



Ross Elementary School
PTA General Body Meeting Minutes
April 3, 2019, 5:15 p.m.

Welcome, Kate Gardner, PTA President

President Gardner called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. She reported that the book fair at Politics and Prose and Comet Ping Pong raised \$1,067.83. We have already scheduled a similar fair for March 29, 2020. The Mother's and Father's Day Book Drive will be April 26, 27, 28, & 29. It will take place in front of Safeway on Saturday and in front of TD Bank on Sunday. The goal is to raise six to eight thousand dollars. The gross proceeds from the auction were \$57,542, which is the best the auction has done in five years.

Principal's Update

Principal Searl announced that enrollment opened on Monday, April 1, and the deadline is May 1. The first class to reach 90% enrollment by May 1 will win a water balloon fight with staff. The first class to reach 95% enrollment by May 1 will win free dress for the rest of the year.

Middle School Update, Daniel Adler (LSAT president)

Daniel Adler provided an overview of the middle school issue. Prior to 2014, Ross was in-boundary for Francis-Stevens and Wilson. After the 2014 boundary review, Ross no longer had feeder rights to Wilson. DCPS promised to build a new Shaw Middle School, but Ross and Thomson retained the right to attend middle school at Francis Stevens (or Cardozo) until that new school opened.

In November, the mayor announced that Banneker, a selective high school, will be modernized and built at the Shaw site. Families who were expecting a middle school were upset and wanted to know what the plan is for the promised middle school. A "Save Shaw Middle School" movement developed and is being led by families at Seaton, Garrison, and Cleveland, who do not feel they have a viable middle school option. As a result, DCPS has been engaging in a series of public meetings to consult with the community about options.

It is an open question what will happen if DCPS builds a new middle school. There are three potential outcomes if a new middle school is built:

- Ross has feeder rights exclusively to the new middle school
- Ross retains the option to go to Francis Stevens



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- Ross feeds exclusively to Francis Stevens

President Adler reported that the Ross survey showed that families are increasingly comfortable with Francis Stevens and have a revealed preference for that option. He suggested that the Ross community needs to think about its position if we end up with a new middle school.

President Adler further shared the data presented by DCPS at one of the community meetings. He explained that DCPS believes the numbers do not warrant building a new middle school. There are only 149 fifth graders across the five feeder schools, and the average retention rate city-wide from 5th to 6th grade is 50%. (The retention rate is in the 70's at Deal and 12% at Cardozo). DCPS says it is not viable to build a middle school for under 500 students. Principal Searl noted that a larger student size allows for increased offerings in mathematics, world languages, and electives.

The proponents of a new middle school are arguing that if there were a great middle school, there would be induced demand. They also propose that DCPS move the kids from Francis Stevens to the new middle school to reach the critical mass.

President Adler says he suspects (but does not know) that DCPS will not build a new middle school because DCPS does not believe the numbers are there, and there is no money for it in the 5-year capital budget. He suspects that DCPS will instead try to improve Cardozo. If that happens, and DCPS creates a new middle school "at Cardozo," it is unclear if Ross will retain feeder rights to Francis Stevens, particularly if Francis Stevens is becoming overcrowded. President Adler noted that Francis Stevens is scheduled for a renovation in 2022/2023. There may be an opportunity for Francis Stevens to increase its capacity.

Some other ideas that are being floated in the community are co-locating a middle school and Banneker at the Shaw site and adopting the Francis Stevens education campus model at Seaton.

Currently, there is an online survey for families to fill out about the middle school issue. DCPS will present its analysis of the results at the end of the year. A decision as to what to do could drag out because there is a new chancellor and a lot of employee changes in central office.



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President Adler proposed that Ross be clear on the record that our families have a revealed preference for Francis Stevens, it is an option the Ross community would like to retain, and that DCPS should build on this success.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:18 p.m. The next PTA General Body Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 15 at 6:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY STEFANIE SCHNEIDER,
SECRETARY