

JFK SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL MEETING

November 13, 2019

5:30-6:30 p.m., rm. 101

Attendees:

David Juralewicz, Nichole Barros, Morgan Hayword, Tracy Triplett, Seth Kroll, Meredith Sandiford, Maritza del Rosario, Sarah Horsley, Sara Smith, Jen Douglas, Nadine Desharnais, Dr. Copeland (for part of the meeting)

Translation was provided by Erica from the Boston Interpreters Collective.

Discussion:

Introductions were made.

Presentation and Q/A from Dr. Copeland

Dr. Copeland reported that 378 students are currently enrolled at the JFK. This year the Music Program has keyboards for students to use, through a grant obtained by the Lang Lang Foundation. We have added Art to our curriculum via Ms. Feeny, who teaches in the classroom using an “art cart.” Playworks continues to be an important component of the school with our new coach, Leah Doherty.

She also shared that our students met all but two of our targets on the MCAS last year, which we credit in part to curriculum changes and obtaining sufficient Chrome books to prepare students for the computerized exam. Last year she focused on reducing chronic absenteeism, and is continuing that attendance initiative this year, recently through the October ice-cream social, and a planned movie event in the auditorium. The special events are available to all kids with “strong,” rather than perfect attendance, ideally less than two absences. Parents should make sure to provide a note if their child is absent for health reasons.

Dr. Copeland reported that Superintendent Cassellius will visit the JFK on Thursday, November 21, as part of her tour of all BPS schools, and JFK students will give her a tour of the school.

Finally, Dr. Copeland reported that the JFK website is now live and is fantastic! She thanked Meredith and other parents for making it possible!

Parent Questions for Dr. Copeland

Tracy raised the concern that there is no crosswalk to the school from Wyman Street. Dr. Copeland advised calling 311 and reaching out to Matt O’Malley. She noted that she has previously sought to have a sign posted at the start of Wyman prohibiting through traffic during school dropoff and pickup as the areas is very congested with buses and frustrated drivers, but she has not had success. She suggested that parents might also raise that issue through the same channels as the crosswalk. Krista noted that the Mission Hill School as such a “no through traffic” prohibition.

Sara inquired about the status of petition to add a sixth grade to the JFK. Dr. Copeland said that she is still pushing for this, but that she was not sure that it would happen next year. She is not aware of any other schools, aside from those in East Boston and the McCormack feeder schools that are moving forward, as well as the Manning and Nathan Hale, both of which are in the JFK’s relative neighborhoods,

making our petition a lower priority. Krista noted that since the Hale and Manning are quite small, perhaps we can argue that our neighborhood needs more 6th grade seats. Dr. Copeland noted that Dr. Cassellius appears still to be interested in 6th grade expansions, but she is not sure of the timing and had not seen a set plan for how that process will proceed. Sarah noted that the lack of a 6th grade at the JFK hurts our recruitment, and Dr. Copeland agreed, in that families want to avoid transitions where possible (such as having to leave for a different school for 6th grade before possibly entering an exam school). She also noted that since our budget is based on the numbers enrolled in our school, it is important to have good enrollment. Sarah stated that she had heard at the City Wide Parent Council (CWPC) that the 6th grade expansion plan is on pause. Seth asked whether 6th grade expansion would be something to bring up at Dr. Cassellius's visit to the JFK on November 21. Dr. Copeland said, yes, that she plans to have the students raise that issue with her. Dr. Copeland reported that K0 would not be in the JFK next year because unfortunately the higher grades within the school are not able to meet the special needs of our K0 population. That change could provide more space to accommodate a 6th grade within the school.

Jen asked what Dr. Copeland's vision is for parent/school collaboration. Dr. Copeland stated that she would like to see more parent involvement at the JFK that reflects the diversity of the school. She noted that the Parent Council has tried various strategies to attract a broader segment of the parent population, and that perhaps changing the meeting times and locations would help. In terms of long-term plans at the school, she views replacing the playground as a priority and would welcome Parent Council assistance in that endeavor, through fundraising and reaching out to political representatives. It was noted that the Ohrenberger School recently replaced its playground – at a cost of \$1 million.

Dr. Copeland noted that going forward to continue the JFK's success, there will be a continued focus on data-driven instruction and improving student attendance. She noted that earlier that afternoon, staff had completed a professional development session focused on interim assessment of whether students are gaining the skills and learning that the curriculum is intended to provide.

With regard to attendance, Nadine noted that in previous years parents would get automated calls if their child had not arrived at school, but that those calls did not seem to be occurring anymore. It was noted that Ms. Eunice may have triggered those calls w BPS, and it was requested that Dr. Copeland determine how to transfer that responsibility to another staff person.

Jen noted that she has been exploring information provided from an organization in D.C. called Teaching for Change that provides guidance on promoting parent engagement through the sharing of stories and experience. She provide handouts from Teaching for Change's website (<https://www.teachingforchange.org/parent-organizing/our-approach>). [Those handouts were previously attached to the minutes from our October 10, 2019 meeting.]

Meredith noted that she appreciates the school's "strong attendance" approach to the attendance initiative, as her family experienced numerous unavoidable sick days.

Dr. Copeland noted that she would like to begin regular check-ins with the Parent Council co-chairs after our meetings so that she can timely address any parent concerns raised. Krista noted that the delay in reinstating those had been the need to conduct elections for open positions, which would be held during this meeting.

At this point, Dr. Copeland left the meeting.

Future Meetings

The dates set at our prior meeting for future meetings were relayed:

2018

- Friday, December 13, morning

2019

- Wednesday, January 8, evening
- Friday, February 7, morning
- Wednesday, March 11, evening
- Friday, April 3, morning
- Wednesday, May 6, evening
- Friday, June 5, morning

Elections

Krista briefly described the open positions, which have staggered, two-year terms: Co-Chair, Treasurer (two positions open), Secretary, CWPC Representative, SPED PAC Representative.

Sara and Krista noted that the CWPC provides an opportunity to meet parents from other schools and that the Council has made huge organizational improvements over the last couple of years. It meets on the first Tuesday of each Month at 6 p.m. at the Bolling Green Building.

Nichole noted that she is on the board of the SPEDPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Council) and thus is willing to stay in that position. She noted that it is intended to be the voice of SPED parents to BPS and has helped her immensely with her special education experience in BPS. Meetings are held monthly on the 4th Thursday at the Murphy School in Dorchester and childcare is provided. Each month there is a topic for parents focused on special education issues and an opportunity to talk to the BPS special education staff. In order to serve as a representative, your child needs to have an IEP or 504 plan, however, any parent can attend the meetings.

The following individuals nominated themselves for the open positions. As there was no opponent for any of the open positions, a voice vote was conducted, and each was elected for the respective position:

Co-Chair: Dave Juralewicz

Treasurer: Sara Smith, Krista Magnuson

Secretary: Meredith Sandiford

CWPC: Jen Douglas

SPEDPAC: Nichole Barros

There was a question raised as to whether a parent can serve in two positions. Although it was noted that the JFK Parent Council does not appear to have its own bylaws, newly elected Co-Chair Dave was

able to search on line and determine that it is permissible to have the same parent serve in two positions, if necessary.

It was also noted that the DELAC (District English Learner Advisory Committee) representative position has not been filled at the JFK for the last several years, but also that DELAC does not appear to be active at this time.

Upcoming Events

11/27, early dismissal for Thanksgiving holiday

12/5, school picture day