

Executive Board Meeting, January 5, 2009

Present: Francesca Di Mauro, Ivelisse Suarez-Levine, Kathy Brito, Carlos Brito, Susan Saar, Kirsten Cowal, Kate Forbes Dallimore, Susan Rosenberg, Leonisa Ardizzone

### Photography

Irving Simon was unable to attend the meeting but gave assurances that it would make a presentation at another time if necessary. The consensus among the Executive Board members was if no other photographer came that evening to make a presentation, that dates with Irving Simon should be booked and that a presentation would be unnecessary. It wasn't clear that any other photographers were going to make appearances since the only alternate photographer suggested was found to be a boutique operation and not prepared for the volume involved with school pictures. It was also agreed that because of the overwhelming volume of retakes this year, that retakes would only be permitted only for kids absent on picture day with the exception of 8<sup>th</sup> graders. The possibility for parents to buy a class photo only was discussed and Kathy Brito will raise that question with Irving Simon. Ms. Brito also indicated that she intended to negotiate with Irving Simon to get a larger percentage of the profits for the PA and asked Leonisa Ardizzone to join her in a meeting with Irving Simon.

At the appointed time of 7:30pm, one photographer showed up – Natasha Layne Brien, the freelance photographer and mother of two students at the Washington Heights Academy. She did the photography for the picture day at Washington Heights Academy, which was her first experience with school-based photography. The Executive Board members were impressed and charmed by her sample photos but it was ultimately ascertained and agreed on both sides (after Francesca Di Mauro and Kathy Brito Theredescribed the parameters and time frames) that she was not equipped or prepared to handle the volume of students at P.S./I.S. 187 within the time constraints required by the administration.

### Wish List

The wish list was discussed at length in terms of how to establish priorities and allocate funds. Some members voiced their opinion that the Executive Board should have control over how the money is spent and should possibly have an RFP (request for proposal) type process for deciding how to allocate funds. A number of issues and sticky points were discussed including the fact that the nature and extent of the administration's role in establishing priorities is unclear and that efforts to achieve equity in the allocation of funds will inevitably be hampered by differential efforts on the part of teachers to secure resources (the squeaky wheel problem). Francesca Di Mauro clarified that the Vice-President for the Intermediate School has traditionally played the role of intermediary between the PA and the administration in fulfilling the wish list, though this is not written in stone. Several members were in favor of funding field trips and classroom items

(manipulables) separately. Leonisa Ardizzone came up with a proposal for dividing up the available funds (estimated at approximately \$16,000) among the grades and clusters with a separate line item for field trips. This proposal was based on rough calculations of the total amount spent on field trips last year and on a formula weighted on a per capita basis for the allocations to grades and clusters. Ms. Ardizzone will prepare and distribute a spreadsheet with the information.

### Petition

There was another lengthy discussion on the petition that was presented at the previous School Leadership Team meeting. The petition, which had about 25 signatures, expressed concern about disciplinary practices in the school. It was generally felt that the approach to the issue was badly handled and that the stance of the individuals who presented the petition was unnecessarily and counterproductively confrontational. The administration and some teachers felt attacked and reacted defensively. There was, as well, a lack of clarity on the specific content of the petition that was presented before the SLT. Some or perhaps many parents signed the petition under the impression or understanding that they were signing a document that was asking for a dialogue on the issue. However, the petition that was presented was much more pointed and referenced several instances some of which took place some time ago. Some members wondered why the issue was not presented to the Parents Association first before going to the SLT. There was concern among some that the recently achieved openness to parents by the administration would be reversed because of the petition, while others indicated that the administration does not have the option of closing itself to parents' voices. There was general agreement that the underlying concern about discipline in the school is valid and real and that the actions of the petitioners was impelled, in part, by the lack of clear lines of communication between parents and the administration. The question of how the PA should respond – whether it should write a letter or some other measure – was discussed and there was no clear conclusion. Francesca Di Mauro and Leonisa Ardizzone were asked by Ms. Chory to meet with her on the following day, so it was agreed that any further action would depend on the results of these meetings.

### Follow up

1. Kathy Brito to meet with Irving Simon to ask for five photographers and to request the new option of buying the class photo without any other pictures
2. Leonisa Ardizzone to draw up spreadsheet with proposed wish list allocations by grade and cluster
3. Ivelisse Suarez-Levine to seek input from administration on teachers' priorities for wish list