

Parents' Association of The Bronx High School of Science Executive Board Meeting January 11, 2023 (remote)

Attendees

Christine Kattan - Co-President
Jayesh Patel - Co-President
Elizabeth Polkovitz - Co-President
Jennifer Allen-Cheng - Co-Vice President
Yan Yu - Co-Vice President
Kai Lu - Treasurer
Li Ping Xu - Assistant Treasurer
Sheila Boland (taking minutes) - Co-Recording Secretary
Katia Kubicek - Co-Recording Secretary
Dorie Lederfajn Paparo - Co-Recording Secretary
Dongli Huang - Corresponding Secretary
Xia (Lisa) Li - Member-At-Large
Ellen Goldberg - Member-At-Large
Abhilasha Mahan - Member-At-Large
Novelle Maxwell-Sinclair - Member-At-Large
Paul Sinclair - Member-At-Large
Mimi Yee - Member-At-Large
Helen Qiu - Member-At-Large
Amy Xue - Member-At-Large

Absentees

Ram Halder - Assistant Treasurer

Elizabeth called the meeting to order at 5:46 pm and welcomed everyone. The November and December meeting minutes were approved.

New Business

1. President's Report

a) Donor Wall - Elizabeth introduced the donor wall for review. Board members have to decide whether to have it up or not, and if so, in what form. She outlined the 3 initial options;

Option 1: Bronze Donor (5 to 749), Silver Donor (750 to 2499), Gold Donor (2500 to 4999), Platinum Donor (5000 +)

Option 2: Bronze Donor (5 to 999), Silver Donor (1000 to 2499), Gold Donor (2500 to 4999), Platinum Donor (5000 +)

Option 3: Names only, no amounts. Does not acknowledge larger donations; Option 4: No wall.

She also mentioned a fourth option to have no wall.

Last year was the first time there was a wall and it received mixed reactions. Some parents find it too aggressive but Yan Yu said that some parents approached her this year and asked if one could be set up, at least on a trial basis.

Board members questions, reactions and comments;

- Can donors opt out of the wall?
- What's the purpose/objective of it?
- Some are not in favor of it and others are more open to it.
- Some feel that introducing it mid-year will cause confusion and be ineffective.

The only other public schools that have donor walls in place are specialized schools.

Christine reminded the group that there are other ways to encourage large donations, that we serve a wide range of situations and the challenge for the Board is to balance our decisions.

The wall was introduced last year when it came as a default with the One Cause software.

The anonymous portion is easy to manage and donors have the ability to select if they want their name to be listed or not. The aim of it is to increase participation and donations, by recognizing parents who have made donations. However, if one decision makes a group feel inadequate, then we need to question if it is the right option. There are other ways parents can contribute to the school. Whatever amount people donate, we are trying to encourage greater participation. The thinking is that a list of names is more impactful and compelling than a list of numbers. We need to consider the question of equity especially given that it's a public school.

Christine tabled the motion and said it would be brought to vote in February.

2. Principal's Report

Rachel Hoyle mentioned the winter concerts, the much-needed break, and acknowledged the good spirits among students heading toward mid-years. It is the first time in 3 years that they are being held. She stressed they are not as high stakes and the school wants to make sure it provides support to students and to give them the best instruction on how to prepare.

The Robotics team had its kick-off at the school. The game looks different. Excited about its new challenge.

In the Regeneron talent search, 6 Bronx Science students were named among the 300 students. Waiting to see who will become a finalist. Two of the 6 students were in math, 1 was social science (which was a homegrown project working just with her teacher) and 3 were in bio.

Questions from board members

- PSAT is there a limit on how many students can take the PSAT in the school? No, it will either be run over 2 days or else a 2nd room will be used for testing.
- A freshman parent asked when students can apply for the summer program. Trying to get the form out before winter break but if not, it will come out just afterward. Last year, the DOE wouldn't allow the school to run accredited programs in the building. The school will push for in-person programs this summer. Communication will be by email.
- When will the final grades for this marking period be sent to the schools for seniors? The last day for capturing grades is February 7 but the teachers will set a deadline for all work to be submitted and for accepting work from students.
- When do they go out to the colleges? New York has a late semester so it will be a week or 2 after February 7.

