

***Penn Alexander School***  
***School Advisory Council (SAC) Meeting Minutes***  
Wednesday, October 18, 2017 3:30-5:00pm

**In Attendance:**

SAC Members: Michael Farrell, Kathleen Moosbrugger, Iliana Pagán, Jessica McCollum, Michelle Papachristou, Bryan Lathrop, Theresa Knight, Jayne Downing, Monica Calkins.

Other Attendees: Mark Bowerman, Ann Kreidle, Amanda Diesel, Jessica Fishman, Casey Whipple and Douglas Butari

**Agenda:**

Agenda Item No	Agenda Item	Time Estimate
1	Open Forum (sign-up required in advance)	30 minutes
2	Voting of Officers	10 minutes
3	Approval of minutes from June 2017 SAC Meeting	5 minutes
4	Principal Report	15 minutes
5	Discussion – Homework Requirements at PAS	25 minutes
6	Discussion of November Meeting Agenda	5 minutes
7	Announcements <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SDP Clearances</li></ul>	1 minute

**Agenda Item#1 – Open Forum**

**Topic: Homework**

Mark Bowerman was first at the opening of the meeting to speak on the issue of homework quantity. He explains that he and fellow parents strongly agree that their children are tired in the evening from too much homework being assigned. He felt that there is a negative judgement being felt on children and too much work inhibits children from their overall learning in enjoying. It has a negative impact on their health and happiness. The opinion was, it disproportionality penalized children. His point is that it doesn't necessarily benefit the child with extra time and cuts into family time which is important thing to do. Their ask is to have the ten minute rule for homework and a limit of 10 mins per grade.

For example:

10 mins = 1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
20 mins = 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
30 mins = 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade

They would like a more flexible schedule for handing in homework. Lastly, if no decision can be agreed upon in this meeting, asking for a group to be banded together between teachers, parents, health association to find a solution in having a better balance of homework for the children at PAS.

Jessica Fishman also discussed about the extra homework issue and is looking for a solution to a policy that meets values. There are concerns that 4-5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are communicating to the children that they

need to get prepared for middle and high school. Through research findings is not consistently helpful with academic performance and test grades.

Exercise, sleep and quality time with friends and family are important and there are negative consequences for having too much homework. Jessica brought handouts with her to share with everyone being:

- Examples of Family Concerns with Homework loads
- Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School: Too much sitting linked to heart disease, diabetes, premature death

### **Agenda Item# 2 - Voting for Officers**

The following SAC Members were voted on to the board:

Sarah Shackley – Secretary  
Jessica McCollum – Chair  
Michelle Papachristou – Vice Chair

### **Agenda Item# 3 - Approval of minutes from June 2017 SAC Meeting**

Approval was given of the June 2017 SAC Meeting

### **Agenda Item# 4 – Principal Report**

Principal Farrell gave his updates on the following:

- i) K-3 Literacy Program
  - M. Trusty is serving as a Literacy Coach for teachers in grades K-3
  - Ms. Downing is serving as our Reading Specialist/Librarian working with students who need additional reading support
  - During the 16-17 school year, PAS saw a 12% increase in students meeting expected growth goal in K-3
- ii) New Staff- Art, 5th grade new teachers & changes, Kindergarten, and ESL
- iii) Meadow Planting- Early Project for Play Space Initiative was a big success
- iv) Core Values & Recognition Program- introduced and alive in our community
- v) Afterschool Clubs- Over 250 students are attending afterschool clubs one or more days per week for clubs, including intramural flag football in the middle school and New Meal Program
- vi) WHYY & Vetri- Two new partners working to enhance our afterschool programming
- vii) Upcoming Events - Science Expo, Kindergarten Literacy Night, Fall Festival, Equity Around the Table Initiative- 4 potlucks over next 4 weeks
- viii) Alumni Association Kick Off- announced on website and will have first annual day of services and reunion on MLK Jr. Day in January
- ix) Strategic Planning Process Kick-Off - More to come, Task Force has been formed with representation from HSA, SAC, staff, and UPenn. Initial phase of process is survey and data collection, big push in November will be surveys collections.

