

PS 516 Sunset Park Avenues Elementary School Leadership Team (SLT)  
 April 7, 2020  
 5:00 -8:00 p.m.  
 Zoom

Present	Absent	Guests
Dayanna Davis (teacher) Jessica Knudson (principal) Roberta Cordeau (teacher) Catherine Sanchez (teacher) Emily Baskin (teacher) Amanda Blevins (teacher) Dennis Holinka (parent) Brenda Garcia (parent) Claudia Lechuga (parent) Tory Messina (parent) Serafin Luqueno (parent)	Melody Sosa (parent)	Nera Cruz (presenter) Emily Falanga (presenter) Deeanna Gunderson (guest)

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 pm.

We read the [Minutes](#) from last week's meeting and approved them. (next time)

1. Call to Order
2. Last meeting's Minutes: review, voting, and approval (10 min.)
3. Norms: Be kind, be safe, try your best (5 min.)
  - a. [Video Conferencing Norms](#)
  - b. [Tips from the NYTimes](#)
4. Principal's Report (30 minutes)
  - a. Middle school admissions
    - i. The school received announcements yesterday (4/6). Emails and phone calls were made to families. If families need support with accessing MySchools, they can reach out to Social Worker or Principal. Overall, most students got their top choices.
  - b. Kindergarten admissions
    - i. Parents will find out at the end of April. We are projected for 3 K classes again next year. Once K families receive offers at the end of April, they can go on MySchools. Parents can call 718-935-2009 for families who aren't able to access the online system to accept or decline the offer. Schools will adjust waitlists based on who accepts or declines. Everything

will be maintained centrally, individual schools do not have say in the process.

- ii. They have not given guidance about Pre-K admissions, but usually occurs about a month after Kindergarten, so expecting mid- to late-May.
- c. Spring Recess update
  - i. The mayor and chancellor decided the best thing for the city and our families is that we will continue with remote learning through what was scheduled to be our Spring Recess.
  - ii. We plan to keep Morning Meetings consistent. There will still be activities to do, but there will not be 1:1 or small groups planned next week.
  - iii. It will be a time to pull back and reset for teachers, families, and students.
- d. Supports for families in need
  - i. We recognize that some families in our community have significant needs. This question was tabled--see below for full discussion.
- e. Budget updates
  - i. All hiring has been suspended. Any money in our budget cannot be touched. A guess might be that the city might take that money back. There is no purchasing that can happen from the school-side right now. Only COVID purchases can be made specifically for rec centers (buildings open for children of essential workers). There is no per session, no per diem. No purchasing or spending of money right now.

## 5. Teachers' Report

- a. Remote learning updates from teachers
  - i. During week of March 9th, teachers kept calm and taught on. We saw lower attendance, especially by that Friday, but we kept calm to keep children calm and maintain a sense of normalcy.
  - ii. The following week, we planned on returning to teach. Much to our relief, it was announced on Sunday that schools would close, but teachers would have to report for trainings and to distribute tech to families.
  - iii. SPA staff made hundreds of packets of take-home materials, reached out to every family in the school to assess tech needs, set up and distributed every piece of tech in the school, and taught ourselves how to use all the new platforms.
  - iv. The first week of remote learning included daily staff meetings and daily Morning Meetings with all of the students. The DOE does not require teachers to "go live" with students, but this was something our school emphasized knowing how important it would be for all students to see their teachers and connect with peers during this time.
  - v. This process also highlighted the considerable tech inequities within our community. Staff continued reaching out to families to help set up equipment, log into google classroom, and set up accounts for other online resources.

- vi. Ms. Knudson has been an incredible leader through all of this. She continues to be deeply dedicated to doing what is best for our staff and families.
  - vii. UFT members are working from home and figuring out this new reality. Many are caring for their own children while simultaneously teaching their students.
  - viii. Despite changes and disruptions, including the decision to cancel our previously scheduled break, staff has continued to work tirelessly to ensure students have been engaged in meaningful academic activities, but primarily the even bigger role of supporting children and families in this traumatic time. Our community has been disproportionately impacted due to socio-economic and societal factors beyond our control. We have invited Ms. Cruz and Ms. Falanga to speak to the immediate and dire needs of the families in our community.
- b. Addressing student and family physiological needs during crisis
- i. Presenters shared about a teacher task force that has been formed to support the immediate physiological needs in our community. We have 20-25 families with significant needs. We are trying to supplement what is being provided, such as the free meals. We need to do more--sometimes these places are farther out and some of our families are quarantined and cannot get out to get the food.
  - ii. Proposing that PTA can support these families in the next 3 weeks until the pandemic plateaus.
  - iii. Grocery stores have been contacted to find best ways of getting needed resources to families.
  - iv. Some other needs are toiletries, diapers, etc. Families are being impacted, some families have lost more than one family member. We will be returning to school one day dealing with a lot of loss and grief, but for now we need to stay present on these immediate needs.
  - v. Meals offered by the city are not culturally sensitive and not accessible to our families.
  - vi. We must take pride in how we respond to this challenge. This could happen to any of us. This is an opportunity for our PTA to grow.
  - vii. The PTA is 100% behind this--and agree that all the budget needs to go toward this immediate need.
  - viii. The PTA president is working to get access to the bank account. They are also waiting for outstanding checks to clear before spending more out of the budget.
  - ix. Understanding is that it needs to be academically related, but we can say that according to Maslow, students can only learn if their physiological needs are met.
  - x. The PTA president clarified the amount of money in the budget and amount of spending since early March.

