

Parent Advisory Council
Minutes
September 22, 2005

David Kern called the meeting to order. He distributed updated rosters and handouts on the Parent Advisory Council and Cluster Parent Groups. Everyone introduced themselves. David asked for any additions or changes to the agenda. Antioch's concerns were added to agenda item #5; item #10 was combined with item #4; review of a draft of a letter to the School Board was added between items #5 and #6.

Woody McMillan spoke to the group about fundraising opportunities available for schools. He said his office receives hundreds of requests from people who want to distribute their materials in schools. His office screens these requests. They are developing guidelines on what is permissible for distribution in schools. He presented two ideas that his office deems appropriate. Hecht's has a program where they sell \$5 coupons with all proceeds going to the PTO/A. Representatives from Barnes and Nobles spoke to us about their "Back the Stack" program. In this program, librarians submit lists of their most wanted titles for a Spring Book Drive. Barnes and Nobles asks every customer for a month if they want to buy one of the books for a particular school. Metro received 900 books last year from this program. They also run a Book Fair in the fall during which customers can designate that a portion of their purchase go to a school of their choice. Barnes and Nobles' goal is for Tennessee public school libraries to be in the top 10 by 2010 of items per enrollee under age 10. For more information on the program, go to backthestack.org. Individual schools can schedule their own book fairs at other times of the year. They also allow schools to set up holiday gift wrapping stations at their stores as a fundraiser. Space and materials are provided and the school keeps the tips. The Barnes and Nobles representative passed out brochures and will e-mail a copy to David to distribute to us.

Karen Johnson, Antioch cluster, described the serious overcrowding crisis in her cluster. Antioch High School has 25 portables. Every school in the cluster has multiple portables. Half the day at the high school is spent dealing with issues related to the crowded cafeteria. There is not enough restroom capacity. They need options to bring relief before the new high school is built. There are safety issues. Everyone has to juggle so much just to get through the day that learning is compromised. There is no slowing down of new housing being built in the area. Dr. Garcia said they moved 400-500 students to McGavock and moved Una Elementary to another cluster. They built Edison quickly. They moved 5th graders from middle schools to Lakeview Elementary. Another middle and elementary school will open next year. A long-term solution is for the Council to have builders pay some type of fee to build schools or donate land for schools before they build more housing. Right now the infrastructure is too small for Antioch High School which was built for 1800 students. We are a year behind on acquiring the land for a new high school, but they are bringing the purchase of 50 acres to the Board next week. Right now we don't have the money to build the new school. We are hoping the Council will approve \$37 million needed next year. The Board decided not to do some other capital projects because they may need the money for the new high school if the Council does not approve enough money. We are engaging some experts to look at rezoning the district to provide some balance. Dr. Garcia acknowledged that redistricting is problematic even though some schools have excess capacity. Karen asked for ideas from the PAC. Options discussed included: 4-track year-round calendar,

annex campus with one grade split off, morning/afternoon tracks. All these have been considered and none are desirable. The public needs to pressure the Council to deal with this issue. David encouraged the Antioch representatives to get the media involved. Everyone was asked to e-mail ideas to the Antioch representatives.

Karen asked that we go ahead and discuss item #12 (condition of portables) since it is part of the Antioch overcrowding problem. Many are leaking and will cause mold problems. She asked if they could be maintained better. Dr. Garcia will ask Mr. Edgens for a report and he will respond to David. When problems like this arise, representatives can e-mail Dr. Garcia directly; you don't have to wait for a meeting. If the issue is city-wide, contact David who will contact Dr. Garcia. If it is particular to your school/cluster, contact Dr. Garcia directly. The representative from Goodlettsville Middle said they need 3 portables.

Dr. Garcia reported that we have enrolled 337 Katrina evacuees in 79 schools. Counselors and social workers have been working with the refugee centers. We have been told that 1000 people from Houston will come to Nashville. Many schools have raised funds and gathered food for evacuees.

