

**PTA Meeting Minutes  
February 18, 2014  
Beverley Hills Methodist Church**

Meeting started at approximately 7:05 pm. Leocadia Conlon, PTA President, welcomed everyone.

**Update on School Initiatives**  
(Assistant Principal Namba for Principal Balas)

**SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM**

- Summer Learning Program is proposed to take place from July 28-August 15.
- Will offer English intervention classes for ELL students and Spanish enrichment classes for English-speaking students.
- Additionally, kindergarten prep will be given on a ½ day schedule for the three-week period.
- For 1st-5th graders, it will be a full-day program with ENCORE classes—(like a regular school day).
- There is a possibility that families will have to pay a fee to attend. Details have yet to be finalized.
- One parent asked if it the summer academy would have an “all or nothing” type attendance. Ms. Namba thought the program would be similar to intercession—i.e. a child can attend a portion of the program, but would have to pay the full price. *(Mr. Balas later clarified in an email that children will need to attend the entire three-week period due to program evaluation.)*

**UNIFORMS**

- The conversation about school uniforms started at the end of last year and was tabled due to the year-round calendar discussion. School leadership now wishes to restart the discussion, with a longer timeline for discussion/implementation.
- School faculty was surveyed with an overwhelmingly positive response for uniforms.
- Parents will now have a chance to provide feedback. Parents will have an opportunity to provide their opinion and ask questions by way of parent forums and principal coffees. Additionally, a parent/teacher uniform committee will be formed to establish guidelines. Principal Balas would like to keep the uniform very informal—i.e. it won't involve shoes, belts, etc. At the end of this parent engagement period, a survey/vote of the parents will be taken. For the school uniform policy to pass, 60% of those parents surveyed will need to be on board with the initiative. The committee will decide what it looks like and the timeline. Decision will be made after intercession.
- Cindy DeGrood Morrison, parent of kinder, has researched the topic and presented an overview of pertinent regulation. VA state policy allows for the

implementation of voluntary or mandatory uniform programs. However, our District policy does not allow for denial of services or punishment for lack of uniforms. However, incentives can be given to encourage wearing of uniforms.

**Q&A-Uniforms(All answered by Ms. Namba)**

**Q: Why go to uniforms?**

A: 1)Sense of equity, uniforms will bring communities together. 2)Create school pride. 3) School safety. Since our school is right in the middle of the community, it is difficult to distinguish school kids from community kids. It is also safer for the kids to wear uniforms on field trips.

**Q: Why are teachers supporting uniforms?**

A: 1)Bring a sense of community and pride. 2)Equity. Removes some barriers for learning. Creates less behavioral disruptions from uniforms (research supports this).

**Q: When will the uniform policy go into effect?**

A: Roll-out would start next September when school starts.

**Q: What would the uniform look like?**

A: Ideally, it would be very simple. Lyles Crouch, Maury & Jefferson-Houston all have uniforms, with varying degrees of regimentation. Maury & JH have a solid color shirt with khaki bottoms. Lyles Crouch is much more regimented. A clothing exchange would be offered throughout the year would operate like an in-house swap. There would also be a clothing closet for those in financial need. Additionally, pricing research from Maury showed uniforms to be cheaper than regular clothing.

**Parent comment: Research actually doesn't support uniforms in the elementary school setting. Instituting a uniform policy is window dressing in the wake of many other important issues to address.**

**LITERACY**

- A decision was made by the ACPS central office that the Success For All (SFA) reading program will not continue next year for the following reasons: 1) SFA is not structurally or philosophically compatible with a full dual language program.  
2) In a true dual language program, the math and literacy teacher should be team teaching. The SFA program doesn't allow for this pairing because children go to another teacher for the 90 minutes of the SFA reading block.
- A comprehensive balanced literacy/social studies block will replace the SFA program. Reading, writing and spelling will be all in one block. Teachers will have the opportunity to explore texts.
- In addition, kinder and 1<sup>st</sup> grades (potentially 2<sup>nd</sup> grades) will receive instruction in Spanish literacy. Grades 3/4/5 will not have full Spanish literacy, but will have longer math/science (which will be taught in Spanish).

