

Woodrow Wilson Senior High School, Washington, D.C.

PTSA General Meeting

January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008

7:00 p.m.

Held at the Library of Woodrow Wilson High School

Executive Board Members present:

Columbus Spruell, Co-President

Mary Giffin, Co-President

Jude Landis, Co-Treasurer

Katherine Abraham, Co-Treasurer

Susan Carter, VP for Membership

Ellen Leander, Recording Secretary

Beth Perry, Outreach VP

### ***1) Columbus and Mary opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m.***

Columbus and Mary welcomed all. Anyone who needed Spanish language translation was asked to identify themselves.

Columbus reported on the Principal Selection Process. Resumes of principal candidates had been received.

Columbus: The Saturday Academy, initiated to help students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade catch up on math they missed because there was no teacher, is coming to a close.

### ***2) Principal's Report***

Mr. Jonathan Shea and Ms. Andrea Thompson give the Principal's report in Principal Williams' absence.

Mr. Shea: Report cards will be out in two plus weeks. The advisory ends on Friday.

Jack Kozcela: The Wilson pool will be ready in 2009.

The WMC (Wilson Management Corporation) is working on feasibility to hire architects for school reconstruction. We are looking for volunteers.

Ms. Thompson: The Science Fair will be held here in the library. Abstracts of the science fair boards will be reviewed by teachers before the fair.

The Health Fair is coming up. It will be sponsored by the NIH and the Red Cross.

The students in the Academy of Finance and in SciMaTech need opportunities to work. They

need internships. Please contact me if you know of any.

### *3) Phonathon Announcement:*

Mike Zeller, Phonathon Co-Chair: We have already raised money through the pre-phonathon. We have raised a quarter to a third of the money we expected already. The phonathon gives all Wilson families a chance to participate. We send letters to those who do not answer the phone. Phonathon participation is easy. Please help. It is important that we raise the money. This is Wilson's biggest fund raiser. See the December PTSA Newsletter for contact information. We need 60 volunteers to make the calls. The dates are Sunday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Monday, February 4<sup>th</sup>, and Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. The location of the calling center is on Connecticut Avenue.

Columbus: This year, we will take credit cards.

### *4) Report on Wilson Think Tank Process and Restructuring*

Mary Froning: I am the chair of the Local School Restructuring Team. This year, we really have restructuring.

The green handout shows what we have been doing toward the "No Child Left Behind" mandated restructuring.

We divided into three groups. These are the three categories we are going to form our proposal around.

We are now about to put the ideas all together.

Parent: What are the reasons Wilson did not meet AYP (Annual Yearly Progress under the "No Child" law)? What made it necessary for restructuring?

Mary: Each year we failed for different reasons. We failed at attendance once, and another year with economically disadvantaged. We failed each time because of sub-groups.

We are working hard to meet AYP this year in terms of attendance.

We have to review discipline, hallway activity during class time, etc.

We have to make our proposal comprehensive to make an overhaul.

Parent: Is the plan going to target those most in need, based on which sub-groups were left behind? How will we address Hispanic reading, for example.

Mary Froning: We are trying to be responsive to what the school system wants. The plan has to be transformational.

Parent: There was a focus three years ago to move toward autonomy.

Mary Froning: We have to have leadership to gain autonomy. Chancellor Rhee said she will consider autonomy when Wilson is ready. Autonomy is not part of the restructuring proposal. One recommendation is the academy model. There are 636 students not in an academy (small learning environment); their GPA is 1.56. Students in the academies have GPAs of 2.5 and above. (Note: to get into an academy, you must meet certain application standards, including certain GPA; thus, the students in the academies are likely to have higher GPAs.)

70-90 students from the senior class did not graduate.

Another problem is the 18 year old age-out.

GED option should be available.

All 16 year olds must be in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or above, according to DCPS rules.

What happened to the kids who did not graduate?

Specialized involvement is important in academies.

Team teaching in 9<sup>th</sup> grade is working; we are suggesting it for 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

We are suggesting summer school for students who are struggling.

The goal is to teach kids to be successful high school students.

We want to increase attendance, reduce tardiness.

Mary Ball is an ESL teacher here at Wilson; she can answer questions about teaching and learning.

The 16 year old 9<sup>th</sup> grader is new to Wilson; we did not know that would happen. It is a DCPS policy.

Mary Ball: We got caught off guard, we were not prepared to have 16 and 17 year olds as ninth graders.

We do not have the answers, but we have ideas.

We want to be able to identify the children who are lagging in the spring of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, before they come to Wilson, so we can set up programs for the lagging students.

1) We need 8<sup>th</sup> grade information for each student.

2) We need to set up reading and math help for the students who are lagging.

Parent: Do the students who are 17 year old 9<sup>th</sup> graders, do they have IAP? Maybe they are special ed?

Mary Froning: I do not know whether some of the kids could be identified as special ed.

Parent: How do we provide emotional support for the students who lag behind.

Mary Froning: Getting the GED will offer other possibilities to give them a chance to move forward. Where do they go if they just do not graduate without the GED?

Mary Ball: There is a lot still to be discussed.

Parent: Regarding the meeting with the Chancellor, does the Chancellor have any specific ideas

about restructuring.

