

Parent Council December 13, 2013 - Minutes

1. **Taking Minutes.** Parent Council is looking for a parent representative to take meeting minutes. This could be a rotating schedule, if anyone is interested, please contact Brooke.
2. **Opening Circle.** Attendees shared some of their favorite Winter / Holiday / Solstice traditions.
3. **College Update** – Mr. Baker:

Playground supervision: Mr. Baker shared some of the concerns expressed in previous meetings about playground supervision with the College of Teachers. The teachers would request that parents act directly and get right to the source of any issues. If a parent has concerns about playground practice, please contact someone on the College of Teachers so it can be addressed timely.

Overview of the College of Teachers. Mr. Baker provided an overview of the College of Teachers. The College of Teachers meets Wednesday afternoons and begins with a meditation and study of various Steiner lectures. Currently, they are studying the Karmic lectures. Anyone with a foundation in Anthroposophy is welcome to attend the first portion of the meeting (from 3:35 – 4:15). “Foundation in anthroposophy” would mean the individual knows the basic world view Steiner has on the evolution of consciousness and his spiritual concept about human existence. Two basic books that might be helpful to anyone interested: The Essential Steiner by Robert McDermott and the chapters that mention Rudolph Steiner in Marc Booth’s “The Secret History of The World as Laid Down by the Secret Societies.”

The remainder of the College meeting is focused on updates of projects/tasks in process, discussions of new issues, celebration and a closing circle. Current agenda topics include appointing hiring a committee and meeting with candidates for the 1st grade class, professional development, review of the disciplinary code, core principles, class sizes and the College’s role in budget decisions.

4. **Accreditation Update** – Kelly Church.

DWS is applying to be accredited by the Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS) and the site visit is March 16-19, 2014. A team of people will review all aspects of the school including administration, curriculum, finances, etc. There are a number of beautification projects scheduled such as painting over the next couple of months; this master list does not include repair of the broken asbestos tiles. If you see something that needs repair or deep cleaning please notify Kelly Church (Kelly@pikespeakyouth.com) so she can update the list. Additionally, we need volunteers Sunday March 9th and Saturday March 15th for deep cleaning. Please contact Kelly if you are available to help.

5. **Addressing Concerns with the School** – Elizabeth Strammiello.

Parent Groups / Recommendations: At the November meeting, we discussed concerns about bullying/social justice and playground or classroom issues. Parents questioned what the school is doing, the timeframe, and if there is something that can be done immediately and/or if it needs to go through the school. Brooke and Elizabeth discussed this issue with Judy Lucas; Judy confirmed that the school continues to look at how it handles restorative discipline/social justice. Parents can always form their own groups to support, discuss and address an issue; parents do not need administration permission to get together and discuss anything of importance. This applies to book clubs as well as to parents who may want to talk about a particular topic (such as playground issues). If a group of parents want to propose a solution or ask the school to consider or take specific actions, Judy asks that the idea is first presented to Parent Council for further discussion, evaluation and development. This helps ensure that issues presented to administration are discussed by and representative of the DWS community.

Communication Facilitation: We also discussed parent-administration or parent-teacher communication and how this can sometimes be challenging if the topic is sensitive, emotions are high or the discussion gets “charged.” We want to affirm that parents can always bring a third person to attend the discussion as a neutral third party or facilitator. This can be another parent, friend, teacher or member of administration. Sometimes we need another person to help us feel heard or feel safe and less vulnerable; this isn’t a bad thing and anything that will facilitate communication between parties is welcome. If either person (parent, teacher or administrator) believes a third party or facilitator would be helpful, please suggest it. This isn’t about finding another person “on my side” it’s about identifying someone who can help both parties feel comfortable and heard.

6. **Why I Attend Parent Council.** Elizabeth Strammiello asked each of the attendees why they attend, what they hope to get out of the meetings, and if they are getting needs met. Most people attend parent council to find out what is going on and to stay connected with the school and community in another way. There were other reasons as well including to stay motivated to keep kids attending DWS, “guilt”, to learn about the school and who plays what role, learning the business of the school and what happens behind the scenes, and to connect with other parents/socialize. To improve the experience recommendation included: name tags, not taking ourselves too seriously, and ending the meeting on a positive note (the closing circle). Many attendees want more information and updates about the progress of the Campus Master Plan and capital campaign. Specifically:
 - a. Has there been a change to the plan since the September update?
 - b. How much money has to be raised in order to get started with construction?
 - c. Will there be any space for unrestricted natural and creative play?
 - d. Is any fundraising occurring for specific items (such as asbestos or the gym) and if not, can there be specific campaigns? and
 - e. Where is the money going?

Parent Council co-chairs will either plan a large portion of one meeting to discuss these issues and/or discuss with administration the possibility of having a special meeting dedicated to the campus plan.

7. **Fundraising update** - Ben Drotar. Holiday Fair attendance was down a bit from last year, probably due to the cold temperatures. Colorado Gives Day was fantastic with a high percentage of families contributing and breaking our goal for the day (the goal was \$120k, we raised over \$150k). Ben is compiling the details which should be available in January.