Minutes of the Classical High School Community Association

Meeting on May 5, 2019

Prepared by John Landry

 Co-chair Marybel Martinez ran the meeting, secretary John Landry was present, and co-chair Gloria Hartman called in. Eight other parents attended.

 We had no speaker at this meeting; instead we went over a variety of items.

**Updates on Various Concerns**

 Marybel reported on Classical’s School Improvement Team, which is now meeting monthly during the school year and had just met that morning. She was one of four parents present; also in the group are students, teachers, and administrators. Principal Barr chairs the team, and he said the Title I funds are available and the principals are finalizing the budget for the year starting July 1. They are looking to revamp the curricula for 9th and 10th grade history and for math covering Algebra I through Algebra II. They also expect to overhaul the bathrooms, especially the girls’, as well as the girls’ locker room. The water foundations and connected plumbing will also get fixed so kids can start using them again. But the plumbing work may not be done before school starts in September.

As a city-wide high school, Classical should have an improvement team with parents representing all the main zip codes in the city. So Principal Barr is looking for parents from 02908, 02907, and a new one, 02901 – there are now enough families living downtown to justify representation.

Each public school in the city has a School Improvement Team, established a year or two ago, but these are taking on added importance now as the state department of education works with the district to address the ongoing underperformance of many of the city’s schools. Some of the parents attended one of the recent Q&A sessions held by the education department. It seems there will be a few months of investigation before any concrete changes are discussed. So far it is looking like a city-state collaboration rather than a state takeover. Part of this work will involve a single city-wide School Improvement Team, including a few parents; details to come.

Gloria mentioned that some parents have been going directly to the school district offices with their concerns about issues at Classical. Principal Barr offered to have informal coffees with parents to address their concerns. We also talked about the role of the parents’ association to channel those concerns and work with the administration for follow-up.

Next year’s daily/weekly class schedule is not yet set. It should go up on the school’s homepage soon. The general calendar for the 2019-20 school year, with vacation days etc., is now up on the site.

**Plans for Next Year**

Our goal is to have a speaker at nearly all Chsca monthly meetings. Some of these speakers will be administrators, and Principal Barr is now looking to have an administrator attend every meeting. But we will also want some non-administrators too.

We talked about topics. There was a great deal of interest in having someone talk about the challenges of social media – to the students as well as parents. Not only is social media a distraction, but students may not realize that everything they post is recorded somewhere, and recruiters for colleges and companies can check it out. Students now are hearing about this danger from guidance counselors, but we thought it would be helpful for them to hear it from others. Maybe the alumni association would chip in funds to have someone come in for an entire day with separate sessions.

It would also be helpful to have a speaker explain the progression of Advanced Placement courses. Once they understand the schedule and the advantages and disadvantages, they help their students choose what to do.

Nikki Best, the school’s main mental health counselor, spoke at a meeting last year, and we’d like her to come back. On that note, some parents said their kids had told them about the administration working with troubled kids. We especially talked about an all-school assembly this spring to address a bias incident between two students.

Especially when there are major responses such as all-school assemblies, we thought it would be good to somehow inform parents so they can follow up with their kids. A simple robocall wouldn’t work, but perhaps the robocall could direct parents to the parents’ webpage with a brief note explaining the situation in a general way that doesn’t mention names.

One parent praised the presentation to kids on sexual harassment that Sojourner House has been doing at the school. Maybe it can be a model to address other sensitive issues. Another parent spoke well of a multicultural class taught by Ms. Toro that their student took last year. And maybe it would be good to have a series of speakers for students, especially freshmen, so they’re better equipped with the tools to handle all the responsibility they’re getting in high school.

A couple of parents asked about having a Field Day near the end of the school year for students to enjoy time outside. The local private high schools have these field days, and it would be fun for our kids too, perhaps without much expense.

John is drafting a “Frequently Asked Questions” information sheet to give to freshmen parents at orientation in August. It will explain the parents’ association and encourage attendance at our meeting. But more important, it will explain the kinds of communication parents can expect to get from the school (Skyward, weekly report cards, notice of absences and other robocalls); what they shouldn’t expect to hear (what will be told only to their kids); and also the willingness of administrators and faculty to meet with a parent one-on-one. Once we have a draft, we will run it by Assistant Principal Baldizar.

A couple of parents at the meeting agreed to give feedback on the drafts. Input from other parents is welcome, by reply to this email. What information do you wish you had had when your kid started at the school?

**Tribute to Gloria Hartman**

This was Gloria’s last official meeting, as her son is graduating, so we paid tribute to her wonderful work on our behalf. Not only has she helped lead the parents association over the years, and served as treasurer, but she has been our main fundraiser. Before all this she did a lot with the parents’ association at her son’s middle school. She says she will stay involved with us informally next year, including training her successor as treasurer.

Besides a treasurer, we are looking for a vice-chair. Marybel will become the sole chair, and John will continue as secretary. The vice-chair’s responsibility is to attend many of the meetings and back up Marybel in case she has to miss a meeting.

This was our final meeting of the school year. Next year our meetings will continue to be 6:30-7:30pm, generally on the first Wednesday of each month, September through June. We’re hoping to replace our October or November meeting with a party similar to what we did in October 2018.

 Any thoughts or concerns, please reply to this email, classicalparents@gmail.com. For updated information, including past minutes of meetings, go to the Parents page of [www.providenceschools.org/Classical](http://www.providenceschools.org/Classical).