Mary Froning: All the data from the restructuring process and site visit and review will go to an outside consultant, and Wilson will have to address the points made by the consultant. The maChancellor will look at what Wilson presents, but she will make up her own mind.

Parent: Will Wilson get the resources it needs to make the changes? If Wilson says we need money for A, B, and C, will we get money for A, B, and C?

Mary Froning: We may have to cut some courses or administrative staff to address the problems. Right now we do not have enough faculty to address remedial issues.

Parent: Who else is restructuring? Are there funds for all the schools that are restructuring?

Margot Berkey: There are many schools in restructuring. All the comprehensive high schools in DC are in restructuring. Some charter schools. Any money to fix problems would have to be shared among all the schools.

Parent: These are ideas for improving what we do. Will anyone be looking at the management structure of the school?

Mary Froning: We do not have a permanent principal/ The new principal will be a transformation principal.

Parent: Will the extra money go toward changing the management structure?

Mary Froning: "No Child Left Behind" suggests there should be a management change. We have to adjust our request to fir what Ms, Rhee will listen to.

Parent: A participant in the restructuring process said we have to have the management ready for change.

Parent: We need to address the issues on which Wilson will be evaluated.

Jonathan Shea (Wilson director of student service and guidance): We did not get quality review questions until we had already started the restructuring process.

Mary Froning: Thinking takes a long time. Organizing will be faster. We will try to make sure everyone has input in the proposal.

Parent: Will we do a mass mailing? Or a robocall (automated phone message)? How will parents get access?

Mary Froning: The PTSA will help get information out to all.

Beth Perry: Because of the Jacks' kids murder by their mother, there is a new look at the social safety net, and we are all examining the safety net.

Mary Froning: We are "In Loco Parentis" while the kids are here.

Parent: We need to get the point of coming up with a restructuring plan, we need a proposal. It is taking us a really long time, we had three years to start but we did not do it until now. A compact time to do evaluation and governance change.

Mary Froning: We are not an overall failing school, we are a special case; the problem is a few cells.

Parent: Thinking about our position, finally we are addressing the problems Wilson has had for many years. We are suffering from years of the same problems. Finally we are addressing these.

Mary Froning: Crisis creates opportunities.

Parent: What would have to change about the academies if all the students are in academies?

Mary Ball: Every child would be in an academy, we would add academies like Peace or Vocational.

Mary Froning: We would need to add the remedial component to the academies because they would serve all the kids. Even the remedial ones.

Parent: We have to take care of the children, offer them opportunities.

Mary Froning: Safe and effective learning environments, are there any questions about this?

Parent: The environment will not be safe without fixing the education.

Beth Perry: Discipline, rules and regulations, and consequences. What are the supports? Sometimes, when the kids get in trouble, there's something else going on. Community organizations, use of detention is also important, the counselor can talk to the kid and see what is going on.

When the student enters the school, they should know they are entering a community. How to address the environment of disrespect?

Mary Froning: We have not had a strong principal regarding safe and effective learning environments.

There has not been a referral for truancy from our school for years, but we certainly have had kids who have missed many days.

Beth: The kids have to know it is fair.

Parent: We have to empower the kids to be involved.

Mary Froning: The site team is going to meet with students.

Parent: Teachers were enthusiastic about programs like peer mediation before. There was enthusiasm during the time of Principal Bonner. Peer mediation was one. The principal at that time followed through to make a safe and effective learning environment.

Columbus: We need to bring services in to help the kids. Social services. There is a lack of respect for the students by the teachers, and even for other students. We do some things best, but we need to address best practices at other schools. If we do make a change in safe and effective schools, we need to follow through.

Mary Froning: Accountability. We have to have accountability. The students need to trust the administrators. The students have to know they are part of the process. They have to be empowered.

Parent: The school needs to operate such that your opinion counts even if you are a student. You should not be torn down just because you do not like someone else.

Parent: The kids do not know about restructuring.

Jude Landis: Maybe we need a robocall about it, to announce when the meetings are.

Mary Ball: Home room teachers could be asked for student input, and be told who to turn to.

Mary Froning: Mary Giffin, will you want to talk about parent and community involvement now?

Mary Giffin: Let's talk about next steps.

Margot Barco: What are the kids going to add, if they do not understand restructuring?

Parent: The kids do not need a whole lot of background on restructuring to answer the question: "What would make your school better?"

Parent: Students have the right to know about restructuring.

Columbus: This is about the kids. We need to get some of them to participate.

Parent: All the kids think that restructuring will require them to wear a uniform to school.

Parent: A uniform is not a bad idea. There should be a dress code.

Mary Giffin: Next steps: Either through robocall, list-serv, newsletter, however we can, we will add new information about restructuring and offer comments.

If you would like to participate, it is not too late.

The restructuring team is ready for new energy.

Mary Froning: Once we get all input from all people, we have only a week from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January (date of the site visit) and then the independent consultant will have a week to respond.

### *6) Meeting Adjourned.*

Sarah Whitener: On Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, the PTSA meeting will cover AP and honors classes. We will talk about what is involved, and what are the prerequisites. There may even be an AP Fair.

We are trying to increase participation in the AP program.

Our College Board coach will help set up AP night.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Ellen Leander

Wilson High PTSA Recording Secretary