BSI PTO General Meeting Minutes (consolidated from morning and evening meetings) for March 23, 2016

- The meeting was called to order by the PTO President David Orsolino at 8:47AM and 6:30PM. There were 41 members in attendance in the morning and 28 members at night. The minutes for the February 2016 meeting were read by Celeste Ivers in the morning and James Ng at night. They were unanimously approved by the attending parents. Thank you to Dionne Burnett for taking the morning meeting minutes.
- Principal’s report presented by Donna Taylor:
  - A bit of history, 2009 BSI doors opened. 4 classes – 3 K, one 1st grade. Hiring freeze in NYC for teachers – glut of certified teachers. Observed at Anderson – TA’s good idea. Found way of hiring TA’s as temp position. Hiring was good –lots of options. Teachers were hired by May; BSI had time to prep them. BSI got great people. Anna Moshura, Sevgi Unay, Mr. Rory were TA’s. 2013 – NYC lifted hiring freeze. Less TA’s available. More charter schools starting. BSI became busier with more responsibilities. 2013 Pearson G&T testing mistake – awarded more spots to siblings late April 2013. Donna created 13 extra seats over grades 1, 2 and 3.
  - Slide presentation on proposed Enrichment for 2014 – Donna requested over $550K from PTO to help with BSI budget. 2015 requested over $615K. 2016 - now requested $808. PTO gives roughly $500K yearly
  - Extra budget money to make up difference has come from the register –by having more kids.
  - I have concerns regarding current TA situation. TA’s are not as well trained, no longer certified teachers, just babysitters. Anna and I spend too much time interviewing TA’s. Tried to instill how important it is for TA’s to stay for the year. Very disruptive to kids for them to leave. But they often do. Student teachers is a good idea but they don’t want to travel to BSI, it usually is too far.
from their school. As for Post grads, we have trouble finding people who want to live in South Brooklyn. But BSI has great reputation so people often come for training short term.

- The class size was brought up as a concern. Kindergarten was capped at 25 kids as of last year. There were thoughts to use PTO funds to reduce class size. This can only affect first grade next year. Not kicking anyone out. Possibly keep 1\textsuperscript{st} grade at 25 from K. But this affects possible siblings who may test in for grade 1. But we would need to increase 1\textsuperscript{st} to 28 to allow for siblings to enter. Siblings are important to BSI. Other schools cap class size at 28 irrespective of siblings. We do not want to turn siblings away. Note: if we do this, we will lose some funding because of “register loss”. There will be more register loss per year due to attrition, as larger classes graduate. Register is how many students in each class. Get almost $4500 per child. This is the only money we get from the NYC DOE.

- What are the classroom size look like, from what I see and know, having more teachers in classrooms really helps. I can understand some of the babysitting that TA’s are doing but that comes at a price. Next year, a new math teacher to push algebra down to the 1\textsuperscript{st} and kindergarten. 5 days a week, an extra teacher per grade. If the PTO is interested in supporting a teacher specialist for K & 1\textsuperscript{st} next year, it will be a literacy specialist for a couple of hours a day.

- Stephanie Parsons did research on reading/ writing. Research on how to deepen the learning experience and help those kids who are not able to follow as well at some points.

- This year in 6\textsuperscript{th} grade, we have extra teacher to support teaching to equalize across the whole grade.

- The following are part of the discussion with Donna:
  - For next year, 2\textsuperscript{nd} to 5\textsuperscript{th} will have 32 kids. Maybe hire TA’s for 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} grades but Donna discussed departmentalization and specialty teachers. May devote funds more there.
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade – latest recommendation is for teachers to specialize. BSI departmentalized 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} grade already. But 3\textsuperscript{rd} graders are too young to change classrooms. The teachers will change and come to them for specialty periods.
  - Average teacher salary $76K, may go up to $80 next yr. So if $35K is TA fund for each 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade, she feels this $70K would be better to use for experienced specialty teacher.
  - Donna feels it is better to have seasoned teachers. They are better to support different needs of the kids with different learning needs.
  - TA’s are great at hand holding, taking kids to nurse. Parents have concerns about lunch and behavioral issues. But Donna has noticed that TA’s may not be
watching kids as much as they should, especially during lunch. She wants them to be more purposeful.

