

PTA General Meeting in June
6/5/23

Call the Meeting to Order/Welcome at 7:39 pm.

1. Principal Updates (Dr. Oliver)

1. Thank you to Mr. Goode and the whole PTA for their work this year!
2. Next week, completing class placements.
3. Admin team will be going to Douglas MacArthur to visit their autism program. They will be coming here, too. There will be 6 staff for the program next year. 2 coming over and they will fill the other 4 instructional vacancies this summer.
4. Ms. El-Baba will be coming back to teacher K!
5. 3 Encore staff members will be itinerant. Ms. Rosner will be teaching band and orchestra.
6. Some Dragons will enjoy a limo ride during the school day this Friday.
7. Pups and cups will be on Tuesday of next week.

2. Presentation on the George Mason Modernization Project (Azuka Bartlett)

1. History

1. Building needs to be replaced due to facility conditions, layout, small classroom sizes.
2. Conducted a feasibility study in 2021.
3. School board voted to include swing space in the budget.
4. Limited swing space options and Beauregard was selected. Right across from Ferdinand T. Day.

2. About the Swing Space

1. 4 floors
2. Dining area on 2nd floor
3. Physical activity space on 3rd floor
4. 4th floor media center and art room
5. Classrooms on 2nd to 4th floors
6. Preschool on 1st floor and it will have a separate entrance. No comingling.
7. Card access, cameras throughout.
8. Natural playground and another potential playground space near parking garage.
9. We will provide transportation for GMES students.
10. Conducting a traffic impact analysis.
11. Considering staggered start and dismissal times.

3. Project Timeline for GM Project

1. Swing space
 1. Currently working on design and permitting process
 2. Construction early 2024
 3. Looking to complete in late 2024 or early 2025
2. George Mason
 1. Planning phase currently
 2. Design phase in fall, once CIP funding is available
 3. Transition for GMES – winter or summer of 2025
 4. Then GMES construction will begin
 5. 2 years on design; 2 years on construction
 6. Complicated project due to many requirements
4. Outreach and Comms
 1. Advisory group will be established for the GMES modernization project and it will kick off in fall of 2023
 2. Check Capital Programs, Planning, and Design webpage
 3. Sign up for CIP newsletter.
5. Q&A
 1. **Parent Q: Why move in the middle of the school year and not the summer? Summer is much less disruptive.** We would all prefer the summer and that provides us ample time to get prepared. Flip side, moving in the winter would provide more construction time. We are currently experiencing construction cost increases and delays.
 2. **Parent Q: How far in advance of the move would you make the call?** At least a year ahead. Once we have the team set up, they'll be able to flesh out the project schedule. Likely, by mid-next school year.
 3. **Parent Q: Will there be afterschool care, like Campagna, at the swing space?** We are continue convo w/partners. We will likely have it continue at the swing space but we need to make sure we have the space available.
 4. **Parent Q: When will you have the Campagna decision?** A year in advance. Ferdinand T. Day has afterschool but it's through the rec program, not Campagna.
 5. **Parent Q: How is the advisory committee put together?** We've done them on the last several projects. Superintendent's advisory team. One rep from civic association, PTA rep, school rep (like principal), school board member, we might have at large community members. Outreach will be communicated through Artea. Outreach will happen in the fall
3. Encore Teachers (Dr. Finney, Dr. Sanders, Dr. Kay-Wyatt)
 1. Thank you for allowing us to be here and for the questions. Change is a process and we know you are seeking to understand.
 2. Fall of 2022, we experienced class size issues and concerns. Sparked a review in 4 areas:
 1. Monitor class size trends

2. Monitor enrollment throughout school year
3. Understand existing needs
4. Be proactive in ensuring plans are in place and communicated the school year prior
3. Division-wide rationale
 1. Some Encore teachers were not given full instructional schedule in their area of certification
 1. So some principals had them do reading and math intervention.
 2. 6 positions needed to be cut due to new enrollment numbers
 3. Music instruction not offered at all ACPS schools, and some schools didn't offer enough PE time.
 4. Some schools overstaffed with Encore teachers, some understaffed.
4. Division-wide impact
 1. No school will lose the quality of instruction they are receiving. All students will still get the Encore instruction from their home school teacher.
 2. Some teachers will work at an additional school.
 3. School leaders will work collaboratively to ensure that teachers have a full instructional day in their area of certification, rather than having to travel between schools (when possible).
 4. Goal was to preserve jobs. This prevented them from having to cut positions.
5. ***Did ACPS consider hiring new Encore teachers?***
 1. No, they had to eliminate 6 positions because of enrollment numbers but this policy change allows them to preserve those positions.
6. ***What will ACPS do to backfill the non-Encore role that teachers served?***
 1. We have to make sure teachers are working in their instructional area.
 2. Some schools don't have the additional staffing.
 3. IEP meetings are typically scheduled during planning periods. If that time doesn't work, classroom monitors are available.
7. ***Did ACPS take into account GMES' new autism program?***
 1. Yes, and current staffing can support the addition of this new program. Principal will receive support.
8. ***What resources will be shared?***
 1. Impacted teachers are only shared w/one other school.
 2. Teaching assignments have already been developed to ensure equity.
9. ***Since the decisions were based on enrollment numbers that we've known since the beginning of the year, why are we only learning about this now?***