Principal Farrell also gave an update on the current waiting list at PAS, as follows:

### **Current Status of Waiting List for Penn Alexander**

**Waitlist Update (As of 10-17-17)**

Grade	Cohorts	2017-2018 Enrollment	Max. Enrollment	Waitlist November 2016	Waitlist June 2017	Waitlist October 2017
K	4	80	72	2 (-2)	10 (6/4)	13 (4/9)
1	3	72	72	5 (-5)	0	1
2	3	72	72	7 (-2)	0	2
3	3	72	72	3 (-2)	5	7
4	3	72	72	4	1	3
5	3	61	48	5	10	3
6	2	50	48	4	10	6
7	2	48	48	7	8	9
8	2	50	48	6	7	11

In total, there are 13 on the waiting list, 4 were since June and 9 are still on the waiting list and not guaranteed. PAS have taken over 2 dozen students off the waiting list.

The outline will be posted at the end of November, when the lottery registration opens.

**Agenda Item #5 Discussion – Homework Requirements with PAC and SAC Members only**

There is a homework policy already in place at Penn Alexander. As depicted in the image below details the policy handout that were given out in the meeting:

**Penn Alexander Homework Policy**

The purpose of homework is to encourage student self-discipline, independence, and responsibility; increase student achievement; and expand the curriculum. The type of homework assigned is determined by the grade level and teacher, and by the students' needs.

Homework is assigned Monday through Friday. Weekend homework assignments are encouraged in the middle school grades at the Penn Alexander School, and may be assigned in the lower grades as needed. Long term assignments, reading logs, and projects are examples of possible weekend homework.

Homework is expected to be completed on time. Completion of homework assignments will be reflected in students' report card grades. The classroom teacher, on an individual basis, may provide extensions for homework assignments in case of extenuating circumstances.

Penn Alexander School students are expected to read, or be read to, daily in addition to assigned homework. Following is the minimum amount of time students at each grade level should be reading, or be read to, for homework:

- K: 15 minutes
- 1<sup>st</sup>: 15-30 minutes
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: 15-30 minutes
- 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>: 30+ minutes

Issues around the homework were discussed. One parent's concern was with families that are bilingual, being able to have time to speak at home in their own native tongue, for example, if too much time is consumed in doing English homework then there is not enough playtime or family time to have in their own language.

Suggestion of a sub-committee/working group to be set up about how to find a solution for the homework issue. There is a lot of content to research, analyze and discuss. Have a working group to deep dive into the issue and look at quality versus quantity etc. Michael Farrell confirmed already that a 'no homework policy will not apply at Penn Alexander'.

Next steps – choose members for the homework group. SAC members, Alumni students group and parents. Talk with the student council. Principal Farrell mentioned that the alumni group are good to talk with and good to understand the homework history and be a part of the working group.

What is important to articulate is the mission and purpose of the working group. For it to be a 3-month process as a parameter. The group is to come with a suggestion/recommendation to the SAC who take a vote and then that gets levied up to the Board as a policy change to be requested.

Iliana Pagán and Michelle Papachristou have already volunteered for the working group. They have agreed to reach out to Principal Farrell to discuss the setup of the group and who should be involved.

Every SAC meeting going forward there will be a five-minute update from the working group as to what has been discussed.

#### **Agenda Item#6 – November Meeting Agenda**

- Homework discussion update
- Strategic Planning

#### **Agenda Item# 7 - Announcements**

- Halloween Parade on Tuesday, October 31st. Gather at 4pm; start at 4:30pm.
- Spruce Hill Annual Meeting on Tuesday, November 14th at 7:30pm. Will be held in the PAS Cafeteria
- SDP Clearances - If would like to check if your clearance is complete, call or email the PAS main office
- Date of the next SAC meeting is on the morning of Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting Adjourned.