- Back to benefit of specialty teachers. Someone who knows the students well and the teachers. They deepen the learning. Have level of maturity and experience. There would be a specialty teacher in classroom 2 hours a day in K-2.
- Some people wanted to hire teachers with more experience if we are going to take the money from TA fund. The 3 teachers hired last year had more than 10 yrs experience. Eg. Ms. Rita – teaching 12 yrs. Very few teachers at BSI who have had less than 3 yrs experience.
- Colleges are not preparing teachers in an appropriate way. NYC asked BSI to help to be a training ground for new teachers.
- Question: How have we decided on salary of $17K for TA’s?
  Answer - It is standard. They actually do not get paid this much but that is how much it costs BSI.
- Parent brought up concerns about social and emotional needs in K-2. Donna does not think they are addressed well by TA’s. BSI spends $250K per year on TA’s. She feels that is not that smart.
- Discussed school aides to help with lower grades. $35K salary.

- Q: How is the sibling rule for next year?
  Same as now, 97% and above gets priority.
- Q: Are the teachers ready to handle the number of kids without TA’s?
  Many times, the TA’s just go and hush the kids which undermines the teaching. You might ask what about having an Inter Collaboration Teaching (ICT) class. To do that we need to have enough kids that have IEP to form the class. For the next 6th grade we might have enough to create an ICT.
- Q: Last year, in my 1st grade class with the teacher who is not great with management skills, the class seems to get out of control.
  That is a training issue. We have consultant to train the teachers that need it. I know who needs it. We have filmed each other to see what needs to change and what can be done. The teaching coach will give feedbacks. It’s great to see how you did, much better for learning than just have someone tell you what went wrong.
- Q: What if there’s a budget issue after we hire these teachers, how do we keep them?
  We have always depended on this generous parent body to come through to support our goal. I think, once the parents see the benefit of the extra teachers, the parents will fully support it. But if we are short on funds at that time, then I’ll see how to fix it.
• Some parents spoke of researches that have a lot of support for this change.
• Q: I think for 3rd grade and above, the kids could do well without TA’s. But K-2 kids, a TA would have positive effect. Maybe we could have TA’s in lower grades, if we could get the money. We could try to get a TA for K. Maybe we could get a new teacher in training from Brooklyn College to be TA. Maybe for K would get 2 TA’s through fundraising.
• Q: Every year, teacher’s line up gets changed. Someone that we know is good at a grade sometimes moves. How do we keep quality up? Next year, most teachers will stay at the current grade. Some teachers are great, some need more learning because they are new.
• Q: In my younger kid’s class, is it really possible for a teacher to handle all the kids without help? Teachers are trained to handle difficult kids. If it becomes too much, then the guidance counselor, Valerie, comes in to help. Anna and I could also come to help.
• One of the parent said that “All along I am for the extra teacher, but now that I am hearing that maybe the kindergarteners needs a TA.
• Q: I heard a lot of the complimenting resource but what about the teachers? What do they think about this change? It is a game changer to have a thought partner to help with planning to improve curriculum. We don’t plan to have more teachers for sake of changing. When 1st grade teacher get pregnant, we have to change. When a 2nd grade teacher leaves, we have to change.
If you have a partner to train on specialty for math/ literacy, these area will improve.
Marcy only works 3 times a week right now. She will come back full time later. When you have a second teacher in the class, a teacher could teach a group while the other teaches a separate group on more advanced material.
• Q: At SLT, the teachers were very happy to have the change. We’re among the few schools that have TA’s. It’s not a norm. Many school principals don’t even know how to hire one. We’re helping to teach better teachers here.
Last thing, I want to do right by you and your kids. I hear that you’re wondering how the babies would fare. They’re my babies too. I want your support to do what I felt is the right thing. So I need you to support my effort.