1. Enrollment numbers fluctuate over the school year. We have more accurate numbers in the spring.
- 10. Can you confirm that GMES students will still receive the same level of Encore instruction with a certified Encore teacher?**
1. Yes!
- 11. It seems that ACPS was not expecting this response from the community. What changes will ACPS make to avoid this in the future?**
1. What is new is having this happen at the elementary school level.
 2. We will be communicating in the fall regarding any position audits and provide timely updates. Notification will still occur before the close of school.
 3. We did not want to cause alarm.
12. Dr. Kay-Wyatt
1. We are looking out for what's in the best interest of our children and will support all staff with these changes.
- 13. Parent Q: I'm having a hard time understanding. Were there 6 cuts, or were you trying to avoid 6 cuts? When we looked at enrollment numbers, there were 6 positions that needed to be cut. But instead of doing that, we are making this change to ensure that the 6 positions aren't cut. Encore positions are different from homeroom teaching positions.**
- 14. Parent Q: I'm having a hard time comprehending the statement that Encore needs to be in the areas where they are licensed. According to the budget book, Encore teachers are allowed to be used for other supports. What is your plan for us to fill our legal requirements for teachers to be present during IEP meetings?**
1. Principals can't use them outside of their area of certification.
 2. Re: providing coverage for IEP meetings, we'll work with schools to make sure there is a plan for this.
- 15. Parent Q: My final concern regarding our legal requirements under IDEA is that when our kids go on field trips, some kids need 1:1 supervision and that can't happen if we're so short staffed. With this change, how will we ensure that all students receive the accommodations they are entitled to in order to participate with the class?**
1. We'll have to work with principals in who their dedicated staff will be. It doesn't need to be an Encore teacher to ensure children aren't excluded from field trips.
- 16. Parent Comment: I'm confused about the concept of Encore. There are schools for dual language. I thought music was special for GMES. But they only get music once a week. We need adults here because we don't have enough of them. If you force an Encore teacher to work at multiple schools, they may decide to work in Fairfax.**

17. **Parent Q: Are any GMES teachers impacted?** That info has been shared w/the principal. The teachers need to receive their contract for next year before we share that info in a forum like this.
18. **Parent Q: Sounds like there's a utilization issue. Rather than hire at schools where they are underserved, there's a sharing of resources between schools. That will impact teachers who are used to serving one community. How is that being addressed?** They will only be paired with one other school and the principals will create a schedule that's as accommodating as possible. There will be compensation for travel between schools in a school day. Also, this is about equity of pay since some Encore teachers have had a full schedule and some haven't.
19. **Parent Q: I do want to thank you for coming out and explaining the process. Most of us don't know the budget and what goes into these decisions. When I was touring this school my 6th grader, I was told that GMES has an arts and music focus. We were told that if we wanted a foreign language, the kid should go to another school. There are a lot of 1:1 music lessons that take place during the day. Is that factored in?** I met with Ms. Rosner. She is phenomenal and she will continue to serve in the same way as before. As we move forward, we will continue to look at data points.
20. **Parent Q: How will Ms. Rosner teach both band and orchestra?** This is where our instructional specialists will come into play.
21. **Parent Q: If it turns out that during the school year, this plan isn't meeting needs, will there be adjustments? Also, what is the staffing plan for substitutes?** In education, we learn how to be flexible and responsive. We will be working w/principals over the summer to make sure the master schedule is complete.
22. **Parent Q: We're not apples to apples when we talk about Encore here. We're talking about fundamentally changing the unique character of the school. When we lose a PT orchestra teacher, there will be an impact. Our enrollment didn't change dramatically enough for this to happen. We have more for a reason.** Each school's individual needs were looked at. Once the master schedules are complete, I think parents will have a sense of calm.
23. **Parent Q: Can you provide those details (the numbers, the hours) without providing teacher names?** Teachers were notified and this is an HR process. We can't share that info at this time due to the communication protocol.
24. **Parent Q: My 1st grader loves Encore, though last year, her music class consisted of watching videos. Given the feedback you're hearing, what assurances can you give us that this won't happen again? Will there be a way to get input from us in the future? For Ms. Rosner to teach both, how is that within her contractual rights? We have overcrowded 1st and 2nd grade classes.** What you're talking about is programming. You'll still have your programs. This isn't just about fine arts, but also health and PE.

