Board and General Membership Meeting Notes  
April 2, 2014, Trailers 1 and 2

Attendees: Evan Glazer, Michele Gonzalez, Robin Hatanpää, Natalie Goldring, Lakshmi Bala, Enit Lulushi, Hilde Kahn, Shawn Lukas, Laura McConnaughey, Nicole Kim, Young Chen, Andrea Smith, Debra Linick, Janet Minkler, Jane Hsu, Lan Fan, Joanna Wang, Baishali Maskeri, Jeff Steele, Teresa Angueira, Leena Nathan, and Paula Mathews.

Call to order and President’s report -- Michele Gonzalez on behalf of Grace Becker  
Michele Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 7:32PM. She reported that Pi night at Mosaic raised $500 for the PTSA and several hundred dollars for charity as well.

Robin Hatanpää provided an update on the upcoming cluster gatherings.

Faculty Allocations Committee (FAC) -- Jeff Steele  
Jeff Steele reported that the main proposal is for two laminating machines requested by TJ teachers. The other FAC proposals are for equipment, since FAC is now prohibited from funding teacher registrations. The total requested is less than half of the year’s allocation. Natalie Goldring moved approval of the request, Robin Hatanpää seconded.

SGA Report -- Joey Valery  
Joey Valery reported that SGA is having interest meetings this week for the elections, which include Honor Council elections. SGA has received positive feedback on Honor Council so far.

JDay will still be at TJ this year; SGA is planning it now.

Teacher liaison report -- Laura McConnaughey  
Laura McConnaughey thanked the PTSA for the recent faculty lunch, and reported that approval of the math sequencing for 2014-2015 is expected soon.

Principal’s Report -- Evan Glazer  
Dr. Glazer reported that TJ students are heading into the testing phase. There’s a KIT on getting approval of prearranged absences. Paperwork is due before spring break.

Renovation: The renovation has brought with it parking challenges; in the next phase, all of the patterns are going to change. FCPS standard operating procedures on dealing with asbestos are in his Techcetera update. He does not yet have an answer with respect to a possible stoplight at Braddock Road. Construction is behind because of the weather.
April 7th is a Telelearn Day. He realizes that students are not huge fans of anchor day Telelearn days, but it’s necessary because of block schedules. Otherwise, teachers might have one set of classes on a Telelearn day and the next on a block day.

He thanked the PTSA for its donation of 500 umbrellas, but said that the school could still use more. Next year, about 75 percent of the classrooms will be outside.

**Treasurer’s report – Enit Lulushi**
Plans for ANGP are moving forward, and we’re still doing well on free money programs.

**Homework expectations committee and homework discussion**
Robin Hatanpää -- Homework expectations committee – The committee has met a couple of times. Woodson and a lot of other high schools have implemented a plan with no tests or major assignments due the week after breaks.

Laura McConnaughey – we were snowed out the meeting we planned to discuss this. For AP BC calculus and AP science courses, there was no way to get through the material other than putting kids on self study. The AP dates don’t change.

[Note: Questions and comments below are both represented by “Q”]
Q: What’s defined as a break?
A: Thanksgiving, Winter Break, Spring Break
Q: I favor real breaks, but weekends and breaks are also a great time to catch up.

Natalie Goldring -- What about giving less work in general, and not scheduling half the B/C calc final exam the Tuesday after spring vacation?
Laura McConnaughey: The kids wanted more practice before the APs.

Dr. Glazer -- The deeper question is: How do we know the homework we’re assigning is appropriate? If there’s a pattern of too much homework for the same teacher, I want you to approach that teacher. I think our teachers are extremely reflective of that.

The policy states that we shouldn’t be accelerating our curriculum over breaks. Students can be given one regular assignment any time there’s a break. I’m conscious that people aren’t always following that.

The AP homework expectations table is based on students earning a B.
Q: Why?
A: We can change that, but it’s what we’ve done. It may not take more effort for the student who’s earning an A.

Andrea Smith -- It depends on how fast students process the information. Sometimes we advise students to take the more intensive course in one area and not in another.
Q: But other classes are doing pieces of the AP practice exams along the way.
Laura McConnaughey -- Students in calc can’t even do a full free response until half way through the second quarter. The synthesis piece comes in the third quarter. The B/C issue has been compounded by snow. It’s easier in some other classes, like physics.

Q: Try to honor the major breaks. If it’s not due the day after break they may just procrastinate another week but that way they’ll at least have had their break. I didn’t see a break in four years, and my student is not a procrastinator.
Q: Have you sent out a questionnaire to the students asking about these issues?

Robin Hatanpää -- Some TJ kids wear the homework on their shoulders as a badge of honor. What about trying to work with teachers and asking how long they think assignments will take? Then we could poll students on how long it actually took.

Q: If you want to take an AP course and read the textbook and manage the curriculum, it’s going to take some time. Maybe they have to limit the AP courses. Some private schools are limiting the number of AP courses students are allowed to take. The kids are less burdened.

Q: FCPS is kidding themselves if they think that homework is limited to 2 hours per night. These are not average students. They’re the top 1 percent.

Michele Gonzalez -- if you’re going to take four AP courses it’s going to be a lot of work. There are kids who want to over-excel and parents who may also want that.

Q: What can we monitor? What can we limit? I think the break is important for the students’ and the parents’ mental health. Family time is important time. What homework is being given out after class? Are assignments being added over the weekend? The administration’s responsibility is to stop extra assignments.

Laura McConnaughey -- remember that an AP course is designed to be a collegiate course. In grad school every hour inside is worth three hours outside.

Dr. Glazer – Sometimes teachers give second chances to accomplish a task. The benefit is mastery of the material; the disadvantage is the extra work. On web assign, students get multiple chances. They pay a price in terms of the time. Part of the maturation process is understanding your limitations.

Q: Is the amount of homework on the end of year evaluations the students do?
Dr. Glazer – The evaluation can be tailored to get more information on homework. The information is shared directly with the teachers and the teachers’ responsibility is to produce a reflection on what they’re learning.
I don’t receive the evaluations; I just get the reflection. The comments go straight to the teacher, not to me. When there are concerns on an elevated level, those are shared with the counselors, who share the information with the administrator.

Q: If there’s a bad experience with a teacher, not getting that information into your hands seems like a mistake.
Dr. Glazer – we get that information when students approach the counselors or the administrators, and when we walk through classes. If you feel that the administration is not tuned in to a particular issue please let me know.

PTSA Committee and booster group reports
Natalie Goldring -- Many of the most active parents in Academic Boosters have seniors, so we need parents of younger students to step up and help out. If Academic Boosters isn’t around, the members of each of the nearly two dozen academic teams will have to pay more to compete or the individual teams will have to develop their own booster organizations. Having one organization is more efficient.

Robin Hatanpää – PTSA needs lots of volunteers. We have 94 volunteer slots to proctor AP exams. We need a Techcetera editor, or else Techcetera may not exist. The Governmental Relations committee also needs a new chair.

Hilde Kahn spoke on behalf of the nominating committee and the Partnership Fund. She pointed out that according to our bylaws and the qualifications of the people at the meeting, virtually anyone there was eligible to be the PTSA president next year.

She also made an appeal for the Partnership Fund. The juniors know what labs they’re going to be in, so this is a great time to give to your junior’s lab.

Move to adjourn by Robin Hatanpää, seconded by Paula Mathews. Meeting adjourned at 8:43PM.