

Thanks to all of you who attended the meeting last Wednesday evening and we look forward to meeting and working with all of you who were unable to attend. We had some great discussion, suggestions and are positioned to move forward! On the note of moving forward, everyone seemed to agree that meeting monthly and alternating between daytime and early evening meetings is a good idea, so our **next meeting will be Wednesday, January 12 at 10:30 a.m. at MYAC.**

Also, if you do not want to be copied on notes or meeting notices in the future, please e-mail Maria Olig at molig@wi.rr.com and you will immediately be taken off of our distribution list.

Expectations of Parents in the Group:

Since the beginning, this group has consisted of parents who have been able to contribute at various levels of involvement, based on their availability. Some parents have taken leadership roles, attending most meetings and volunteering heavily; while others have jumped in to meetings and/or events whenever they could. The input from the diverse group of parents from different backgrounds and perspectives has been valuable to First Stage. This flexible structure also seems to be working for the parents and the group so there is no need to change or redefine the expectations. To provide greater structure and efficiency, we will create subgroups and group leaders for specific areas. There is more information on that below.

Setting Objectives for the Parent Group:

The primary objective of the meeting was to set our direction by prioritizing our role in supporting First Stage. We prioritized our objectives as: event planning, volunteering and providing feedback as needed. There were a lot of great “off the cuff” suggestions for both small and large scale events (from movie nights at MYAC to field trips to the Rep and Goodman Theater in Chicago) for both students and parents. Volunteering will continue to be done on an as needed basis. Volunteer needs will be communicated to the members of the Parent Group at the monthly meetings, in the monthly meeting notes, and through separate e-mails (only when necessary). Input and feedback from members of the Parent Group will be solicited from the group by the First Stage staff members as needs arise, via the monthly meetings or e-mail surveys.

The issue of improving communication to new First Stage parents was raised and Heather Whitmill will lead the subgroup and work with Erin Whitehead on this project.

It was decided that the Parent Group will not take on fundraising as a primary objective, but we did note that it is likely that some student activities will become fundraising opportunities; and that individual members will also volunteer to assist with fundraising programs and mini campaigns run by the staff.

Next Steps:

1. Identify Group Leaders and members for the subgroups. The three initial subgroups will be: Events, Volunteer/Staff Support and New Parent Communication. If you are interested in leading or being a member of any of these subgroups, please contact Maria at the e-mail address above.

2. Come up with a new name for the group. To quote Rob Goodman “we need a sexier name.”
Feel free to e-mail suggestions to Maria. We will brainstorm suggestions at the next meeting.

Ongoing and Upcoming Events:

To minimize the number of e-mails, whenever possible we will use these notes to communicate upcoming First Stage events, activities and volunteer opportunities.

Holiday Costume Ball for middle and high school students will be held at 6:30 p.m. on December 16th at the Todd Wehr Theater. I’ve attached a flier that contains additional details. Not all students may have costumes to wear, so we are in need of prince and princess attire for this event. Please contact the Academy Office at 414-267-2970 if you have costumes, old prom/bridesmaid dresses or boys formal wear that you are willing to donate.

Make Bee-Lievers is in progress. More information is available and bees are being sold on-line at <http://www.firststage.org/supportus>. There will be opportunities for parents to help sell bees during the performances of *U Bug Me* from February 18 - March 12 at the Todd Wehr Theater. Interested parents can also assist with the planning and preparation for the Bee Bop which will be held this summer at MYAC. Please contact Nancy Clarkin at 414-267-2938 if you have any questions or are interested in helping out with this event.

I Think I Can will take place in the MYAC lobby prior to the performances of the First Steps show, *Little Engine*, on Saturdays and Sundays at 11:00 and 1:00 from January 29 - February 13. Parents interested in volunteering should also contact Nancy Clarkin at 414-267-2938.

Best wishes for happy and peaceful holidays. As always, please feel free to contact Maria Olig if you have any questions on feedback on the Parent Advisory Group.