1. President's Report

a) Donor Wall (continued)

Christine resumed and asked if anyone had further questions, to reach out to Jayesh, Liz, Christine or to Yan. She also asked board members to be prepared to vote on it at the February meeting.

As well as initial 3 options, members will be able to vote for no wall.

b) Fair Student Funding

Elizabeth gave a mock presentation of the Fair Student Funding slides she was going to present at the PA meeting.

This funding is at the city level and the Department of Education is considering overhauling the way it works. It is significant for the school because the fund determines the hiring of staff in the schools and if they overhaul the allocation of weights to students, it will affect the money the school receives to finance the hiring of staff. Currently, each student has a weight of 1 and high school students have a weight of 1.03. A poverty weight applies only to grade 4 or under and a range of weights are applied for English language learners and to special education students. Bronx Science is considered an academic portfolio school and right now, the majority of schools are getting 100% of funds allotment. However, in the last budget, 3 changes were recommended, one of which was to add a weight for students in transitional/temporary accommodation and to high needs students. It's hard to know for sure what effect it will have on the school but the most concerning recommendation was to remove the academic weight which applies in academic schools such as Bronx Science. This could cost the school \$3.1 million in annual funding which is very concerning. The PEP notified community councils on January 4 to say they will be presenting proposals.

The PA is asking parents to find out when their local CEC is having their presentation. These will be held in Grade 1-8 schools. Parents are asked to please notify the PA with the details and if attending, please let the PA presidents know what's in the proposal. We cannot plan until we know what we're reacting to. PA presidents are trying to get a hold of the report.

The working group is not unanimous in supporting the proposal. A minority group recommended keeping the academic weight. The process is not transparent. Timeline is January 19 through early March. Parents are also asked to write a letter to PEP, education council and borough presidents. Please base any claims on the proposal itself and not on reports. Ultimately, we should be funding students and not schools and we have to lobby against the DOE's proposal to punitively defund a small category of schools. We agree that students in transitional housing and highest needs students need to be taken care of but this proposal is not the solution.

Christine reacted to the presentation saying that without wanting to alarm anyone, \$3.1 million translates to about 30 teachers. If budget cuts were to happen, the school would not deal with it by reducing staff reductions. We have different constituencies that have this on their radar too.

3. Treasurer's Report - Kai Lu shared the latest financial results in slides.

For the period July-Dec 2022;

target revenue \$443k, actual revenue to date \$249k,

budget \$443k, actual expenses to date \$91k

\$250k revenue has been generate so far until the end of December

Donations by month; September \$18k, October \$109k, November \$47k and December \$73k. Have reached 56.3% to target. Rolling ask
Expenses breakdown; PA admin expenses \$22k, student electronic subscription naviance and ny times) \$19k, student expenses \$36k, others \$12k.
As of 12/31/2022, bank balance was \$805k.
Kai is currently working on interim financial report due at the end of the month

4. Fundraising Update

Yan Yu said we're making really good progress with the annual appeal. We have a 50% increase in terms of participation rate and are 19.3% to target. We've achieved \$243k and the gap now is \$57k.

1. President's Report

c) Audit Committee

Christine explained that they're looking for someone on the board to volunteer for the committee. If interested, please reach out to her. It is to review revenue and expenses at the end of the school year (June). No financial background needed.

d) Nominating Committee

The nominating committee is in pretty good shape. Looking for a board member to join for next year and who is not planning to continue on the board.

4. Fundraising Update continued

Yan Yu pointed out an error from her presentation. The annual goal is actually \$300k and last year, it was \$250k. We need \$52k to reach that goal.

5. Other business

Christine will check in with everyone in the coming weeks and start having those conversations to determine interest in continuing next year with the board in the same or different position, or in a different PA role.

Christine adjourned the meeting at 6:45 pm.