

Garden Oaks Elementary SDMC Minutes

November 12, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm.

Introductions were made. Members present were Ms. Morris, Ms. Straker, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Charlton, Ms. Villareal, Ms. Wilgis, Ms. Dhayer, and Ms. Pollock.

Visitors present were: Mr. Diaz, Ms. Knauth and Ms. Woods

The Hurricane Ike plan for make-up time was reviewed. Ms. Pollock reported that the first draft of the plan was returned from the district office. The plan was revised to alter the early dismissal days on Nov. 7th, Dec. 19th, March 13th and May 28th in order to recapture lost instructional time. Early dismissal was change to 1:30pm on these days. The committee also reviewed other ways to recapture instructional time. Suggestions included restricting birthday celebrations on the campus and ensuring that students are not checked out of school early unless the family has an emergency or doctor's visit scheduled. The committee reviewed policies at other schools and the TEA requirements for compulsory attendance. The committee discussed the importance of keeping the school day focused on learning and instruction and ways that the school could better focus on meeting students' academic needs in a rich, nurturing environment. The committee voted unanimously to discontinue birthday celebrations during the school day with the exception of the Montessori observance of the child's special day. Traditional classes will continue to recognize children's special day, however, no parties will be held during the school day. The committee agreed that Ms. Pollock will draft a letter to send home with parents to explain this and other policies the committee may draft during today's meeting.

Also mentioned were students with chronic tardies to school. These children have significant loss of instructional opportunity. The committee discussed ways that the school could remind parents of the importance of bringing their children to school on time. Mr. Diaz and Ms. Pollock will call families who have many late arrivals. The on-time policy is included on the Transfer Student Contract and students at Garden Oaks on transfer who are chronically late will not be approved for transfer next school year. Perfect Attendance is impacted if students have more than 2 tardies. Ms. Dhayer announced that she would secure family memberships as rewards for students who have perfect attendance.

The committee then reviewed the results of the survey to teachers regarding the Character Parade. Ms. Pollock presented the information gathered from Principals at Horn, Kennedy and Browning where they have similar activities. After much discussion about the event and the disruption in the school day, the committee voted unanimously to discontinue the Character Parade during the school day and move it to be a part of the Fall Festival which occurs outside of school hours.

Ms. Pollock reminded the committee members to be sure to go online and complete the SDMC Webinar at www.pdserv.org and the group reviewed the FAQ's handout.

The committee heard a presentation from fellow committee member Jenna Dhayer, Executive Director of the NW YMCA on 34th Street. She presented an update of the YMCA program services and plans to provide enrichment classes as part of the YMCA

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program. The committee discussed the history of the YMCA at Garden Oaks and the different funding sources that support the program. Garden Oaks presently receives a CASE grant which helps underwrite a few scholarship spots for students as well as to provide for supplies for activities. Ms. Pollock stated that she has received a few parent concerns regarding more active supervision and the lack of enrichment activities. Ms. Dhayer stated that parent complaints should be directed to her. Ms. Pollock mentioned that she had met with Sylvia Ponce De Leon who coordinates the Oak Forest after-school program to discuss supplementing the YMCA program with other after-school enrichment activities. Committee members received copies of the Oak Forest After-School Program Extended Day handout that was printed from the internet. A survey will go home to parents to determine if there is a level of interest in additional activities.

Ms. Pollock apprised the committee of the HISD Magnet Program application process. At this time, the district is not accepting new Magnet Program applications. The committee discussed the importance of becoming a Magnet Program and the additional “advertising” the school would receive should we become a Magnet School. The committee discussed the possibility of focusing on Environmental Sciences as a Magnet Focus since the Montessori Program is a tuition-based program and probably would not meet the Magnet criteria as such.

Ms. Pollock informed the committee that Garden Oaks has received approval to offer a tuition-based Pre-Kindergarten program on the campus. Applications will be available on the website and Ms. Johnson will take the information with her to the Kindergarten round-up in the neighborhood.

The committee noted that students leaving campus early had been discussed under the topic of Hurricane Ike make-up plans.

Ms. Pollock announced that there is a regular 2nd grade teaching position being vacated as of Dec. 2008. The teacher has asked not to be identified. Volunteers will be needed to interview qualified applicants. Interviews will begin after Thanksgiving. The new teacher will begin in Jan 2009.

Campus security update: A chain-link fence has been added to the side of the school near the Multi-purpose Room to stop visitors from walking onto the campus and going directly to the 5th grade wing. A wrought iron fence will be added to the side of the school near the PK wing along with a gate or door to restrict access to the campus. Visitors MUST sign-in at the front office AND have a visitor tag on when on the campus. Security for the Spark Park is an on-going concern and a bid for a fence around the park is being sought. Ms. Wilgis suggested approaching the Car Hospital on Ella about a fundraiser to help defray the costs of these projects.

The committee was offered copies of the book *Last Child in the Woods*, by Richard Louv should they be interested in participating in a book study. The meeting was adjourned at 6pm.