

**Park Road Montessori**  
**SLT Minutes**  
**March 22, 2013**

Members Present: Bill Aheron, Sharon Cherry, Aryon Dubinsky, Barbara Dubinsky, Allison Hauser, Sherry Herbert, Anna Moraglia, Kristen Piscitelli, Susan Plaza, Manuel Rey, Ginger Salmon, Candace Steude, Joy Scyzowski (PTO), Cynthia Wood

Called to order by Manuel Rey.

Manuel introduced Eric Davis, District 5 BOE representative.

Eric discussed the popularity of PRM. He is seeking our advice on the CMS budget, needs far exceed our checkbook. While they can't do everything, he has heard the following concerns: Take Care of Staff (Compensation, professional development); Security (while welcoming and inviting); Old Buildings and Overcrowding; Demand for Magnets; Fix Bell Schedules and Reopen Closed Schools. What priorities do we have? Some examples of costs are Staffing – if we give every member a 1% increase it is \$7.8M; Add one teacher to every school \$9.8M. It takes a serious investment to make serious improvements. CMS expects 3000 new students, an increase in retirement/insurance as well as water rates, 1 new school is opening, and we need funds to keep school resource officers. This will add \$15M to current budget. What would you prioritize first?

Ginger – pay our teachers. They have been given more time to work, make them happy so our kids are happy. They do so much for us.

Candace – we continue to say 1% per year, that is short term. In 12 years that is a 12% increase.

Anna – There have been several years with no increase.

Sherry – long time teachers are nearing retirement. How teachers are treated and paid will create a teacher shortage. Not enticing to be a teacher anymore. You can't support a family on it, teachers are not treated with respect, not paid for what we have put in to becoming a teacher. There will be a shortage nationally as well as CMS. If teachers are not addressed as front line people, we are facing a problem.

Eric – I agree, we already have a problem. Teachers should be paid as bankers, lawyers etc. Taking care of children is the most important thing.

Kristen – how much control do we have locally? It seems like a lot comes from the state, we are 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation for teacher pay.

Eric – yes, we have a state run education system. BOE is at end of a long line of decision makers. The 170 legislators have the most impact over our children. Senator Berger put out proposed bill doing away with tenure, grading schools on proficiency. Gov. McCrory has proposed a 1% salary increase and 1800 additional teachers. CMS would get about 10%, or 1 teacher per school. It is incumbent on us to get in front of these legislators. If state does 1% we can add to that. County appears to be \$50M in the hole. CMS has the ability to cut something and redirect it somewhere else. Federal and State money is pretty much directed.

Kristen – do we have an impact as parents? Teachers are not normal state employees, how can parents impact the legislators?

Eric – write or pick up the phone. We have a powerful delegation. They can help influence but we must make our voices heard. They will likely respond more to parents than to BOE.

Ayron – we have not had a pay increase, yet our insurance cost does increase. Deductions are greater than the raise.

Eric – It ends up a pay decrease due to healthcare costs. This is a state run system.

Sherry – can we address the bell schedule? Long day is not developmentally appropriate for young kids. By this time of year kids are melting down. Just back it up 15 or 30 minutes would be incredibly beneficial. They need time to be outdoors, run and play etc. We are not allowing kids to do these things.

Anna – walk down the carpool line, great example of this.

Sherry – Kids can't even think anymore at 4:00. We are not doing the right thing. As we look at other things that are national trends like obesity, when our kids are sitting all day in an academic environment, we are feeding that problem. If we do what is right developmentally academics will improve.

Barbara – getting out so late is the problem, not the longer day.

Bill – We have a wide range of ages here, maybe not a problem for older kids.

Ayron – kids get home at 5:30 or 6:00. Stay up late, want to play etc. They are tired in the morning. No time in the evenings for homework, time to just relax, too late. Not attentive in class because they are tired and cranky. It is a cycle.

Eric – that is a local decision.

Allison – is that feasible in this budget climate.

Eric – as you know there is a task force looking into this and you are well represented here. Susan can you give an update?

Susan – we have been working on this for almost two years. The task force has found a budget neutral plan that could actually save millions for the district. It involves putting all magnet kids on a shuttle, but not the current shuttle system. Children would ride the bus to their neighborhood elementary school and transfer to the magnet shuttle. Would cut ride time from 45-90 minutes to 20-35 minutes. The task force goals are to give 30 minutes of planning back to teachers while keeping 15 minutes of additional instructional time, and having all schools dismiss by 3:45.