- xi. Money for fifth grade graduation is being worked out if it will be reissued as credit or if it should be fully reimbursed. Would like to be reimbursed to utilize for immediate family needs.
- xii. PTA wants to hold \$600 just in case for straggling bills.
- xiii. The executive board will need to vote on emergency expenditures for up to \$100 for each family and possibly keep doing it for each family.
- xiv. Presenter clarified we were looking for \$50, \$75, or \$100 for each family.
- xv. Reminding to keep a paper trail, but don't think we'll be penalized by the DOE for doing what is right for our families.
- xvi. It was stated that the rights of enforcement comes from PTA members.
- xvii. Not yet sure how payments need to be paid for toiletries and groceries, but the PTA president is looking into the system. Looking into electronic bill pay for whatever we want to set up.
- xviii. For families right now, presenters propose to start with \$5000 total from PTA for the next 2 weeks to give families debit cards (\$50, \$75, \$100) for these supermarkets. We want to come up with the payment plan for families so we have a paper trail for possible audits. School task force can put in a formal proposal to the PTA executive board. It was proposed that families could sign to show they received the debit card or take pictures of receipts.
- xix. Teachers are working on e-learning needs (e.g. headphones) for students.
- xx. Former PTA president will support with future direct appeals around the government checks that community members do not need in order to support and donate. Focusing on electronic means at this time. PTA can also offer tax-deductibles for families.
- xxi. A parent asked about community agencies to complement the school's efforts. Center for Family Life is struggling right now, so it does not seem like the best option. South Brooklyn DSA, South Brooklyn Progressives, Mixteca are all organizations to reach out to.
- xxii. A teacher mentioned that teachers are working on a resource list for families, but are wondering how to best get those resources to families. Principal is trying to send this information via Principal's Corner and email, but what else can we do? One class parent seemed to have the most success via text and phone. Some feedback from families is that it's felt like the information about resources has been too much information. How can we present information for families that's more accessible and more streamlined?
- xxiii. A parent suggested doing a care package that is the same for everyone, but it's difficult right now with what is being rationed.
- xxiv. Ms. Knudson and presenters said they are willing to present to the PTA executive board for emergency payments (she has access to who the families are).

- xxv. PTA is asking for specific needs/costs. Task force will meet to put in an official proposal to the PTA executive board and plan to meet tomorrow night.

6. Parents' Report

- a. No PTA related parent report due to PTA cancellation in March.

7. Fundraising/Grants

- a.

8. New Business

- a. A parent brought up that she appreciates the Morning Meetings. Suggesting mini-play-dates or 1:1 or small groups between students. There seems to be a lot of need for connection and desire to connect. Another parent brought up that the best way to stay sane is by emphasizing social-emotional needs of children and not at all on academics.
- b. Each day needs to be taken day-by-day. It's okay if students want to opt out of academics--they are dealing with a lot of abrupt changes and the biggest desire is maintaining relationships.
- c. A parent spoke to the need of giving more unstructured space for students to have "silly space."
- d. Some teachers are doing lunch bunch with students to just chat.
- e. Parents are asking for more small group and partner work with teachers.
- f. A parent also brought up the need for different teacher sensitivities and understandings of being virtually in family homes.
- g. A parent asked how many more families need access to tech devices. A handful of students in each class are not participating for a lot of reasons. The biggest concern right now is the students we cannot contact at all. The message for families and teachers is that if the academic work seems overwhelming that is not the priority right now.
- h. In returning to the conversation about getting groceries and toiletries to families, a guest joined who clarified the possible things to consider regarding how best to spend the money. The concern around the paper trail is related to the different things that could happen with gift cards (e.g., given to someone else or used for something not intended). It was suggested that maybe families take pictures of receipts or have a direct line at the grocery store under their name.
- i. The guest also suggested a Gofundme page that might be created by the PTA so we can have more contributions without the PTA hoops to jump through.
- j. The guest suggested looking into Grandma's Love, an organization that connects families with food.
- k. The PTA president is legally protected by by-laws and other executive board members from being accused of embezzlement.

9. Public Comments

Meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM.