLT met for their monthly meeting last week. They monitor the progress of the CEP (Comprehensive Educational Plan) which was drafted last year, implemented this year.
1. They are focusing on parenting activities. High School articulation, where parents learn about how to send their children to high school. They plan to put forth a workshop for 6th and 7th grade parents.
 2. The committee had worked to implement the Book Buddies program. It was out of the curriculum for 3 years. It was with the 5th grade, but now with the 4th grade.
 3. Social/Emotional Learning – This is a big part of the Chancellor's Initiatives. There is a program called "Advisory" for 5th to 8th grade students to learn life skills and social/emotional learning. The 2 student reps are in groups. Advisory is not consistently meeting their objectives. Some advisors are, some aren't doing what they're supposed to do. Vice Principal Dascal will work on finding out why there's inconsistency.
 4. SLT meeting minutes and agenda are always in Parent Coordinator Mr. Johnson's office.

VI. Committee Reports

- A. Audit Committee – There is nothing new to report.
- B. Grants Committee – 1. Makiko said they submitted a proposal for a student bathroom renovation. They met with the Manhattan Borough President's Office to discuss capital funding. They only have \$200,000 toward the \$1.3 million needed. The Manhattan Borough President's office is reaching out to the School Facility for funding.
2. Submitting STEM proposal for hardware in case funding for the lower yard doesn't happen.
 3. For STEM/STEAM they are speaking with Cooper Union tomorrow, as Cooper Union is interested in a potential collaboration.
 4. The next Grants Committee meeting is Thursday, February 7 at 8:15 am.
- C. Enrichment Committee – 1. Sheri Simmons said the winter session of Spanish started on the 9th. Basketball is on Saturdays, Piano and Chess will start soon.
2. Engineering for Kids – we have a vendor coming in next month for Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
 3. Denada said Enrichment and the parent volunteer found a vendor who is expected to support children to move more during indoor recess. Sheri said if Administration likes them after the month we have enough money to fund them through the rest of the school year.
 4. Parent Liaisons – they are responsible for keeping up with who is in the program and if there are missed dates. Debate, Spanish and Engineering need a Parent Liaison. Sheri said they would collaborate with her and Liz. The Liaison doesn't have to be onsite; they can do it from home. They send an email once a week. Debate meets Fridays, Engineering for Kids meets Thursdays and Spanish meets Wednesdays.
 5. Field Day – We need a Project Manager, or Field Day is in danger of not happening. Denada asked parents to please spread the word, and please come forward if you have the time. Mark Levin said when a parent signs up for the PTA they fill out a check box; he asks if Enrichment takes advantage

of that, to send an appeal directly. Sheri said Liz has done that but hasn't gotten responses. Denada suggests soliciting people who have done it who might do it again.

6. Pam Simon said at the last PTA meeting it was mentioned that enrolment was light. Sheri said we had to cancel Hip Hop and condense Basketball sessions into one. Pam asked if there was any chance of getting more classes of the popular ones, and Sheri said last year there was a lot of interest in Engineering for Kids, but there was no Parent Liaison to facilitate it. Denada explained that Hip Hop was in the auditorium and Engineering for Kids can't be in the auditorium as there is no room. Engineering for Kids for higher grades didn't have enough interest so we opened it up to lower grades and it filled up. There seems to be more interest from the lower grades. Sheri said the Enrichment Coordinator moves all of the students. We need a liaison to get them to the rooms. Denada said we need to collaborate with the other school in the building (Esperanza) for space. Sheri said we lost two rooms this year. Rasheedah said parents don't want their kids to leave the school for the programs, and it would be a liability.

D. Communications Committee – 1. Rajesh Jayaraman said the monthly Newsletter went out today.

2. The next Communications Committee meeting is February 13th.

E. Family Engagement Committee – 1. Co-VP's Kate and Trina spoke. Kate said the deadline is January

21st for the Ski Trip on February 9th, at Mohawk Mountain. They provide express rentals in advance, private room with drinks and catered lunch; yoga will be offered. There are terrific instructors. They offer lessons for advanced skiers. There will be a cooler full of beer and wine for parents and a big private room with windows. It's only \$40 if you don't want to ski. The all-inclusive package includes a comfortable charter bus ride. Trina said there are only 28 seats remaining on the bus.

2. iPlay – the bus is sold out. You can purchase regular tickets (bus not included) through TAG until tomorrow morning. The bus is leaving from in front of TAG at 8:30 am.
3. Kate said she and Trina thought of a trampoline park excursion in Hackensack, New Jersey for March or April.
4. Kalahari indoor waterpark overnight trip will possibly be June 1st.
5. Teacher Appreciation in May – We will need volunteers.
6. Carnival in June. This is a big undertaking; we'll delegate small jobs for all so nobody feels overwhelmed.
7. The next Family Engagement meeting is January 29th at 8:15 am.
8. Johnae Ferguson asked if the Carnival will be a weekday or weekend, and Trina said we're working on the logistics.
9. A parent asked about evening meetings, and Trina said they hadn't thought about that and can discuss it.
10. Kate said regarding Teacher Appreciation they were thinking of 15-minute teacher massages, delivery of cookies, those are some of the things they were thinking about.
11. Trina said Class Parents are important. She also said we need to build community; we are a family.

F. Fundraising Committee – 1. iPledge – Olga said \$102,000 has been donated so far, with 22% participation; this is about 35% less than last year which was \$157,000 and 47% participation. To keep the same programs next year we need the donations this year. Some parents are waiting for the tax status for corporate matching. There's a government shutdown which might slow things down. Pam has a flyer she's passing out now which is getting backpacked with students tomorrow. Chess in-

curriculum, Music, etc. are supported by the PTA. Please donate what you can, please communicate this to fellow parents.

A parent asked about corporate matching. Olga said a lot of corporations check the list and it's not there right now. Denada explained that we applied in August and could expect a response in 90 – 120 days. We're already past that but the government shutdown may also be slowing it down. Mark Levin said some companies may still match after 6 months or so. Olga said last year \$40,000 out of \$200,000 was from corporate matches. About 20% of the donations were from corporate matches.

2. A parent asked about Dress Down days. Olga said last year it was \$5 per day, but we can no longer accept cash for Dress Down. This year if you donate \$100 to iPledge you could get 3 Dress Down days. In addition to money you could also bring in Box Tops.
3. Gala – our biggest event of the year. We have a huge need for volunteers. We need a lot of support and volunteers. We're going to need a lot more help, finding a venue, catering, etc. We estimate about 30 to 40 people are needed to help make this a success. Marco said he liked the venue from last year. Olga said it's not available but we're looking at others. Richa said one is an all-inclusive restaurant. The committee meeting was last Friday. There's a lounge and bar that specializes in fundraising, and she's going over after this meeting. Our budget is \$5,000 which isn't a lot. Last year they spent \$6,000 and had donations. Childcare would be good and is popular; this space might have that option, also if the space is permitted, we will entertain having the Children's Fashion Show again. Tomorrow is our Gala meeting at Dear Mama café at 6pm. We're looking for as many volunteers as we can get. Donations, friends, business, food, drink, even if it's just one item you can have donated. Olga said regarding donations, gift certificates and gift cards are getting sold a lot quicker. It's easier profit and easier handling.

VII. Budget Committee

- A. The meeting was in December. There aren't really any new proposals or changes. We're accumulating information from committees to see where we are spending the surplus for next year.
- B. The next Budget Committee meeting is Thursday, February 28th at 8:15 am. Anyone who would like to help draft the Budget for next year is encouraged to come.

VIII. Treasurer's Report

- A. Johnae Ferguson said her Co-VP James Vasile isn't present and she will ask him to post an updated report on the website.
- B. Olga asked about filing our taxes, regarding the extension which was granted last year. Johnae said the request for the extension was in November and we're making sure it will be taken care of; it's a 6-month extension. Olga asked why we waited to the last minute, and Denada responded that we're preparing the report for school to be presented at the district level. Johnae added that they were elected late, in October, and didn't have everything they needed so they requested the extension. Olga asked the expectation of when it will be filed, and Denada said there's a team compiled of e-board members and they are on it. Johnae said as of the Board meeting of last Thursday there was a discussion on that. The books kept in the school and the questions the accountant had, James is working on. Mark said he thinks we can commit to an update at the next meeting.

IX. New Business

- A.** Eric Crump is on the District 4 CEC (Community Education Council), which is made up of 11 parents, and they meet each month including the summer, for a 2-year term. The Chancellor will be coming and looks forward to seeing a lot of us there. Eric explains that the CEC is an advisory body for the entire district of schools. District 4 is one of the few districts which have a City-wide G&T school. They discuss the construction, instruction, opening and closing of schools, facilities, locations, co-locations, charter schools, charter school caps. They don't have voting power but are a sounding board for the school. Tuesday, February 12th is the Town Hall meeting. Eric asks the parents to fill out the public comment card, which was handed out at the PTA meeting. The monthly CEC meetings happen to be right here at TAG, in the auditorium.
- B.** You can contact or email the CEC if you are concerned with the proposed changes to the SHSAT; we need to know the Chancellor's feelings on G&T education. The Chancellor wants to revamp the way students get into specialized high schools. Eric asks the parents to send in the questions; we'll review them as a CEC. The questions must be sent in advance, and one of us will ask the questions. You can leave questions in Mr. Johnson's office, and there's a bulletin board. Chenice Powell is the CEC Administrative Assistant. Trina asked if we can send the questions with our children and tell them to give it to Mr. Johnson; Eric says yes.
- C.** FACE works with CEC's. The vote is in May. Eric said he does not live in the district; anyone with a child in who attends school in District 4 can be on the District 4 CEC, regardless of where you live. It is an unpaid 2-year voluntary position. Eric said he is the Vice President and Anand Ragunath is the President. Kate asked if a CEC member can advocate on behalf of TAG and Eric said yes, that's part of how the lower yard and such got taken care of. He said he needs to follow up on the draining situation in the lower yard, though. A parent asked if we can put something in writing about this; Rasheedah said Mr. Johnson emailed everything school wide to parents, however, we, The PTA, can get something out, if necessary.

X. Picture Day Retake – Rasheedah said Tuesday, January 29th is the Picture Day retake.

XI. Lost & Found – Rasheedah said we need to start labeling; there are bags and bags of coats and clothes and scarves, etc. After 30 days they get donated.

XII. Adjournment

7:51 pm – Rasheedah Harris 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