

Woodrow Wilson High School, Washington, D.C.  
PTSA Meeting  
February 13, 2008  
7:00 p.m.  
Held in the Wilson High School Library

Columbus Spruell, Co-President  
Mary Giffin, Co-President

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

**Principal's report**

Columbus and Mary opened the meeting. Principal Williams was introduced.

Principal Williams: "You just can't hide that Tiger pride." Good evening. We have job openings at Wilson High. We need to fill positions for music teacher, librarian, special ed, and ESL teacher. Please tell any one who may be interested to apply for these positions.

The e-mail addresses for the teachers and staff have changed. They all end in "dc.gov" now. Please see the hand-out for all the e-mail addresses of teachers and staff at Wilson.

**Mr. Shea's report**

Mr. Shea told us about a new initiative.

Mr. Jonathan Shea: "Reading 180" is the name of the new initiative. The program will pull students out of an elective or a class they are failing and give them an extra period of reading.

We are working on course selection for next year. With the rising 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, we are making 4 or 3 year plans. At the end of April or the beginning of May, they will select classes. Each student will have - we hope, and we have not done this before - a schedule for the next school year in their hands by the end of the current school year.

**Principal's report continued**

Principal Williams: Starting 2/19, students who do not have their ID will be charged \$5.00 for its replacement.

**Student Government report**

Angelica Gregory, student body president: Every third Saturday of the month, at SOME (So Others Might Eat) there will be an opportunity for Wilson students to volunteer and get community service hours. You have to be there at 6 a.m. Students and parents can come. See me

or Ms. Gibson to sign up.

Student Government is having a spring dance. 10<sup>th</sup> graders with good attendance at DCBAS and DCCAS will get in free. The dance is a fund raiser for the senior class and the athletic department.

## **WMC report**

Mr. Howe, of the Wilson Management Corporation: We have hired Grimm+Parker Architects, <http://www.gparch.com/index.php>, for the renovation of Wilson. They have done Washington Lee High School, and many other schools. We have a 72 year old building, we are excited about the process of renovation.

Currently, we are repairing plaster, 12,000 square feet , of broken plaster. We will repaint it after it is repaired.

We have replaced all the security doors, the hardware is in, the access for students will be through front lower doors only.

Goal: Air conditioners in every classroom. The wiring survey has been done and there are no wiring issues to prevent there being air conditioners.

WMC has handled 45 repair projects. We began with 4 and 5 year old work orders. There are only 8 projects still open.

A week from now will be the groundbreaking for the new pool. The swimming pool may open in 2009.

## **Principal Search**

Columbus: Mary and I are on the committee to select the new principal. We were able to publish new job ads for the position in the New York Times and elsewhere.

We have met with a point person for Chancellor Michelle Rhee. His name is John Davis.

We have looked at many resumes, and have identified 45 that we think are of interest.

DCPS does the first step of screening the candidates, then the resumes are sent to us.

We have identified 6 strong candidates that have the qualities we are looking for.

We also have the option of targeting principals at other schools.

The committee got together and developed new questions for the principal interviews.

Mary: If you have been familiar with principal selection before, the system is different now. DCPS is more open.

We get to look at the resumes, not just the ones the school system wants us to see.

We have been talking to DCPS about how to attract good candidates, such through salary or contract.

We will get to ask follow-up questions in the interview. Before, we had to ask the same questions of each interviewee, and not ask follow-up questions.

Are there any questions about the process of principal search? We will now answer questions.

Parent: How are you proceeding with the principal search in light of restructuring?

Chuck Samuels, LSRT: The new principal will have more authority.

But, one reason we might not be getting resumes of the caliber we want is because prospective candidates hesitate to apply due to restructuring.

There have been no “knock your socks off” resumes. This could be because of uncertainty.

AYP restructuring allows a private company to take over, although it is unlikely this will happen.

Parent: What are the qualities you are looking for in a candidate? What is in the advertisement.

Mary: We did an advertisement but did not get the response we hoped for. We have to do more footwork. We need to find connections within our community.

Columbus: We have not found strong candidates.

Parent: Do you have salary information?

Mary: We are just beginning to look at it. There are issues we are trying to raise. We need to be competitive salary-wise.

Columbus: We have candidates in mind, but it is difficult for the potential candidates to commit.

Parent: What do you know from the resumes of the candidates’ management styles, experience, and performance? Seeing resumes does not show you the real qualifications.

Mary: Some resumes are detailed, others less so. John Davis, our contact in DCPS, does due diligence.

DCPS does background checks, then two sets of internal interviews before they can be interviewed by Chancellor Michelle Rhee.

Columbus: I am looking for a candidate with high school experience in a high school of over 1,000 students. You might have an assistant principal from a junior high, but we need the high school experience.

I am looking for an integrator.

The one question I would ask is how does the student feel at the end of the school day?

Modernization is also in the school’s future. The new principal will have to work with and around that.

The new principal must work with the teachers’ union, and with restructuring.

We are delivering a service to the students here.

Chuck Samuels, LSRT: Salary might be an issue. We are not getting resumes from assistant principals from Montgomery County, or principals from smaller schools.

We are looking for someone who can handle diversity and thrive on modernization and reconstruction.

Parent: Is the salary competitive?

Mary: We are told the salary is not competitive.

Parent: How many DCPS high school principal positions are open?

Mary: There are many positions open in DCPS but we are not sure how that affects us.

Parent: Maybe part of the problem is the guidance department. There is no one there to build relationships with kids in trouble.

