

CSC MINUTES – DENVER SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

October 11, 2011 4:00 PM

The meeting came to order at 4:00pm. We agreed to make a change in the agenda to discuss PTSO first since Sue Gonzales had to leave. The main issues for PTSO are structure of community meetings, getting out the school directory and getting the newsletters going again. She briefly discussed that she would like future community meetings to be co-sponsored by PTSO and for CSC to attract more folks to the PTSO meetings and also to give them more information about CSC. Tonight's PTSO meeting will be fairly short. There will be more discussion about scrip and how it works. Sue will set deadlines for getting the directory out this month and getting the newsletter back on line. The news blasts this year will be somewhat different because the new web site this year has more content. Succession planning for PTSO has been behind for two semesters. We need to get a new president on line by March or April of 2012. She would also like to put someone else in charge of the directory and find someone to edit the newsletter and possibly recruit some parent journalists. PTSO also needs a new treasurer ASAP as there isn't one currently. Deb Rosenbaum asked about the number of active members. Sue said that if we view this as the number of dues-paying parents, she isn't sure of the exact number but said that it's usually about 1/3 of the families. The only impact membership has on the PTSO is that it is the determinant of the amount of mini-grants PTSO can award. Deb clarified and asked how many parents are coming to meetings. Sue indicated that there isn't a large percentage of parents who come but stereotypically the things that PTSO would do in other schools is covered largely by our arts parent groups. There is a core group that deals with hospitality but other than that, there isn't a whole lot to talk about. The meetings aren't really traditional PTSO meetings. Depending on the topic – 40 -200 people will show up for any given meeting.

Sue then left the meeting and we went back to the agenda.

Principal's Report:

Mr. Kohut spoke about behavior events. There have been 13 this year so far – last year we had only one. Some of it may be due to a new person taking care of this so there is a different process in place. Attendance is good overall but Senior attendance is not what it should be.

There was nothing to report in terms of budget.

A new item of concern is the DPS School of Choice process. This will be managed centrally by the District. Students will still apply directly to DSA and we will handle auditions. After that we fill our classes. Traditionally we would have sent a letter. Now we send a letter saying that they have successfully gone through the audition process and their name has been submitted to the School of Choice office. What happens after that depends on the order of their selection. So if DSA wasn't their number one choice they won't be assigned here. Once a choice has been made the student will not be able to change their minds and can't switch schools. Same thing for students who are here already who say they want to switch out.

There is a statistic that shows that 40% of the kids who are accepted here move out of the City of Denver once they are accepted. Amanda and Nicole indicated that they are aware that some folks use fake addresses when they apply because they think it gives them an edge and they speculated that perhaps the statistics are skewed by that.

Getting back to the School of Choice changes this year – if we have to go to the waiting list, we get to decide who gets in because the next person on the waiting list may not meet criteria that we need.

Next Bill reviewed the numbers of students currently enrolled. Orchestra enrollment is low – we'd like them to be more like the band numbers. The director is new, so we should be able to grow it over time. Piano has come up nicely, Ted Lassen has added 12 students to the program and he's at about capacity.

Chip Galaty had to leave the meeting at this point but we set up the phone in conference mode so that he could participate by phone.

Bill mentioned that the PTSO meetings will have different focuses each month. In November the discussion will be about the School of Choice program and about the student Travel Policy that CSC will be discussing at our meeting that month. The January meeting will be a District Budget Update and a discussion of the new Friends Foundation, which should be fully formed by then. The March meeting will incorporate the CSC Ten Year Vision for DSA and will be an open forum for parents. April will have a discussion of Teen Internet Safety

Bill then mentioned that there has been some concern over Messenger. Some parents have complained that there have been too many messages. We discussed among ourselves what we have seen. Mostly we have noticed that the messages have been very repetitive in nature.

There has also been some concern over the new quarterly grading system. Some of the students created a Facebook page expressing negativity towards the new system and some complaints have come to Bill. Under the new plan, which was set up by the District, there are no rolling grades any longer. Each grading period now stands by itself. So, someone getting a C for this marking period cannot turn it into an A for the semester. Jenn says that on the positive side, it makes the students more accountable. Bill indicated that one of the things we can do is re-weight the grading periods so that the earlier periods don't have as much impact on the final grade. One of the negatives to the new system is that we had only 7 weeks this quarter instead of 9. Mostly he is concerned that this is a pilot program and he doesn't want to see kids negatively impacted during the pilot.

