TOPS Site Council Meeting Minutes
4/22/09

Present: Lori Eickelberg, Carla Fetterly, Maureen Germani, Steve Haines, Leslie Hazlewood-Spurr, Dan Hurley, Jeanne Kuban, Joby Moore, Leslie Nilan, Barbara Rockey, Clara Scott, Cliff Shettler, Catherine Staunton, Kristina Stoneberg, Karen Stuhldreher, Kelly Griffin, Susan Welch, Betsy Wells, Janis White, Lawrie Williams

Cliff Shettler chaired the meeting, as chair, Susan Welch was out of town and attending the meeting by phone.

February/March meeting minutes reviewed and approved.

Principal’s Report (Clara Scott):

WASL, WASL, WASL – TOPS is in its second WASL week. The 1st & 2nd grade poetry festival just occurred. The kids memorized poems and were great. Teachers and parents did a wonderful job preparing them. TOPS had students showing art at the Naramore art show at John Stanford Center. Camps are coming up. Dan is preparing lists, supplies, and recruiting chaperones. Given the district’s decision to put TOPS on the later start time (@9:00), staff will talk at their May staff meeting about how early the Middle School will be able to start in the Fall. Buses may not be able to get kids to TOPS in time to start 15 minutes earlier than elementary. This can impact a number of things in the Middle School schedule. Volleyball, Frisbee, and track are all going on now.

Lori Eickelberg reported that the “Writers in the School” reading will be in June at Seattle Public Library. Some middle school students will probably be reading.

Building Leadership Team Report (Jeanne Kuban):

A group of teachers went to Loyal Heights School to work with a “Writers’ Workshop” person from Columbia University. It was a really valuable experience.

Regarding the Safety Committee, our emergency response meeting happened on April 15, but there were only 3 parents attending. A few Eastlake Community Council members came in during the meeting. The presenter, Joanne Jordan was engaging and did a wonderful job. She talked about what parents should do to help the school respond in a disaster, e.g., not tying up phone lines. She is willing to return during and event that draws more parents, e.g., open house/curriculum night. The Safety Committee will keep trying to get better turn-out to talk about emergency response. The district is collecting data from the school about preparedness. Lawrie Williams pointed out that the Center for Children with Special Needs has a toolkit for emergency preparation for people with special needs.

Treasurer’s/ Finance Committee Report (Cliff Shettler):

Timeline for Finance Committee Process:
• May 1, 9:00 p.m.: Due date for budget requests (RFP)
• May 2, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.: Finance Committee will meet in the a.m. to review requests
• May 3 - May 12: Any needed follow-up by Finance Committee
• May 13: 5:00-7:00 p.m.: Present preliminary budget to Site Council
• May 27: If needed, special meeting to complete discussion of budget and RFPs
• June 10: Friends of TOPS will convene at the Site Council meeting to approve budget
The Finance Committee members are Carla Fetterly, Johnny Calcagno, Marlies van Bergeijk, Maggie MacDonald, Maureen Germani, and Jeanne Kuban. Cliff will send electronic copies of RFPs to the webmaster so that they are all online. For the RFPs that are funded, they can be viewed by the TOPS community next year. Application forms are on the website, and Cliff has a list of the current budget and project managers. Folks can use that as a guidepost for what budget requests you should do, pass along to someone else, or decide not to submit this year. A question was raised about spending of scholarship funds designated last year for this year and how to do the RFP this year. Any requests to use scholarship funds should go to Jeanne Kuban, the project manager for the scholarship fund.

Task Force Updates:
Kindergarten/Pay for K Task Force: (Kelly Griffin)

This group (names were missed by the secretary) was formed to address potential hardship for families entering TOPS next year (2009-2010), given the school’s decision to go to a “Pay for K” system, in which families pay $200 per month to attend all day kindergarten. The goal of the group was to propose short term solutions and determine how to help incoming families understand how this will work

Kelly’s Presentation:
Pay for K Task Force Assumptions

- Social justice mission drives decisions
- PEAK stays but is not included in costs for purposes of discussion
- $40,000 cost for .4 Kindergarten teacher
  - 1/3 of 50 families won’t be able to pay
  - Cost for remaining 33 families would total $121/month

Short Term Solutions
- Short term solution is for incoming families who hadn’t been planning on Pay for K
- For 2009-2010 families pay for K but costs are subsidized by FoT.
- Auction – raise paddle to bridge gap

Long Term Solutions
- Pay for K until full day K funded by state
  - future families have sufficient warning and can be prepared
  - Pay for K is eliminated once funding comes through
- Pay what you can
  - Some pay less than target
  - Some pay more than target to create scholarship fund
- $20-$40 month/family across whole TOPS community
  - 500 families instead of 50
  - potential downside is reduced appetite for fundraising
  - collection and distribution of funds a potential logistical nightmare
- FoT subsidizes families who can’t pay for K
- Grants - we shouldn’t have to fundraise for kindergarten if we want a diverse population

Survey Questions
- Would you be willing to contribute $

Next Steps
- Site Council
- Coordinate with PEAK task force
- Forward questions to Survey group
• Start working on long term plan

Pay for K other information

• Average pay for K fee for five cluster + alternative schools 2008-2009 -$78.25

At this point in Kelly’s presentation, a discussion began among Site Council members, some parts of which were missed by the secretary:

• Lori: The $78.25 figure may be misleading, because other schools with similar Free Lunch profile as TOPS are paying $200. Our diversity comes from the south end where they don’t have to pay anything.