Parent: Have you thought of seeking retired military for the principal job?

Parent: The largest portion of military operations in peacetime is training.

Parent: Can we talk about salary?

Mary: We have not seen candidates we want to interview.

Parent: If the Chancellor is worried about attracting competitive candidates, maybe she should look at salary.

Parent: Maybe we should look at the Montgomery County assistant principals who are about to retire.

Susan Carter, PTSA: We need to use the word accountability.

Parent: In evaluating the candidates, is there a question about "What is your process of holding people accountable?"

Susan: Maybe we should ask the person should be able to work on a budget.

Mary: The list of questions for the principal candidates we handed out is for review only, it is not to be taken home.

Beth Perry, PTSA: I would suggest a question about passion, do they see the students as a resource?

Mary: Do they really believe that every student can achieve?

Parent: We need to ask what they learned from their mistakes.

Parent: At Deal, during the principal selection process, we asked scenario questions. We said,

here is the scenario of a busy day. We wanted to see how they would handle the scenario.

Parent: Maybe it is not a good idea to ask open ended questions.

Parent: There needs to be a racial and cultural sensitivity question.

Parent: What is your time frame for asking questions. There are a lot of questions here.

Mary: How long should a person be grilled in an interview.

Parent: Is there a time limit for the interview?

Mary: We are still discussing it.

Parent: Sometimes teachers are masters of deception. They behave differently when observed. We need feedback from students about teacher behavior in the classroom.

Parent: I am new. I just moved here.

An hour and a half interview is for when you have your top two or so candidates. That's when you ask the questions.

Chuck Samuels, LSRT: We do not know if we will get to conduct a second interview.

Parent: We need to know how the principal candidate will represent Wilson to downtown, how will they fight for money and resources for the school.

Parent: How about phone interviewing?

Mary: We will take one more question. Our contact information is on the [www.wilsonhs.org](http://www.wilsonhs.org) web site. Please contact us.

Mary: I will collect the questions sheets now.

### **Restructuring Update and LSRT Report**

Mary Froning, LSRT: If we let the new principal pick their new administrative team, for example, this restructuring will be a plus.

As far as the restructuring proposal, we have the parent part done, and the school climate part is underway, but the teaching and learning section of the proposal is in the hands of the Wilson staff.

There is a title of a class for Wilson students called "Office Assistant." The Office Assistant position has been abused. Now the "Office Assistant" can count as a class. We would change that to community service hours, so the student could get community service hours for being an office assistant but not class credit.

The title of Lab Assistant is also under review.

There is another option for Teacher Assistant. The Teacher Assistant could grade papers. If they are in high level classes, they could help the kids in the entry level classes.

Parent: What are the options for vocational classes?

Mary Froning, LSRT: Office Assistant positions have masked the need for vocational classes. The sign up for next year's classes is March 1<sup>st</sup> so we had to make the decision now.

Chuck Samuels, LSRT: The office assistant position shows we need more faculty. There are new classes and faculty being added.

Mary Froning, LSRT: We have to add credit classes, we need to be careful because we have to look at under-enrolled classes.

We wrote a letter to the Chancellor stating that we did have equalization. Chancellor Rhee then looked at our special ed and ELL, and we are getting more aides and teachers. We also got approved to hire an 11<sup>th</sup> grade counselor.

Columbus: How are we going to close the achievement gap? We have to start now to make a positive change. I need to know what is happening right now to close the achievement gap.

Mary Froning, LSRT: Any successful restructuring starts with strong leadership. The details of the restructuring plan do focus on incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders and looking at DCCAS and DCBAS scores to see how better to teach the students. Lisa Grymes, the literacy coach, is working on teaching the kids how to write. "Reading 180" is focused on moving kids ahead and up the scale. They have identified 60 kids who are move up from basic to proficient or proficient to advanced. It is a lab approach, with 3 stations serving 5 students at a time. One station is computer learning, another station is the teacher, and the other station is silent reading.

Columbus: The achievement gap. It is not about race. Everyone wants to see improvement in the achievement gap. Break it down. How many kids are passing? What works for the kids? We have to come together. We have to make change.

Mary Froning: Let me finish telling you what we are doing to improve.

Columbus: I want to hear it from the teachers themselves and the academic department heads. What are they doing to make change.

Mary Froning: You have to be able to have a real evaluation, to look at teachers who are not preparing lesson plans. At Wheaton High, the principal and assistant principal spent all their time in the classrooms, observing the teachers.

Margot: Teachers are working intensively on the restructuring proposal.

Mary Froning: The school climate issue is important. We want student input. What would help

turn around the discipline problem? The attitude seems anti-student because students are not participating in the restructuring process.

This is a big ship to turn around. I think it is a great idea of we bring in academic department heads to tell us how they are changing.

Beth Perry, LSRT: At Mary Center, we deal with kids who are getting turned away, who are not being served by Wilson. My daughter is a Latina, the teachers treat her differently.

My biggest frustration is that the teachers and staff do not open up their minds and listen to the kids.

I think the best thing was the grade level meetings.

We should not even be here at this meeting, we should be tutoring and working with the kids.

Mary Froning: Beth had about 10 recommendations to make about how to make things better. But how do you turn the faculty around. They think the kids have to come around.

Parent: Michelle Rhee says the teachers should be worried. If the teachers are not up to the task, they should leave. We can change things, but we have to be united. How do you have a teacher who is totally incompetent? But other teachers are innovative, they care about helping our kids. I think the Chancellor is behind in seeking change.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Leander

Wilson HS PTSA recording secretary