

Meeting Minutes for 9/10/19 SOTA 1 Steering Team Committee Meeting

Present: Doris Faucheux (President), Dawn Wacek (District-wide Rep), Jonathan Ticku, Clarissa Grover (Volunteer Coordinator), Maria Henry, Mike Lawrence, Kerrie Moore (Treasurer), Kari Bersagel Braley, Kirsten Gabriel, Jennifer Miller, Ben Burns, Vanessa Picar, Ashley Patros (Yearbook), Erica Cedergren (Fundraising), Leah (Yearbook), Jillian (Vice President/Fundraising), Kristen Engstrom, Renee Stowell.

1. Introductions and Steering Team Roles:

- All attendees went around and introduced themselves and the names and grade levels of any kids at SOTA.
- Kirsten Gabriel volunteered to take minutes every other month, if another committee member would be willing to alternate secretary responsibilities.
- Dawn Wacek volunteered to be the District-Wide Representative.

2. Back to School Night Feedback:

Overall:

- Appreciated being able to get everything done in one fell swoop and nice to meet other families.
- Appreciated being able to talk with someone about Boys and Girls Club and other offerings.
- Things flowed well – we were able to get through everything very quickly.
- The line was a little overwhelming when we arrived (later) – it wasn't always clear what we were waiting for.
- Convenient to write a check for lunch.
- Felt like I got home and had already taken care of a good number of things; reduced anxiety for the first day of school.
- Nice to have all the information/all those people in one spot.
- Coffee outside on the first day of school was a nice touch.
- Lots of people were interested in/excited about the Remind App.

Suggestions:

- Add signage that tells parents/families what they're waiting in line for.
- Remind parents/families to bring a checkbook (in addition to Facebook reminder).
- Better with wine and cookies ☺ - it would be helpful to have food to create more of a hangout experience.
- Concern regarding a perceived overemphasis on fundraising/other financially-oriented stations (according to Ben, the concerns emanated from less than half a dozen families – i.e. I wish I knew I was expected to pay for things tonight; is the focus of this school technology and arts, or money?). Could consider additional emphasis on the voluntary/optional nature of the fundraising opportunities.
- Concern regarding diversity in photos.
- Might be helpful to have some information re: "here's what to expect at Back to School Night" prior to the night.

- Could do a Back to School Night passport of sorts – visit your classroom, check out fundraising opportunities, learn about Boys and Girls Club, etc. - so parents and families can choose where they stop.
- Think about ways to keep things moving – there were definitely lines for different stations. Steering Committee/Who We Are might be a good first station.
- Think about how we can reduce duplication in materials/marketing, recognizing that some duplication is necessary to make sure information reaches everyone.
- Need to have more than two people for each station to keep things moving.

3. Miss Sage Situation

- Information on how you can write a letter to the district/how you can get five minutes of floor time at the district meeting is available on the SOTA 1 Facebook page. Feel free to contact Doris if you have questions.
- Amanda Jackson, SOTA 1 parent, has offered to develop a marketing plan for the school.
- Conversation ensued regarding marketing the school:
 - Is there a way to make the SOTA school signage more prominent? Ben will be checking into the signage that's been provided for other charter/choice schools.
 - Is it possible to add a 4k preschool class at SOTA 1?
 - Who is/are the point people spearheading marketing? Ben reiterated that the joint parent/teacher collaborative nature of SOTA would undergird marketing efforts moving forward.
 - If anyone wants to come to this Thursday's marketing meeting at 7/7:30pm at Java Vino, everyone is welcome.
 - Some folks voiced concern re: the lack of promotion of charter schools, including but not limited to SOTA.
 - As a point of clarification, Ben outlined that everyone who wants to come to SOTA 1 has to fill out the choice form. If there's anyone interested in attending SOTA 1 from outside the school district, they need to fill out an additional form. If families are currently enrolled in the La Crosse Area School District, the window for priority placement is early Nov – late Dec. That said, there is no hard and fast deadline to have a child attend SOTA 1.
 - There was a suggestion to go to daycares and moms/parents groups to promote SOTA. Ben pointed out that before we go out and blanket the community, we should have consistency in our messaging AND clarity regarding the lack of transportation for this school option. Perhaps this could be addressed in part by organized carpooling? However we deal with that, it's important to acknowledge that transportation is a barrier for some families.
 - Dawn pointed out that many people who go to the library don't know about SOTA 1. Doris pointed out that it would be helpful if the district (or the Library) hosted a choice and charter school education night; could also be advertised to the 35+ care facilities, Parenting Place, etc. to advertise this night.
 - It was noted that expansion of the SOTA Facebook page or website would allow parents to share what SOTA is to prospective families/would allow prospective families to learn more about what happens at SOTA 1. The SOTA 1 Steering Committee has a less-utilized Facebook page as well.

