

Rieke PTA Meeting
September 14, 2011

2 PM Meeting Attendance (28)

Cindy Eldkrona, Cheri Castaneda-Sout, Anne Eddy, Kelly Laboe, Renee Limon, Lisa Johnston, Patti Mapes, Kirsty Hamilton, Jennifer Merrill, Sharon Scheurer, Jamie Repasky, Wendy Slocom, Nicole Olszewski, Teresa Prall, Jen Martin, Linda Huseby, Leanne Van Horn, Stephanie Wieker, Nikki Dorfman, Michelle Beeker, Marty Lafrenz, Melissa Sanders, Ruth White, Sharon Meieran, Shannon Pullen, Patty Fale, Lindsay Wierdsma, June Bremmer

6:30 PM Meeting Attendance (24)

Ruth White, Jason Roepel, Heather Burton, Nellie McCarthy, Arah Gould, Jill Anderson, Curtis Roth, Natisha Doherty, Erika Pollock, Dick Hausken, Sharon Scheurer, Anne Eddy, Tania Giger, Jeff Dobbins, Janet Rosenthal, Katie Unflat, Anne Hill, Jeni Seller, Raja Afrika, Shannon Pullen, Melissa Sanders, Erin Barnett, Christina Geist, Sharon Meigh-Chang

- 1) Ruth presented an introduction to and overview of the PTA. She provided a summary of fundraising accounts, including PTA, Rieke Foundation, Rise Up For Rieke and RAT Race. (See attached Powerpoint for further detail.)
- 2) Andrea's Principal Report

We have 416 students enrolled at Rieke, up from 361 last year. Once a school goes over 400 students, Portland Public School District (the District) may provide other infrastructure supports, such as a one-day-a-week school counselor and an additional office staff person.

A physical headcount was done on Tuesday, September 13th. It will be done again on Tuesday, Sept. 20th. In early October, another head count takes place. All of these are used to assess Rieke's capacity to serve the increased number of students.

The District has parameters around class size but no specific capacity limits.

In assessing capacity, the District looks at many different aspects to determine the whole school picture, not just class size. The District also considers other resources the school has available, such as classroom space, current staffing and other resources. For example, we have 4 classrooms not in use.

The District may decide to give us additional Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers. We hope to know by the beginning of October. PPS has no budget resources for additional teachers. The District will be reallocating teachers based on needs throughout the district.

We also have 0.5 FTE set aside to hire a Basic Skills Support person, either a full-time educational assistant or a half-time certified teacher. So regardless of what the District decides, we are confident that even with our existing teacher-to-student ratios, Rieke teachers are delivering quality instruction and implementing routines. The teachers can handle 33 kids in their classroom. Andrea emphasized if nothing changes, the teachers will continue to succeed in delivering high quality education.

3) Q & A

Parent: Do we have a Plan B?

Andrea: We've positioned student teachers from Lewis & Clark (one-year commitment) and George Fox (semester commitment) in Kindergarten, 1st and 3rd grades. We also have a partnership with Wilson High School (WHS) to prepare 42 WHS students to be teaching assistants. We are training them how to partner and read with elementary school students, how to manage small groups of young students, how to engage kids, and how to correct young students when they make an error. We currently have 42 WHS students through January, who can opt to go thru June. Mary Mitchell is the speech pathologist for both Rieke and Wilson and is running the overall program. Erika Meyers, the business manager for Wilson, oversees the students when they are at Wilson. I oversee them when they are at Rieke.

Parent Comment re: Lewis & Clark interns: When they are licensed in the spring – they can be alone in the classrooms with the kids (in the home room with a closed door).

Parent: Last year we had a Reading Specialist but it sounds like this year we may have a full-time educational assistant. What is the difference and why did we decide to change?

Andrea: The Reading Specialist last year was a 12 hour per week personal contract position. When Rieke has a personal contract with someone for specific work, such as reading assistance, we cannot go over the bottom line budget for which we contracted. The personal contract type of position can also seriously limit Rieke's ability to provide consistent services. For example, we have no control over things like the contractor's vacation schedule. So when the contractor takes time off, we simply cannot offer that service. The District does not supply a substitute.

We believe the need for student support resources is so great, that we want to move away from contracting to hiring a teaching resource that is not limited to one type of service, such as reading. We want to hire a basic skills teacher that can assist with reading, writing or math. If we move to a FTE – the person has to come to work everyday. If they are sick we get a sub from the district. And we get more than 12 hours per week.