Dr. Garcia gave a budget update. He said this year is set. Reserves are at the 3% state-required minimum. They have a soft hiring freeze which means they don't automatically replace people when someone leaves. It is too early to know about next year's budget. Unless the mayor or the state comes up with more money, they will be \$27-28 million short. Mayor has said to wait and see what happens. The Board is quite concerned. We will probably have to start by cutting 400 positions and may close some schools. We need to decide by December or January but won't know the exact amount of money available by then so it is problematic. Dr. Garcia was asked whether the district could take money from the sale of a school to use for something else. He said there is a process for declaring school property surplus and then getting permission from Metro to sell it. Closing schools is not part of our culture and small schools are desirable. Steve Glover reported that he was told in a meeting with the Mayor that the Council will not approve a property tax increase next year.

The Board is trying to make budget decisions by December 10 so families will know what to expect. Elizabeth Knox and David Kern have drafted a letter asking them to make a list of cuts, ask the Council, Mayor and other stakeholders (Chamber of Commerce, MNEA) to look at the list and sign off on it or suggest different cuts before cuts are finalized. The idea is for the city to see what the Board must do to provide a balanced budget. Everyone needs to look at the letter and get back to David and Elizabeth with changes. A discussion ensued about whether the letter is a good idea. We were asked to review the letter over the next 2 weeks. We will vote on the letter at the next meeting. Dr. Garcia suggested that we express our concerns to the Board and invite them to one of our meetings to discuss cuts.

Dr. Garcia reported that his staff is in the process of redoing their Strategic Plan. The 5-year Strategic Plan will drive budget discussions. They want the new Strategic Plan in place by January.

The Food Director was unable to attend our September or October meeting so he is on the agenda for November. The Food Advisory Committee suggested that we all eat some school meals between now and then.

In response to a question about comparison data for our schools, Dr. Garcia suggested that he could bring a different set of comparison data each month. David asked that we each send him our top 10 data items we would like to have on the schools. Woody McMillan passed out the new Report Home which has more information than it has had in previous years. Dr. Garcia distributed school rankings on various tests. He went over some of them and pointed to the success of Buena Vista, a high poverty school. He said that the new web site will go live in a week or two. Parents will be looking at it in the next week to review it before it goes live.

The PAC will have a linkage session with the Board on September 27 at 5:00 about End Results for Children. David explained that we could all go or we could appoint a committee. Ten said they could attend. It would be best to have every cluster represented, and he asked that each pick a representative. Anyone who wants to come may sit in the back and not speak. Our job is to express the parents' perspective to the Board. End Results refer to what children are supposed to know when they graduate. You can go to mnps.org to review End Results for Children. Everyone may send ideas about this and other items they want to discuss with the Board to the group via e-mail. Those going will hold a meeting Monday, September 26, at 6:30.

The Hillwood cluster had a middle schools fair on Tuesday, September 20. 80 people came to learn about the cluster's three middle schools. Parents organized the event which was held at Brookmeade Elementary School. They ran an ad in the Westview newspaper to publicize it. The Antioch cluster offered free clothing to people at a clothes closet at Apollo Middle School. The Overton cluster has a school supply closet at Croft Middle School where supplies are available to students who need them. One of the Stratford cluster representatives pointed out that 5 of the top 10 schools on the No Child Left Behind list are small schools. Dr. Garcia said it is easiest to make gains in small school and one of the things that attracted him to Nashville was the number of small schools.

Dr. Garcia said his biggest concern right now is making sure our middle schools are prepared for higher performing students coming from our elementary schools where 90% of third graders are now reading on grade level. A Hunters Lane cluster representative asked about bus safety issues and asked if the director of transportation could come to the next meeting. A Maplewood cluster representative asked about the policy on homework for suspended students. Dr. Garcia said to discuss it with the principal. A request was made to invite the head of athletics to our October meeting.

Next meeting – October 27

Minutes respectfully submitted by Sally Goodrich

September 26, 2005