

University Elementary Parent Teacher Organization  
General Meeting Minutes - 8/17/21

I. Welcome and Introductions. Invitation to express hope/goal for the year.

Officers: Oniffe Grizzle & Samantha Eads (Co-Presidents), Jen Rhoda (Vice President), Rachel Voorhies (Secretary), Kerry McGarry (Treasurer), Glen Hopkins (Principal).

Attendees: Amna, Laila Aljumah, Michael Baladi, Kristian Cassimire, Calin Cotoi, Sarah Daugherty, Shelly Donahue, Heather Duemling, Krista Freedman, Mandy Grabczak, Patty Harpring, Rebecca Hays, Matthew Josefy, Maryellen May, Margaret Menge, Jody Mitchell, Sarah Mitchell, Nazmun Monsor, Keisha Odom, Kori Renn, Kelly Ridge, Lauren Rosner, Dinorah Sapp, Vivian Schroeder, Stacy Sedory, Maggie Sher, Leah Simoni, April Stillwell, Hopi Stosberg, India Thusi, Danielle Walker, Agnes Weyers, Wendy Westphal, Nichole Williams, \* Baker.

Establishment of Quorum (5 or more voting members present).

II. Review of Meeting agreements

- a. Our goal is to keep the meetings to an hour whenever possible.
- b. If you have spoken on a particular issue, allow space for others to speak so everyone has the opportunity to say what they want on an issue.
- c. Respect others
- d. Set aside judgement
- e. Engage in deep listening

III. Principal's Report-Glen Hopkins

a. IB School

- i. Last year, to build community at UES, we found success with a common school unit. There are 6 lines of inquiry that students go through and in the past, different grade levels, started on different units. We decided to have one common unit to start together and build community. We are keeping this in place this year as well. The central idea is: Communities create unity when using diverse actions and skills collaboratively.
- ii. UES is a community and we want to do the right thing and treat people right. These are Mr. Hopkins go-to questions for students: Did you do the right thing? Did you treat people right?
- iii. Mr. Hopkins reviewed an article said that kids are getting to college unprepared and quitting college because they aren't learning soft skills. UES is helping students develop these soft skills. Examples of these skills include: working on how to take action, how to advocate, be open

mindful, how to be thinkers and communicators, how to be risk takers and balanced in every thing they do.

- iv. He will communicate what the lifeline is for the month and the learner profile so you can have conversations with your kids about this at home.
    - 1. Teachers are currently talking about manners and how different situations call for different behaviors.
  - b. The staff equity team is looking at how to create opportunities for our families to grow in community.
    - i. Mr. Hopkins congratulated PTO for efforts. He and Ms. Odom discussed the PTO's goals and our mission to build community and make the PTO more inclusive.
  - c. Last year, there were 348 students attending school in person and this year, there are 552. It is likely we will have another 30 or more in attendance once IU begins classes.
  - d. Administration and staff are looking at safety procedures and making modifications to accommodate the number of people in the building. Mr. Hopkins emphasized flexibility and problem solving.
  - e. Stated Ms. Odom, our new assistant principal "is knocking it out of the park for our school."
- IV. Committees Updates: anyone interested in joining a committee was asked to share their name and email address in the chat box.
- a. Events Committee- We need a chair for this committee, members and ideas for events this year.
    - i. Teacher appreciation: Amazon Wish List – Krista Freedman offered to put together a survey to ask teachers what they would like. Lauren Rosner also says she has more ideas for teacher wishlist this year.
    - ii. School directory – Rachel Voorhies will organize
    - iii. Global potluck will not take place this year due to covid safety protocols.
  - b. Equity Committee-We need members for this committee
    - i. The Welcome Table- Dinorah Sapp
      - 1. Build community, get to know each other, find common threads and give back to the community. Last year, small group of parents came together on zoom and discussed helping other committees and reaching out to our international families. We will start again and meet as an equity team. If you are curious about the approach, look for more information about The Welcome Table initiative from the William Winter Institute (<https://www.winterinstitute.org/community-building/the-welcome-table/>).
    - ii. Oniffe Grizzle-Welcome table intimate way to get past usual pleasantries with others. Equity committee also started a website with reading materials to supplement IB curriculum. This is a work in progress to be continued this year. Meetings are low stakes and there are usually

multiple meetings per week so you can come when you are available. The equity committee also reached out to the district level and involved Mr. Rafe Hassan, the MCCSC equity and inclusion coordinator.

iii. The Parent Guide-Rachel Voorhies

1. Last year we sent out a survey asking for feedback on what to include in the parent guide. Helpful information for families about the school and the district. We worked on the guidebook over the summer and will have it ready soon. Committee members will continue to update and add to it as needed.
2. If you have suggestions for the guidebook, please email the PTO at [universitypto@outlook.com](mailto:universitypto@outlook.com)

c. Wellness Committee-MaryEllen May

- i. This is a relatively new committee that met 3-4 times last year. The first official meeting is tomorrow at 7:00 on zoom. The committee will be discussing what to do this year.
  1. The committee will look at the physical, mental, social wellbeing of our students. Project ideas include gardens, nutrition, family fitness night, mindfulness, backpack ideas, among others.
  2. The committee will be mindful of self-care as well and alternate who attends PTO meetings and provides the committee updates.

d. Fundraising Committee- We need a chair for this committee as well as members

- i. Hopi Stosberg has chaired this committee in the past and provided a brief overview of the Fall Campaign.
  1. The Fundraising Committee has two primary sources of income: Fall Campaign and an event in the spring.
    - a. Fall Campaign- Rather than selling items as a fundraiser, we send a letter asking for donations and it has worked very well for several years. We modified this last year due to Covid.
  2. Sam Eads pointed out that everything we raise goes to the school. The programs we support financially benefits the teachers and the students.
- ii. 3 new volunteers: Krista Freedman, Jody Mitchell, & Danielle Walker.
- iii. Glen Hopkins offered to send extra fundraising postcards home to families.

