

PTO Meeting
9 March 2021
via Zoom

I. Welcome and Introductions

A. Samantha Eads, Rachel Voorhies, Samantha Wood, Kerry McGarry, Oniffe Grizzle, Glen Hopkins, Maggie Sher, Brian Boland, Heather Duemling, James Eno, Jen Rhoda, Lauren Rosner, Colette Eno, April Stilwell, Madeline McGowan, Dinorah Sapp, Tiffany Coleman, Shelley Donahue - a quorum is present

B. The February meeting minutes were approved

II. Principal's Report

A. Equity Updates: the UES Equity Team meets every Monday from 4-5. The committee is getting ready to start a book study; one half of the committee is reading *Caste*, the other half is reading *White Rage*

B. Discussion of Equality vs Equity: barriers are different for everyone, and not everyone comes to school on the same footing. This means that the exact same resources cannot be thrown at every kid and everything will suddenly be equal; leaders and stakeholders must account for the history of our country, the past of individuals, the current social climate, etc. when making decisions about all resources. As a school, UES is looking beyond just equality and equity towards achieving justice and liberation for all

C. The committee is also looking to address bias in K-12 literature, an initiative developed by MCCSC. This will be a focus over the next three months. A guide on this topic was recently developed by MCCSC and it timed well with discussions that had already been happening at UES. This initiative focuses on why diversity in children's books is important for all students. The main point is to examine bias in our collections and resources to ensure students are exposed to multiple perspectives when reading books. The committee is looking at how to build a diverse book collection, as well as what should no longer be used in classrooms, what should be tweaked and then continue to be shared in the classrooms, and what should continue to be used as it is

1. Brian Boland expressed concern that the look at bias in literature might provide a sterilized version of literature, and might force feed a particular point of view on our students. He asked how the training would provide someone with the proper knowledge to make these decisions for our students, and expressed concern with the process as a whole. Brian shared his opinion that he takes issue with the idea that a certain number of books in a library should be written by a certain group of people. Brian expressed his opinion that parents and the community should have somehow been involved with this MCCSC policy initiative.

2. Samantha Eads interjected that this could be a topic to discuss in the PTO Equity Subcommittees and Welcome Table groups. She said Brian's concern could be explored, but that the general PTO meeting is not the appropriate place for doing so. Samantha stated that according to its bylaws, PTO does not attempt to influence school policy and encouraged Brian to speak about his concerns at the district level. Samantha assured him that his comments would be a part of the record of the

meeting.

III. Events Committee

A. IB Learner Profiles: Brian Boland and Oniffe Grizzle made videos about IB learner profiles that were shared with all students in January. There were no parent volunteers in February to highlight the IB Learner Profile of Caring, Integrity and Risk Taking will be the profiles in the spotlight in March, and the school is looking for volunteers to make videos to illustrate the application of those traits outside of school. Brian offered to do it again if necessary, and Oniffe offered to tutor anyone new who might be interested in contributing. Heather Duemling offered to make a video, and others are considering.

B. Rachel Voorhies expressed gratitude to Tandhy Simanjuntak and Hannah Carroll and to all who contributed to the faculty and staff appreciation video that was made to show gratitude for all who have gone above and beyond to help make this challenging school year a successful one

IV. Equity Subcommittees

A. Welcome Table: this committee continues to look at this method of balanced conversation and sharing that promotes equity. Samantha Eads stated that she feels the conversations are helping parents at UES feel a sense of community. After spring break, the committee will open the Welcome Table experience up to the UES community as a whole. Brian Boland added that he also feels these exercises have been a good thing for the community and that the structure is beneficial for equitable sharing. Glen Hopkins asked what the next step is to expand these discussions, and Samantha responded that ideally we will broaden the discussions to the larger community via virtual platforms and possibly outdoor events as the weather improves. Glen responded that he is in discussions with Dr. Prinkart about the possibility of in-person gatherings in any form in light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic

B. Handbook: this committee is continuing to work towards building a handbook that will serve as a resource for new families as they enter UES, and it will contain tips, hints, and explanations regarding commonly used expressions, abbreviations, procedures, events, etc. The committee is completing a survey that will be sent to the school community at large after spring break regarding what information should be included in the handbook. This survey will be issued in several languages to ensure that all voices have the opportunity to be heard and represented. Samantha added that some of the survey questions are also being used at Welcome Table to help everyone involved to navigate the school community more smoothly

IV. Treasurer's Report

A. "Passive" fundraising initiatives continue. Postcards detailing these initiatives will be going out to all families, upon PTO approval. PTO approval was granted

B. Money going out of the treasury is still fairly low, as is money coming in, but it continues to be what is expected during such an unusual school year

1. There was concern at the February meeting that the Needs Fund would possibly need to be replenished this month, but it is still fairly robust, and it looks to be stable for another month.

C. Tiffany Coleman reported that a large Dine and Donate event is in the works,

to take place after spring break, and that it will hopefully generate increased revenue for the treasury

D. Extra masks have been purchased and are available at school for students who need one for whatever reason

V. Learning Festival

A. In the past, this event is the second largest fundraiser of the year, and also serves as a celebration of student accomplishments. Its status for this spring is up in the air since we do not know what will be allowed or advisable in regards to outdoor events

1. Maggie Sher provided those attending with the history of the event, and pointed out that it is the first formerly annual event to possibly be canceled two years in a row as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. She stated that it would be nice to have something to do to bring the community together this spring, and to try and preserve at least a semblance of the tradition

VI. Questions, Thoughts, Ideas

A. Maggie Sher suggested more spirit days might brighten the community as a whole

B. Heather Duemling requested messages of encouragement for students who are learning online to boost their spirits as well

VII. Meeting Adjourned

A. The next meeting is scheduled 20 April 2021, via Zoom