The question becomes: do we want that position to be a licensed teacher half-time (either half-time every day or full-day 2 ½ times per week) or do we want a full-time all day educational assistant?

We believe our needs can best be met with a full-time all day educational assistant and we have FTE set aside to hire that person. We were hoping to select that person already, but the District has been laying off educational assistants. What this means is that placement is now based on seniority. If we open up the position now, we have to take who ever is in seniority. We have been watching who is at the top of the list to see if their skill set matches our need. For example, if the current educational assistant at the top of the list is a high school algebra assistant, then that might not be the best fit for us. So we haven't opened that position yet. If by October, we haven't found a match, then we will decide to move forward with hiring a licensed teacher half-time. At that point, we would need to decide if we would want either half-time every day or full-day 2 ½ times per week.

Parent: Are we going to replace the ground cover on the playground?

Andrea: The rubber pieces on the playground that were worn, such as in front of the slide, have been patched.

Parent: In terms of capacity, we know that number of bathrooms has been an issue.

Andrea: Yes, there is no bathroom in the North Building. There is also no dishwasher. We have been in on-again/off-again discussions re: installing an ADA bathroom in the North Building along with a trough sink so multiple kids can wash their hands at one time.

Parent: What is the music offering this year?

Andrea: We have a one-year performing arts residency this year on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The RAT Race (Run for Arts and Technology) paid for 1 semester. PTA agreed to pay for 1 semester to make a full year. The performing arts residency, similar to what we had last year, is 16 sessions across 16 weeks and 1 musical performance. PTA matched \$4K, so now we have 2 semesters.

Parent: How many classes have more than 30 students?

Andrea: 6 classes currently over 30, 9 under 30 and 4 empty classrooms.

Parent: Is the growth concentrated in Kindergarten and 1st grade or is the growth spread over all the grades?

Andrea: The greatest growth has been in Kindergarten, we jumped from 64 to 76 Kinders. The other additional 40 students are stretched across 1st – 5th grades. There were 54 Kinders last year but now there are 66 1st graders.

Parent: Has there been citywide growth?

Andrea: I'm waiting to hear from other principals.

Parent: Are we taking transfers?

Andrea: We took 2 transfers in Kindergarten prior to realizing we were going to have such an increase in the number of Kinders.

Parent: How can parents volunteer?

Andrea outlined volunteer activities.

Parent: In the past, I volunteered to read in the classroom. Is that the same as Reading Buddies and what training can I get to be a better reading coach?

Andrea: Reading Buddies is an official program that was coordinated by Katie Berg, who is unable to continue this year. We are looking for a Reading Buddies Coordinator. We are also trying to develop a partnership with Fred Meyers and strengthen existing partnerships with the Neighborhood Associations to get reading partners that are from the community and not just parents. And yes, there is a training program for volunteers of the Reading Buddies program.

Parent: What is a Title I School?

Andrea: Title 1 is a federal classification of the number of students who need free and reduced lunches. Rieke has 13% of its population qualify for free and reduced lunch. A school needs to have over 50% of its population qualify for free and reduced lunch to be classified as Title 1.

Parent: Is there a TAG program?

Andrea: Children can get tested and qualify for TAG. The testing looks at reading skills, math skills and intellectual levels. There is a broader perception in development for these students. There is an official process for TAG nomination. Parents and teachers can nominate a student. Almost 1/3 of the kids at Rieke are TAG qualified. Due to this high level, there is a school-wide plan: what is offered to TAG students is differentiated. We offer extensions for students who are ready to go deeper into a particular subject. Math Detectives is an excellent example: Parents spend 45 minutes – 1 hour working with small groups that go do a higher level of math. Reading is a little easier to accomplish in class because you can give individual readers books that meet their level. But with math you need to pull students out.

Parent: What about art? I learned about Art Attack but is there an actual art teacher?

Andrea: Art Attack is run by the home room teachers, who are trained to run the program. Primary grades receive art instruction once a week.

Parent: What is an artist in residence?

Andrea: An Artist in Residence is a visiting professional who shares lessons and activities related to their work. The artist and the teachers plan together. The students might study an art form and then model an art piece based on that form.

Parent: Can you designate your funds to a specific event or activity?

Ruth: Yes, you can earmark through a check.

Parent: I've heard about student enrichments? What is that?

Sharon: We are working on after-school programs for the students. Eco-Club is our first six-week one-hour enrichment session and is being led by parent volunteer Jamie Repasky. We are looking for parent volunteers to lead additional topics for kids such as yoga, fossils and Lego robotics.