Allison – we would have a group of parents disappointed with 7:30am start.

Susan – magnets would not start then because of the shuttle time. They would start later.

Eric – Isn't there an idea about changing high schools?

Susan – Yes, to put high schools at 3:45 or 4:00. This would save even more money and the academic benefits are great. Greensboro, Chapel Hill, Wake County all have late start times and have seen improvement in test scores and graduation rates.

Bill – Why are high schools so early?

Eric – athletics and extracurricular, it is not all transportation. There are several possible options out there, we feel that we may need to consider these and get broad feedback. We were criticized for making changes without it before, we feel like we should put the scenarios out there.

Ginger – There are two issues here. Shortening the day versus the bell schedule. That has to be weighed out first. Are the kids somewhat benefiting from the longer day? The challenge with the shorter time is it works better for younger kids but not older.

Barbara – teachers tell me that with the shorter day they were struggling to touch on science etc.

Eric – middle and high school staff say they are on 7 hours with the same pay.

Anna – task force has great sounding scenarios. We want to make sure the board is able to see it all.

Bill – glad task force is getting attention. I trust the process on this.

Eric – what else do you think needs attention?

Bill – testing relates to budget. Another illustration about national and state requirements as well as those imposed by the county level. As a parent, my impression is that it keeps piling on and is overwhelming.

Barbara – two weeks just for the reading test. Ridiculous.

Bill – testing costs us 40% of instructional time.

Anna – another example of how state has such a huge impact. Dibles came from the Legislature.

Eric – we have made some decisions that add to this problem.

Candace – we are experimenting with how to pay teachers on the backs of our students. Businesses don't go out and test clients or evaluate them to determine when to give employee a raise. We should not be taking time away from our kids to do this.

Ayron – do we expect kids who are stressed about tests to do their best? They are 8 years old. We teach testing skills but some are not good test takers. They are children. To totally base someone's teaching ability on that is deploring.

Barbara – can't judge kids on one test. It is a whole year's work, not just one day.

Sherry – what are we testing for? Why? Make it developmentally appropriate so they are not sitting through 4 or 5 hours of testing a day. We do informal assessments constantly. We need some formal ones but be realistic. It needs to be done with no negative impacts on kids.

Ayron – testing has its place but concerns me when it determines whether a teacher is effective. We should look at the whole package.

Bill – tradeoffs, think of classroom time as a finite resource just as the dollars are. I don't think that lens has been applied to testing. People have good intentions but not a rationalization of that.

Ginger – do you hear that across the board from other schools.

Eric – I have two girls, neither of who do well on these EOG tests. We have standard tests used for one purpose, formative assessments for another purpose, then teachers give tests for another purpose. The layering is the problem. We need testing, it is the only way I got my degree, got my driver's license – I passed a test. The cumulative effect is creating an undue burden.

Candace – results are the only thing to hold onto, it is measurable. Education is a long term investment, outcome is seen in 5 or 10 years, almost impossible to measure. Do we educate with that outlook?

Eric – there is desire to quantify what we are getting for the investment we are putting in. My job is hard to quantify results, somewhat similar to being a teacher. I would like input from 4 or 5 areas, boss, customers, my peers, I would like my own opinion to count as well. At the end there would be one piece that is somewhat quantified. Current system puts too much on one person – principals spend so much time doing observations. We need multiple elements.

Candace – only difference is that we cannot ever let a client go. Business has a bad relationship, cut it off. In teaching I cannot fire my clients.

Eric – I interact with bank leaders, I am assigned to them, don't get to pick. Testing is an issue.

Barbara – developmentally it is becoming more of a challenge. Used to be only older kids, then we added 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, now it is 4, 5, and 6 year olds being tested to death. Why are we doing this?

Allison – PreK is very tough in a tight budget, and I noticed it did not rank high on the budget survey. There is so much research about children growing up in poverty, it is critical to invest in this. It would be amazing to offer a Montessori classroom for these children. Maggie Barker and Jose Plaza did a fabulous program about Montessori and the brain. How we (Montessori) do primary education makes so much sense.