## **Q&A-Literacy Program**

***Q: Reading instruction is really valuable in SFA. How will that be addressed next year?***

A: SFA has many wonderful things and some elements have even been incorporated into the math curriculum. Next year's literacy program will continue to focus on cooperative learning and the emphasis on phonics in the first-grade will carry over. Teachers will be meeting to identify which SFA values should be incorporated into the new program. Additionally, the SFA training that teachers received will be of use in the new program.

***What will happen to reading class sizes and how will inter-class literacy gaps be addressed?***

Class size is determined by district. The reading groups will be grouped by level and grade.

***Q: I'm frustrated that yet another initiative is being introduced at MVCS. Wasn't a decent amount of money paid for the SFA program? How can I beg you to take on another program? I'm worried that teachers will need to be trained on a new program, which will increase the use of substitutes during class days.***

A: Teacher trainings usually occur in August, which won't be an issue this school year since we're going to back to a traditional calendar. On an average, teachers miss 2-3 days/year for training. The decision to discontinue the SFA program was made by the District because of the dual language program. It was not a school-based decision. Additionally, we are expecting very low teacher turnover for next year, which will also minimize training. SFA materials will also be retained.

***Q: We are a kindergarten family, but it is apparent there is always so much change at MVCS. What does the school's strategic plan look like? Piecemeal changes are really difficult embrace. A strategic plan would allow for parents to have an opportunity to see the long-term vision.***

A: There have been a lot of changes. The school is evolving. We will have stronger academics with dual language. We will continue to have more dialogue about the school's long-term vision.

***Q: How will kids be grouped/differentiated next year?***

English/Spanish partner teachers will return. Kids will not sit in a class way above or below level. We are still working on what that will look like. On the math side, the kids do not flexibly group. The math teacher will perform differentiation.

***Q: Are we seeing growth from the program? Data?***

A: It is too early to tell with some grades. However, first-grade scores are lower than they were from last year.

***Q: Is the 2014-2015 literacy program new?***

A: No, it is not a new program. It will incorporate the established “Teachers College Writing” literacy program and word study. Teachers will have more freedom in selecting texts.

**DUAL LANGUAGE:**

- 2014-2015 will be a planning year; the school will not go exclusively dual language. The central office needs time to develop policies. In, 2015-2016, the school will become dual language and will roll up from kindergarten. English-only classes in the older graders will continue.

**Update from Barbara Acosta, District Dual Language Coordinator**

- The district goal is to have one consistent program for both MVCS and John Adams.
- Ms. Acosta, during her previous affiliation with George Washington University, performed a formal evaluation of the ACPS dual language program. She now has the great opportunity to carry out the proposals from this evaluation.
- There is much research that students from dual language excel academically at high school level and college levels.
- It is very important that dual language programs are of a uniform design and implemented as designed.
- Improvements/changes:
  - The dual language program needs to be of a solid design. In years past, the design has not been consistent.
  - A 5-year plan will be formulated and will include stakeholder ideas.
  - New program proposals will be focused up on language arts and developing biliteracy--learning to read & write in both languages.
  - Ms. Acosta is already beginning to meet with families and parents. We share the same goal. We want our children to be multi-lingual and citizens of the world.

***Q: Is there a window of time for bilingualism?***

A: It is a continuum and depends upon the situation. We do know that learning a language before the age of eight utilizes a different neurological pathway.

**PTA Events (Leocadia Conlon)**

Friday the 21<sup>st</sup>,-Science & Engineering Night

Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup>, Principal Chat

March 4<sup>th</sup>-Celebrate Calm Parent Workshop. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders are welcome.

Playground Committee-Please see Leocadia if are interested in being involved.

International Family Night—May-please see Carolyn if you can volunteer or have ideas.

Big Flea Fundraiser—Need volunteers to help out Saturday, March 1.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.