- The district leadership met yesterday to review and debrief the situation to determine if there are things that can be learned from the situation involving Miss Sage and Spence/SOTA 1 enrollment moving forward. While not at the meeting, Ben has received many emails from people at district leadership levels and beyond; based on the district recommendation to not respond to anything beyond the coordinator district email, he did not respond.

4. Online Directory Update

- We had 47 initial responses; we're up to 57 today. Sue will be reaching out to families who do not have computers to fill out paper forms. Sue sent out an email today to families. Given that there are 120 total students at SOTA, it was expressed that we could push this a little harder/further to increase participation.

5. Budget Update

- We've spent more than we made for the last few years, and we've spent down the budget surplus that we had several years back.
- When we do SCRIP, we tend to get the same 25 families - every little bit helps when people participate in this initiative.
- Box tops are great – an easy way for anyone to participate, particularly with the digital submissions. These are great ways for people who are on tighter budgets to participate. ChipShoppe going by the wayside is nice – we're excited about the different options we've identified moving forward.
- Bottom line is that we either need to increase fundraising this year or cut back on spending for next year.
- It was noted that specific fundraisers that clearly articulate what the money raised will go might be very helpful (i.e. Equal Exchange funds KVR). Erica pointed out that we have thermometer-style posters from Equal Exchange, if we want to use them. A \$1,000 goal for this particular fundraiser was discussed (a reminder was shared that the amount spent isn't the same as the amount we actually take away). It was pointed out that Parents' Night Out is a nice fundraiser for GROW.

6. Equal Exchange Update

- The kick-off for this fundraiser is set for September 30th. The packets and an intro/parent letter will go out at that point. There will be a two-week selling period – the offerings are streamlined and high quality, which the committee is excited about.
- Circling back to box tops – conversation ensued around whether there was a way we can get kids involved, create a competition of sorts, facilitate collection, etc. Ben reminded everyone that inviting parents/grandparents/family members and colleagues that the app/scanning version might be a good way to go.

7. Barn Dance

- The Barn Dance is slated for October 10, 5:30-7pm in the school gym. There is live music and parents are encouraged to dance with their kids. Barn Dance is open to Hamilton students and families as well. It was noted that the SOTA 1 committee would be happy to provide Jud whatever help he needs with the event!

8. Family Night

- The next Family Night Is slated for the last Thursday of September and will be held in conjunction with the Boys Scouts of America, which is now open to kids of all genders.
- SOTA 1 provide the meals and the Boys Scouts provide stations for kids to rotate through so kids can get a sense of what scouting is like. If there is enough interest we could have a pack meet at the school.

9. Ad-Hoc Committees

- We're looking to review our charter and the technology aspect of SOTA 1. The vision is to update the charter so it's clearer to families how technology is taught and utilized at our school. Ad-hoc committees will be forming soon; if you're interested in serving or have questions, please let Doris know. Ben mentioned that the subcommittees will be formed at the beginning of the year, will meet a few times throughout the year, and will come back at the end to report back findings.
- It was asked how we'll get the word out about these ad-hoc committees to parents and families outside the SOTA 1 Steering Committee.

10. Spanish Program:

- It was asked whether parents were interested in expanding Spanish programming in the classrooms. At least among the Steering Committee, the response was yes. It was asked whether there was interest among teachers - Mike Lawrence responded that he was and that he'd check with other teachers to gauge interest and will report back to the Steering Committee. Currently, Jean Hinson, a retired teacher from UW-L, comes in and does Spanish with all classes once a week for a half hour. She is interested in coming in and doing more, if we would like. Currently, her compensation takes the form of a \$50 giftcard for the year.
- It was mentioned that someone would rather expand Community Room vs. Spanish. Ben noted that expanding Community Room would be a school-wide initiative, while expanding Spanish can be done on a classroom-by-classroom basis. Conversation ensued re: whether we can advertise that SOTA 1 does Spanish, and the current take is that we don't currently offer enough Spanish to call it/advertise it as a program.
- We voted to give the teacher \$50 for a gift card for Jean. This was approved by Vanessa and seconded by Ashley.

11. Teacher update:

- Lego League is starting soon. Student teachers have been extremely helpful this year.

12. Should the ipads go home?

- No! We are going to give this a try and see how it works. We will revisit this in January.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40.