Sherry – there is a national trend now, critical time period from 3-6 years old. Montessori has more than 100 years of research, we can effectively make those gains. In terms of looking for expenditures, why spend on other programs when we know Montessori works. National Montessori magazine says Montessori helps in executive brain function. This curriculum addresses the young child to achieve long term goals.

Bill – another task force discusses magnets in general. This is promising, demand for Montessori is huge but limited spots. My word of caution is that it will require a longer term plan than a short term fix. It is a years long process to invest in these gifted teachers with Montessori credentials, but is a great goal. Can't do it halfway and get results we want.

Eric – we need to make changes in our schools, will require additional funding. There are some exciting things the team has come up with. Early childhood, I only occasionally hear criticism of our preK program but most people get it. When I grew up we did not have kindergarten, now it is expected. We need to do the same with PreK. We need to make sure kids don't fall behind.

Anna – we really should have 3 year olds here. We would like that.

Ginger – middle school is an issue for us here. We have heard rumors about it moving.

Eric - I firmly believe in letting the superintendent do his job. There is a proposal Tuesday night regarding Montessori.

Ginger – how do you feel about Sedgefield?

Eric – I have not heard much but I understand not many parents have confidence in it.

Bill – some parents did a survey of Montessori kids at Sedgefield and at the Montessori elementary schools (5 and 6 grade.) Deterioration in interest there, parents concerned with lack of support in the environment at Sedgefield, absence of a Montessori trained and experienced faculty there, big investment in getting Mark Robertson trained as well as an investment in the lead teacher to run the school within a school, that position is not funded now. The program is now only 3 teachers within a rigid school. They can't do their work cycle, no multi-age process.

Eric – I suspect parents will not send their kids from here.

Anna – There will be a dramatic decrease.

Bill – first lottery will show a rosy view but many of them are leaving CMS.

Candace – our 6<sup>th</sup> graders will leave here. Sedgefield won't feel it as severely next year as in 14/15. Our staff here will be affected.

Ginger – I have heard parents say that if those grades were here they would feel more comfortable. We do not want that program to die, we want it to grow.

Manuel – I did not grow up in a Montessori school. We are very proud of this school, I like it for my children. We are a Blue Ribbon School etc. but we don't have that long term option. Parents are leaving because of

Sedgefield. How is this philosophy viewed by the school board? Maybe we are not communicating outside of our school.

Eric – my personal perception is shaped by what I hear from staff and parents, it is incredibly successful. We don't have enough seats. It is similar to our Morehead STEM and Collinswood. I don't think we hold Montessori above those, wait until Tuesday night to see what our Superintendent thinks of it. Our best defenses for folks leaving the system are strong home schools and an adequate supply of magnets. Our challenge is the resources to do this.

Manuel – what are your thoughts on getting private money into public schools?

Eric – Project Lift is funded by philanthropists. We don't have enough resources, we will take all we can get but I don't think that is the long term solution. Lift is a 5 year test program to prove that it will work (the funding makes it possible to produce results, it merits public investment.) I don't mean to say it is all about money, there are things we can do smarter, but giving principals flexibility will benefit. I think in the future philanthropy will give us the opportunity to prove that these ideas can work.

Sherry – I think the parents not choosing Sedgefield Montessori is indicative that those parents think it is not being allowed to be Montessori, being watered down into a traditional style.

Ginger – what is the plan for security for our campus?

Eric – I know that there will be a scaled back version Tuesday night, no more fencing around mobile units. It will not be in the next bond. Installing locks, cameras, control devices for access, communications equipment to assist our staff in controlling access and responding to issues. We have a \$700,000 item that goes to maintain the SRO's we have today. City of Charlotte has backed out of their \$2M investment, please contact the City Council to reverse that decision.

Kristen – how do you look at open campuses like here and Myers Park?

Ginger – make a pass with a key, can be used like a hall pass.

Eric – all schools will get some things but the application must be customized at other schools.

Susan – Gaston County is enclosing breezeways.

Eric – legislators putting out a bill to deputize teachers yet we cannot finish 1<sup>st</sup> semester before break.

Allison – How about the county control of buildings?

Manuel – thank you so much for taking the time to attend Eric.

Meeting adjourned by Manuel.