V. Treasurer Report- Kerry McGarry

- a. We usually keep \$38,000-40,000 in the PTO account, however, we currently have about \$50,000 because we have \$12,000 saved up for an outdoor classroom that should be built this year.
- b. The budget report shows the allocated money, what we have used and where we earn the money
  - i. Fundraisers, Kroger Rewards, Box tops, Amazon smile and t-shirt sales

- c. This summer we looked at the line items in the budget and noticed some repetitive line items, creating confusion about allocation of funds available to teachers and students. Categories have been condensed for this year's budget. Mrs. McGarry explained each line item in the budget. PTO pays for the K-1 Literacy program, professional development, Classroom supplies (each teacher receives \$150), project fund (pavilion to be built for outdoor classroom space), IXL math program for every student, student needs fund that our social worker uses to help students in need, etc.
  - i. If you have questions about the budget, you may email Kerry at [kmcgarry@mccsc.edu](mailto:kmcgarry@mccsc.edu)
- d. The literacy program is for all kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students (more than 120 kids). 90 % of kindergarten and first grade students begin the school year below grade level in reading. This program provides daily, guided reading groups to assist teachers and kids by working at their instructional level. Through the program 90-95% of these students finish first grade at reading level. Rachel Sheets is a new instructional coordinator for the program. She is a former 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher and will be working with remaining children who aren't proficient yet at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> grade. We were not able to utilize this program last year and it impacted those kids. This year, the program will help the kids that didn't have the program last year or kids who didn't have preschool last year due to covid.
- e. In accordance with the PTO bylaws, the budget must be voted on during this first meeting. Sam Eads opened the floor for questions regarding the budget.
  - i. Hopi Stosberg asked if we have connected with the company regarding the outdoor classroom to make sure the price has not increased since the initial quote?
    - 1. Mr. Hopkins indicated that he has been in contact with Hoosier Hills and \$10,000 will cover the cost of the pavilion. The company staked out the area last week and it will be 40 ft X25ft. Fairview Elementary is next on the list and then UES. Construction for pavilion is expected to begin in October
  - ii. Hopi Stosberg also asked for confirmation that IXL (the math program purchased by PTO) is available for all grades?
    - 1. Kerry stated that it will be for all students and if you go through clever it should still work. It may have expired this week, however, if the budget is approved, Kerry will contact IXL to renew it.
  - iii. During the discussion regarding the budget, some questions were asked in the chat box about the amount provided for teachers.
    - 1. Is \$150 enough for classroom supplies, how are large items provided for teachers?
      - a. Kerry stated that the \$150 is adequate, however, most teachers spend much more than that amount. A parent asked what the average amount teachers spend is. A number of teachers present either laughed or declined to answer, indicating that the amount is higher than \$150.



- i. Mr. Hopkins stated that students will not be counted as tardy if the bus is late and teachers will catch students up on anything missed in class due to late busses. He also stated though that due to morning announcements and beginning of the day procedures, students are not missing exams or instructional time.
- c. When busses are late arriving at the school for pick-up, students remain in their classroom until 4:00 (this is when teacher's contractual day ends) and are then taken to the gym where they are separated by bus number. This is social time, students are not expected to sit quietly. Some kids have brought Uno cards to play while they wait. Masks are worn during this time.
- d. Parents discussed the panic they felt when their children were an hour late getting home and they were unable to get ahold of anyone in the transportation department or school to find out where their child was. Parents recommended that we include in the parent guide a statement that parents can expect significant delays in the first couple of weeks so parents don't fear that something bad has happened to their child. They also asked that this information come from the school at the beginning of the year.
- e. Mr. Hopkins recommended that if families speak on this issue at the board meeting, they utilize a "compliment sandwich." His recommendation is to speak about something positive, then address the issue you are there to discuss and then end on a positive note.
- f. Jen Rhoda publicly recognized Julie, a bus driver who "went above and beyond. She finished her route and then picked up more kids and drove them as well." Julie expresses her many thanks to the parents who organized and donated toward a gift of appreciation.

VIII. Additional questions and ideas

- a. PTO Meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the Month and at this time are held via zoom. It was suggested that we utilize the same link for every meeting rather than a new link each month. Parents also requested that the link, date and time be sent out to families earlier in the month to give parents time to plan for attendance.
- b. Heather Duemling suggested a new committee to help families who are new to Bloomington, new to the school, families in crisis, etc.
  - i. Ms. Odom suggested the name "Community Support Committee." The idea of "Buddy Families" where established families can partner with families new to Bloomington.

Minutes submitted by Rachel Voorhies, 8/22/2021  
Reviewed by Oniffe Grizzle and Sam Eads, 8/23/2021.  
Please direct any edits to [universityPTO@outlook.com](mailto:universityPTO@outlook.com).

Next General PTO Meeting:

Tuesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> at 6p on Zoom. Optional Meet-and-Greet beginning at 5:30.

