

# Washington Middle School PTSA General Meeting Minutes

April 1, 2019

WMS Library, 6:30-8:30 pm

- 1) 6:30 Dinner and Social Time
- 2) 7 pm Call to Order & Announcements
  - Volunteers needed for upcoming events and WMS PTSA board  
see <http://bit.ly/WMSsignup> or contact [info@wmsptsa.com](mailto:info@wmsptsa.com)
  - Volunteers also needed for Friends of Washington Music board  
see [www.fowmhome.org](http://www.fowmhome.org) or contact [wms.music@gmail.com](mailto:wms.music@gmail.com)
- 3) Approval of January WMS PTSA General Meeting Minutes (motion by Nancy Allan, seconded by Katie Egolf, passed unanimously)
- 4) Presentation by LaKesha Kimbrough: "What If Every Child Knew They Could Succeed?"
  - a. PTSA Co-Vice President Ya'Vonne Hubbard introduced Ms. Kimbrough, who works for Seattle U, based at WMS. She runs a mentoring program and supports students & families and has been working with children, youth and families for 20 years. She also does racial healing work outside of her work at WMS.
  - b. What might it look like if all children internalized the belief that they could be successful?
    - a. Barriers:
      - i. Adults shutting kids down and not letting them fully experience youth
      - ii. Kids don't see people who look like them being successful
      - iii. Kids getting more negative feedback than positive feedback
      - iv. Kids internalize these things and start to act out
      - v. Parent observation: school also can be a barrier for kids if they aren't treated as intelligent or if teachers don't advocate for their success
      - vi. We have a lot of youth who feel like they aren't good enough & they can't be successful "because people with my skin color/family makeup/who live where I live aren't supposed to be successful." This shows up in classroom behavior, in grades, in whether we believe that all kids can go to college & have the jobs they want.
    - b. What is success, and how do we help all children feel successful?
      - i. How do we help every child see their innate goodness?
      - ii. Society says success equals money & status. We need to show youth that worth & value are there simply because they were born human: if you are born human you have the ability to be successful.
      - iii. When kids understand that they begin to engage, to see that they can be successful, to see themselves as successful.
      - iv. Another definition of success: education
    - c. Group discussion of solutions (mostly parent comments):
      - i. Allow our kids to connect and share their goodness with each other. How do we teach teachers to see when goodness is coming out of their kids & relate it to the content (in any content area)? If we teach teachers to see the goodness in our kids, then students can also start to see the goodness in our teachers.
      - ii. We need to help teachers learn to be intentional—eg., in advisory, we are looking for how do we bring out the goodness in our students? If someone says something hurtful, do we ask, is that coming from a place of hurt and how can we heal that?
      - iii. It can be challenging—teachers can perpetuate the problem without realizing it. And (as an HCC parent) I think the "HCC" wording is harmful, saying some kids are highly capable and some are not.

- iv. What about addressing some of those things through the arts—e.g., a recent theatre performance between a group of kids from Mercer Island and a group from Garfield Teen Life center—making those programs accessible gives kids a place to connect. More teachers of color would also help. (FOWM does some of that here.)
  - v. Kids separate by color. The new principal took on a big challenge and a lot of people were saying there is segregation happening in WMS. The principal allowed additional kids into HCC classes. Some classes were opened up across programs; our kids are being integrated & that is working well, the principal is positive & always there, leadership is moving the right way and things are better than last year.
  - vi. Kids—black & white—want to come together to fix the problems we see. We need more integration across labels.
  - vii. What can I tell my child, who's here every day, to do to bridge barriers? [A: we want to give our students tools to bridge gaps but that is a separate question and there are lots of tools—let us focus today on what can we do to help all students feel successful.]
  - viii. It's about bringing love to our kids & love to how we interact with each other & our community. Kids working together, adults working together—how do we bring it all together? It matters how WE treat the kids, how WE treat the teachers, how WE all treat each other. For our students to be able to do it, we need to be able to do it as adults. We can complain in community but how do we love in community?
  - ix. How do we empower kids, help them feel that they have a part in the decision-making? Teachers and kids should both feel more empowered. Also, how do we empower kids to take control of their behavior without punishing? Detention doesn't really help kids to make better decisions. Youth need to be empowered to be responsible for choices & need help navigating mistakes.
  - x. Lots of kids across the spectrum are feeling unsuccessful. I feel the opposite about this year being better—my 7<sup>th</sup> grader sees a drastic difference in his education (older sister took 2 years of Japanese & trip to Japan, 7<sup>th</sup> grade science is a train wreck)—the student feels like he studied really hard & is not getting what he expected.
  - xi. In my family we define success by supporting each other—how can we ALL work together to know how ALL children can be successful?
    1. I feel good
    2. I can relate to my feelings
    3. I can value you and still value me
    4. I have given my all and I feel good about it
    5. How do kids INTERNALIZE this?
- c. Reframing: we don't want kids to feel like either "I'm successful" or "I suck"—a reframing is, "talk to me about what the challenge was, or why do you feel that way, or hey, you did something new!" If we don't address their feelings, they have a wound that's not addressed, and wounds create patterns that we then start to enact on other people.
- a. Parent: If you're now a middle schooler and you've had the same problems all along, how do you break that sense of "I hate writing" or "I'm no good at math"? Can you break that pattern, or engage that kid by doing something different (e.g., theatre, or music, or tech...) Answer: "both and..." break pattern, rewire, other new things can be part of the rewiring.
    - i. Need a lot more buy-in that involves community resources—eg, community schooling, universities partnering with schools (like reaching out to SU to do more partnering, maybe with HOST or a lunchtime club—faculty and staff coming in with their expertise).
  - b. Adults have internalized patterns and are acting out on other people. Why? You received a message and you created a pattern because of it.