• Clara: People can choose to go to schools where all day kindergarten is free.

• Joby: Some parents pay less for PEAK.

• Lori: – (trying to review the history of TOPS kindergarten allocation) In the old days there was a 1.5 K teacher at TOPS with .5 of that paid for by parents. Eventually (1996) TOPS got a 1.5 allocation and parents paid for other .5. As more and more people wanted to go to full day, there was a lottery to decide who got full day. In 2001 I 728, we stopped Pay for K, then able to pay for 2 full time and reduce 1st grade class size. Maintained PEAK and parents paid. Now, have lost I-728 money. Do not have money for .4 of the kindergarten FTE.

• Clara: The plan for $200 a month takes into account that there are families that cannot pay. The school has to have guaranteed funds to pay the teachers throughout the year. The administration set it at a rate that pays for the .4 salary/sub-pay, etc. and counts on some people who cannot pay and people in the grey area who might be able to pay some but not all. $200 takes all of that into consideration. With 50 families, 30 of those families are assumed to be able to pay. Free lunch and grey area are the other 20 families. This provides a $20,000 cushion.

• Susan: Families need to understand where the extra money will be spent.

• Clara: In April of each year, administration will review revenues and expenses and send a letter to the parents. If sufficient funds have been collected, parents will not have to pay for May and June. This makes sure the financial obligation is met.

• Leslie: – This is like what is done with field trip and camp funds.

• Dan: Concerned about the bigger picture. There may be a number of families who will not choose TOPS and how that will change the economic diversity of the school?

• Clara: We always say that no one is turned away. If a parent is sitting out there now, they can come in door in September.

• Karen: Do they have to qualify for free lunch?

• Clara: No. We know which people can’t pay and have not charged people for PEAK.

• Dan: Psychologically this may make parents less likely to choose TOPS.

• Clara: People choose TOPS anyway and come in and say “this is what we can pay.” We created the diversity through other means. We don’t expect this will impact diversity.

• Barbara: A lot happens in people’s lives between when they register and the Fall. A lot of low income families won’t take a scholarship. We can extend ourselves as a community, but we can’t know what families’ situation is. Also need to look at what the whole community wants. Focusing only on Pay for K misses the needs of the whole community.

• Lori. Every school should cut out Pay for K and that would change things.

• Cliff: The budget is down $22,000 because Site Council’s commitment to the building budget is additional. Raise-the-paddle will bring in about that amount, so if FoT is to support Pay of K or Peak, it will lose something else.

• Lori: Asks whether the other options for raise-the-paddle were part of vote?

• Susan: There was an email discussion and a decision to focus the email vote that was taken on kindergarten funding.
Kristina, Leslie N., and Lori: All speak to not having had time to check with other staff before email vote about raise the paddle.

Some parent Site Council members indicate not fully understanding the situation prior to voting

Betsy moves to nullify the prior email vote on raise-the-paddle and take a new vote that includes other options in addition to kindergarten funding. Motion seconded and approved to send out a list of items and ask for a vote by 9:00 a.m. April 24.

Review of list of ideas from February 23 email. Eliminated items not feasible or likely to be popular at auction. Original list below.

1) Outdoor Covered Play Area
2) Teachers’ Excellence Fund
3) Attack the Gap
4) Sister School
5) Flat Screen TV at front of school to announce events
6) Supplemental staff for kindergarten, special needs...
7) Sustainability Project – e.g. rain barrels, solar panels
8) Macintosh Computer Lab (perhaps coupled with donations from Mac)
9) Reseeding Rogers’ Playfield
10) Middle School Sound System
11) Professional Development training re: inclusion and school community ‘social justice’ awareness.
12) Sharing special auction item proceeds with a non-profit such as Big Brother, Big Sister

Text of 4/22 email for new vote:

The Site Council voted to nullify our previous vote for the Raise the Paddle item because a number of members present at the meeting did not think they had sufficient understanding of the issues nor time to solicit input from their constituents (other teachers and parents). Please vote on one of the following three items by 9:00 Friday morning for the Raise the Paddle Special Auction item after soliciting input from your constituency. Send your vote to Betsy Wells by replying to this email. Thank you.

Special Items List:

2) Teachers’ Excellence Fund to include professional development training on inclusion and social justice
   o This item has a flexible budget, because it would be used to pay for training for either groups of teachers or individual teachers and would be used until it runs out.

3) Attack the Friends of TOPS budget gap
   o The background for this item is as follows: Friends of TOPS budget expects a deficit because $22,000 not committed to the building budget in previous years has been committed to funding the school's shortfall for next year and because Friends of TOPS funds are earning less interest. The money raised under this item would be subject to Finance Committee and Site Council processes by which funding proposals are submitted and approved. A funding proposal supportive of Kindergarten, such as a PEAK proposal would be considered along with all other Friends of TOPS budget proposals for next year, and the "Raise the Paddle" item would hopefully bring the total available funds to somewhere near what they have been this year.

8) Replacing the MAC lab with a PC lab
   o There is a budget proposal available for this item.

The final tally of the emailed vote was 11 for “Attack the Gap” and 3 for the PC lab.
Include Susan’s letter to Clara regarding Pay for K.