Student Reports:

Amanda spoke about what Student Council is doing primarily, they are working on projects to increase school spirit. They are also concerned about healthy eating and physical activities and would like to get at least one healthy vending machine in the school.

The Running Club is training to participate in a half marathon.

She also spoke about a need for healthier eating. Ronni Turner indicated that she is interested in working on a Healthy Eating plan. Amanda has also been speaking with folks about healthy vending machines that could be placed upstairs in the dance alcove. The person Amanda spoke with would like to help, but he believes that there is some conflict with DPS. Bill will look into this.

New Business:

Mike went to the list of what we were going to cover per the retreat. In November we are scheduled to look at Diversity. There are some folks will from DPS who will come here and then we will likely form a committee if it's consistent with what DPS recommends. There is also to be a teacher placement discussion. The Travel Committee will provide a preliminary report, with a final report to be presented in December. In January we will have another all day retreat. We will discuss grading policy in January as well, after we see how the semester went and then we can talk about how we want to weight next semester's quarters. February we will talk about a variety of things that were in the e-mail. In March we will get a report from Diversity Committee, if there is one and April will be the same as what was in the e-mail.

Now, we have a half hour to discuss space planning. Deb did a study of the arts departments and what requirements they have. In an ideal world, she asked them to report on what they would like to see. The music departments feel that they need more space for breakouts. The rehearsal rooms are tiny and there aren't many places for small groups to go. Also, there is no space large enough for the entire choir. Vocal also does some choreography and bigger spaces would be more conducive to that. Band would like an amphitheater on the west side of the building. Apparently, in the original plans for the building, there was to be an outdoor amphitheater. Theater would like to turn the library into a two story theater. There is also agreement that the Black Box Theater needs a dressing area.

Visual arts would like the promised gallery space. They would also like to see a graphic design department and a photography lab with ventilation. Brian Billings would like to move the loading dock over to have more storage space for sets – they have to be built. Creative writing would like to move up. They believe there is a lot of space above that isn't being used.

Before we can really look at space, we need to determine what a true feeder program would look like. If we had a K-6 and a 7-12 we could gain some space that way. Some of this is dependent on Odyssey leaving Phillips and they can only leave if they get the money they are expecting from the bond. We probably need to put together a committee with someone who is DSA Friendly who is an architect. Claire Martin's husband was the architect who worked on this building when it was first built. We need to get the A+ committee in here before January – or at least talk to them by December and then have them meet with us in January. The biggest issue is that there are a lot of great ideas and we need a way to figure out which ones can be implemented. In all fairness, Deb asked them to think big and some of the ideas are really big. So far, no one has looked at this in terms of the entire school. Everyone has been thinking just about what they want as a department. It would be helpful to have academic teachers involved in this discussion. Also, the overall Vision for the school is a big component of this. Is our mission to be bigger? Would that make us better? Deb says that unfortunately we can't expand

our programs without having more kids to fund more teachers. Having a feeder program would help to increase diversity. We could set up a free and reduced lunch criteria for Phillips. We have a much stronger chance in our request for Phillips if we can show that we are creating a feeder rather than just using Phillips for expansion of DSA. There is a high demand for elementary schools in this area, so we do need to fill it with an elementary program. Mike believes that to really sell it we need a diversity component.

This brought us out the space discussion and into a discussion of diversity. There was concern expressed that the Arts Outreach Program is disappearing – we reached out to three different schools – one teacher with volunteer students. However, we have lost that teacher. Deb thinks we should write a grant for this so we can get a teacher to run it. The teacher taught the kids how to write a lesson plan and then teach their lesson plan in all different arts. Students got community service and internship credit. We are behind on service requirement and that should be part of the Vision as well.

Amanda brought up the issues regarding the financial aspects of going to school here. If we change the way this looks how can these kids afford what we have to offer? AP classes, textbooks, tests all cost money. Mike wants to know if this is something we should talk about with the person coming from DPS. There was concern expressed that the Diversity person at DPS really has a focus on disciplinary differences not really the kinds of issues we are looking at. Bill raised the issue that maybe Greg Diggs would have more of an impact. Greg is now part of DPS administration and he understands the issues we experience here. Dave brought up that at the Ellington School, and Bill added The Orange County arts schools, are both more diverse than we are. Ellington is more diverse and has more money donated we probably should talk to them and see how much the two are connected.

The meeting ended raising more questions than were resolved. However, we now have some ideas for framing future discussions about space and diversity.