- 25. Parent Q: Last year, our teacher, Ms. Carrick, went to Central Office so we had no teacher and then the kids had to watch videos. We're just hoping we don't see that play out again.**
- 26. Parent Q: I greatly appreciate you being here tonight to talk about students' needs and addressing our concerns. Our teachers are also incredibly important to us. We will protect them with everything we have. I am personally hearing many stories from Encore teachers that they are distraught about this decision. It gives them a short amount of time to make decisions about their contract. Teachers have written endless notes to Central office and have not heard back. They feel that they are being ignored. I'm hearing that Encore teachers and principals weren't brought into this discussion. It would mean a lot to the teachers if they were addressed, as well.** We are responding to emails that we get. It does take some time. Teachers should reach out to us or the HR department. Our team is scheduling meetings w/Encore teachers to honor the space that they are currently in. That is the group we need to get in front of.

<ACPS staff left>

27. Q from Ashley Simpson Baird: Now that ACPS staff aren't here, how are GMES staff feeling?

1. Dr. Oliver: There are a lot of logistics to work through that we haven't had a chance to wrap our minds around yet. We'll continue to work collaboratively to support one another.

28. Parent Comment: Dr. Tai is leaving and art teacher will be going to the HS (but we'll get a new one). That doesn't seem good.

1. Ms. Rosner does not have to be shared. Many year ago, we did share her w/other schools.
2. Mr. Donohue will stay.

29. Kelly Booz Carmichael: I have kids at Douglas MacArthur and their music teacher does both band and orchestra.

1. I'm sorry that I have dropped the ball on being your school board liaison this year. I stay in close touch with Ashley Simpson Baird.
2. We missed the mark on how we communicate. There is a trust issue.
3. These women (at ACPS) work incredibly hard. They are listening, they are hearing you and they are going to do what's best for the students. Hopefully, this will improve in the future
4. Ashley and I will do a listening session at Angel Park. We'll share the info w/Geoff.

30. Parent Q: Do other elementary schools have a foreign language?

1. It's not considered an Encore.

31. Parent Q: Why did it take a year-long audit to realize some schools didn't have music?

1. Ashley: We are still learning about all this and processing it. The 6 cuts – I'm going to try to explain this. When you add up all of the unused time, it added up to 6 FTE.
2. Kelly C-B: This practice has been going on for a long time now. Now, ACPS is doing the digging that is required. They are going to start involved stakeholders in the audit. There will be an audit of foreign languages.
3. Ashley: Foreign language isn't extra. It's immersion. It's their mode of instruction.
32. Geoff: We didn't fix it tonight but we need to continue to be vocal and give them feedback. This was an opportunity to get more info. We'll keep learning, keep talking.
4. General Meeting
 1. Minutes from last meeting on April 24 – *approved*
 2. Working Budget for summer and early fall – *approved*
 1. No new line items, except we'll pay for K GMES shirts
 2. Some of these are subject to change in Sept.
 3. We have to vote on this now so that we have approved funds to spend over the summer.
 4. We have a big balance in our bank (\$60K-\$70K), and we can cover this now.
 3. Need to do a budget amendment is for the 5th grade celebration. We budgeted \$1K for celebration. We're buying the 5th graders t-shirts b/c they didn't get to go to Jamestown last year. Total is \$2K. – *approved*
 4. Need to approve the slate for PTA Executive Board next year – *approved*
 5. Party on the Patio (Susie)
 1. \$2600 made at Dragon Fest
 2. Over \$26,000 through online auction
 3. Overall, made \$37,000!
 4. Fundraising (Brooke and Liz)
 6. We need volunteers for Field Day, breakfast for 5th grade celebration
 7. Geoff: We accomplished a lot this year. We are a better school and PTA because of you!

Meeting adjourned at 9:36 pm.