- c. How can we make all kids feel like the good human beings they were when they were born? I feel like there's a punitive sense at this school—that doesn't make kids feel good about themselves, or like they're good kids. Very extreme rules relative to students' behavior. Where is that balance in dealing with middle schoolers' behavior/development? We want to say to them: I trust you are a good person and here's why: name those things for them until they internalize and believe them. Celebrate EVERY SMALL SUCCESS.
- d. Right now kids can use the bathroom for 30 seconds a day. How do we make it so they can use the bathroom and be successful and not be stressed about it—and this is just a small example—how do we create more safe spaces for kids to exert their independence?
- e. Kids need a space where they can succeed—we don't want to ask them to do things that are outside their developmental reach; we want to be transparent so they trust us and know that we'll be honest with them.
- f. In working together & having shared goals we need to be able to trust each other—subtext here is that we don't believe we have shared goals
- g. How would we act out our shared goals as a community? How do we advocate when something doesn't go right? How do we make sure our kids are going to a safe place and everyone else's needs are being met too?
- d. How do we do this work as a school community? (Again, mostly parent comments)
  - a. Do we have common ground as a school community? Maybe we DO have and want shared goals but haven't communicated enough to understand that.
  - b. No transparency—nobody has explained why changes have been made or how the things we're talking about here are going to achieve these goals
  - c. Maybe we aren't on different pages, but our lenses are causing us to see things differently:
    - i. We do think we have shared goals but don't understand how the things that are happening to support the goals.
    - ii. If I know what work is being done toward a goal, I can understand & support it.
    - iii. There needs to be a level of trust. And if there's an understanding of what the goals are and how we're going to get there—then there's a level of trust.
    - iv. One q for tonight: how can the PTSA help support the school in this way—PTSA school listening sessions? Then bring info about shared goals to the principal?
  - d. As a community, would it be helpful to have a space to share stories & connect? Because our stories are more similar than we think it is?
  - e. Parent: we need transparency, partnership & communication. Parents & teachers need to be able to work together to help students succeed. Sometimes I send messages to teachers and they are more responsive than other times. For the principal--how do you decide who gets what elective? My son says "it was chosen for me." How can we have more information?
  - f. We would like more information on how some decisions are being made.
  - g. It takes everyone working together—parents, teachers, & students.
  - h. All families here have shared goal of wanting their kids to be successful, well-liked, performing well. It looks different for families of color & we have to acknowledge that—for those kids, their success is affected by their environment, which means WMS is affecting them every day. We have to examine ourselves first. Kids can sense & absorb everything that adults around them think. If we can do some critical thinking about what's happening at school for our kids of color—do we really trust ALL of our children to be successful? Are some of our children always suspect when we see them? If the PTSA can provide some training for our teachers and/or families here, that would be valuable. When you look different at a big black middle schooler walking down the hall toward you than you would at a blond five year old, you're giving him a message: "something about you is not safe." Some parents are too narrowly focused on their kids' education even when these things are happening to children of color. We can agree that we can and should address both.

e. The PTSA will provide a venue to continue this conversation.

## 5) Meeting Adjourned

### **In Attendance:**

Abdulaziz Abdulhamid  
Luul Abshir  
Nimco Ahmed  
Farhina Ahmed  
Cory Albright  
Saynab Ali  
Nancy Allan  
Karen Baker  
Emily Butler Ginolfi  
Gary Carlson  
Kathleen Carson  
Joy Christoferson  
Brian Connolly  
Robin Counts  
Laura Crain  
Heather Culver  
Leonard Dain  
Katie Egolf  
Arlene Fairfield

Jeanne Finley  
Dan Goforth  
Concepcion Gomez  
Elaine Harger  
Ya'Vonne Hubbard  
Paul Hughes  
Charlotte Jahn  
Maria Jasso  
Linda Kadowaki  
Rosa Lefkowicz  
Emily Lieberman  
Rosa Ma. Cortes Hdz.  
Jeremy Mazner  
Karen Mazner  
Erinn McIntyre  
Susan McLaughlin  
Cliff Meyer  
Jan Munger-Zura  
Greg Nakamoto

Anne Phyfe Palmer  
Ivetia Paniagua  
Patty Pearson  
Janey Petty  
Raegen Rasnic  
Owen Richards  
Martin Saxer  
Lisa Schaible  
KL Shannon  
Christine Shigaki  
Casey Sommers  
Katie Vos  
John Wechkin  
Tania Westby  
Emily Wheeler  
Sandra Wheeler  
Ursula White-Oliver  
Amy Zarrett  
Natalie Zheng

**Minutes taken by Emily Lieberman**