• President's report was presented by David Orsolino:
  • Communication, collaboration, and participation needed!!. This meeting is an example of it.
○ Talent show idea – deferred to next yr. Annie Thoms will take charge of this, she will co-chair it. Planning starts 6-12 months in advance.

○ Line item in BSI budget that states TA’s - $325K. PTO wants to change this line to “Educational Support Staff” line item. This gives Donna flexibility to try something different since TA’s are not working. This can include extra guidance counselor.
   Morning vote: for: 16; against: 0; abstain: 0 (some had left before voting)
   Evening vote: for: 23; against: 0; abstain: 5

● EVP report was presented by Celeste Ivers:
  ○ Nomination committee has minimal time commitment, but need to have 3 people.
  ○ If one is on a committee or running for a board position, you cannot be on nomination committee.
  ○ Dionne Burnett, Marcia Osgood and Sorrel Barnard have volunteered to be on the nomination committee.
  ○ Positions in Exec Board – Co-Pres, E VP, 2 Fundraising, 2 Parent Involvement, 1 Treasurer w/ 2 assistant, 1-2 parliamentarian, Co-secretary.
  ○ Election is on May 23rd. Guest speaker on SHSAT test afterward from 7:30 to 9, Mr. Zimmerman, former Math teacher at Brooklyn Technical HS. All 7th grade parents should come.

● Treasurer's report was presented by Mark Caserta:
  ○ At this time, we have $311,479 in the bank.
  ○ Phasing out relationship with Chase. Moving in to Investor’s Bank account. This has some more benefits and extra ways to earn money, better programs.
  ○ We still need to have PayPal change it over to Investor Bank. It’s hard because the initial setup is done at school and we need to make all calls from that number.
  ○ Quickbook still in process to move account from Chase to Investor Bank.
  ○ We’re in process of conducting external audit – more intense and better overall. District 15 requires internal audit of PTO yearly. But the external audit covers it.

● Fundraising report was presented by Jim Buksikares:
  ○ 3 months to finish fundraising. Gala is coming up, hope that it will bring in $120K. Please come to the Gala on May 23rd at Roulette.
  ○ DA is ongoing and it makes up a huge percentage of our budget.

● PACE report:
  ○ No updates.
• SLT report:
  ○ Rehash of what’s talked about here today regarding hiring TA’s vs. teachers.

• Q&A:
  ○ Kindergarten café, Post Office, Brooklyn Bridge all funded as extras – PTO funds allow this. Will we be able to keep these?
  ○ Violin not on budget for next yr.
  ○ Do we possibly have to cut some of the specialty classes?
  ○ Transition times are hardest times for teachers – needing TA’s. Need to work on “responsive classroom” – better classroom management.
  ○ Is it possible to have paid volunteer group? There’s worry that they will not know the best way to deal with things and they may undermine the teaching.
  ○ Class size topic. Will this really solve issue in K-2 – social and emotional issues.
  ○ Classroom management – guidance counselor helps teacher but may need more help. Valerie is one person – sort of hard because she’s already spread too thin.
  ○ David reminded us that PTO gives the money to BSI but has no say in the end about exactly what to do with the money.
  ○ BSI has already spent $200K for TA’s this yr. Extra money not used will get rolled over to next year.
  ○ Last comment: the point is kids will not be in K-2 always, they will be in those upper grades at some point. 519 kids at BSI this yr. Some teachers need to work on more communication and classroom management.
  ○ Dave: What we’re doing here is to collaborate with the administration to support its effort.
  ○ Parent: When my kid at kindergarten, it was so helpful to have a TA. When Donna’s vision is carried out, there’s will be an extra teacher 10 period a week per class. How is this going to work?
  ○ Dave: Donna seems to be flexible with TA’s in the lower grade.
  ○ Annie Thoms: I’ve been a teacher for 15 years. I am now a teacher consultant. I am there to help teachers to be more productive. Having honest conversation with someone who’s been in there with you so that you’re not feeling overwhelmed.
  ○ May: It’s important for Donna to be flexible to spend on extra help with the K-2 provided there’s funding.

• Meeting adjourned at 10:15am and 8:40pm