

# IFA All Family Meeting Notes

October 2, 2019



5:45 - snacks, mingling

6:00 - icebreaker, introduce yourself to one person in the room that you do not know

## 6:05 - Agenda

School Representative Introductions

Meet the IFA Board

IFA Purpose & Goals

Financials

How to Get Involved

Upcoming Dates

State of the School update from School Leadership

## School Reps Present:

Debbiy Dantzler Williams, Kate Keplinger, Shannon Kane, Suriya Douglas, Neoka Smith

## Presentation by IFA Board President Martha Holley-Miers

Meet the IFA Board

**President**

Martha Holley-Miers  
Janey (5<sup>th</sup>) and Jack (pk4)

**Vice President**

Leah Squires  
Olive (K) and Arthur (pk3)

**Treasurer**

Michael Linden  
Eloise (4<sup>th</sup>) and Wesley (K)

**Secretary**

Amanda Hoffman  
Wendy (1<sup>st</sup>)

**Members at Large**

Tim Lyons  
Gilly (5<sup>th</sup>) and Dash (3<sup>rd</sup>)

Charles Montgomery  
Maria (7<sup>th</sup>), Charlie (3<sup>rd</sup>), and  
Gabrielle (1<sup>st</sup>)

Abe Newman  
Micah (3rd) and Sadie (K)

Miriam Sznycer-Taub  
Vera (K)

Terrence Thurmon  
Terrence Jr (1<sup>st</sup>)



**\* IFA Board**

Attending: Martha, Leah, Charles, Terrane, Amanda, Abe, Tim (Miriam & Michael unable to attend)

**IFA Purpose & Goals:**

Everyone is in who is a caregiver is automatically in the IFA.

We provide an open forum (google group), support teachers & staff, social interactions, raise money that goes directly to the school, student recruitment, maintain community relationships.

Q/A: We are a 501(c)3

**Financial Overview:**

The IFA spent about \$7K last year for things like staff appreciation, child care & food for meetings. As you can see we spent no money on beautification. We raised about \$3200. Those numbers obviously don't match. That's because several years ago before the school was in this location the families raised a bunch of money to build a playground on the roof of the old building. After the decision was made not to move forward with that project, the money that was raised was put aside as seed money for the IFA. The IFA has been drawing down on that each year to make up for the difference in income vs. expenses since most fundraising is for the school and not the IFA. This means the reserve goes down every year and we have discussions in place for a plan to address this fact.

This year we have an additional social event and we are increasing childcare. We also have some additional one-off expenses for licensing. Still nothing for beautification. We lowered fundraising since we're not selling merchandise anymore since the school is taking this on. We do raise from the family portraits and some other small things. We anticipate drawing down around \$7K with a balance of \$17K in the bank. We are also talking about asking families and community corporations to be sponsors for some of our events to help offset the costs of our events this year.

### **Social Events:**

First social event is a new one this year - **FALL FEST!!!!** Abe & Tim and co-chairing. They are planning a "big, huge" event and are looking at things like barker events, bake off, fire trucks, face painting, etc. If anyone has ideas or suggestions let them know. Save the date for **November 2nd**.

*Chili Cook Off* - February, Michael Linden is running point and more to come closer to the event

*Kids CanDo Fair* - suggested by Suriya and created by PEP. During the day kids will learn about things they can do at home to foster their confidence and independence. We will look for some volunteers to help guide that, with a comprehensive guide from PEP, and will add that to the movie night in February.

*International Festival* - Now entering its 4th year, this is an amazing event at the end of the year that needs new leadership. The founding organizers will provide guidance and training to anyone who can step in.

*Third Thursday coffee* - Eric Traub and Moira McLaughlin are taking this on!

*Movie Night*

*Pride Parade*

*Staff-Family Softball Game?* (with Mr. Thomas)

The IFA and any event coordinators will send out messages and calls for help as dates draw nearer, so please keep an eye out for more ways to get involved.

A sign up sheet went around for more pressing needs -- Kiss & Go, Third Thursdays, Fall Fest, Fundraising -- many thanks to all who have signed up!

Q: Recruitment Committee - not on the list yet because we haven't coordinated on what the school needs.

### **Staff Appreciation Events:**

Planning is already underway by Hannah Mullen. Please contact her if you want to get involved.

## **Fundraising**

The IFA leads a comprehensive fundraising campaign every year. All funds raised are collected by the school directly and used to meet needs as determined by the administration. In the 18-19 school year, the IFA, its great volunteers, and school staff raised \$137,000!

Boxtops for Education: it is switching to an online format, and we need a new coordinator. Our previous lead is happy to help onboard any new volunteer(s).

Online Auction - will be in January/early February. Terrance is point on the activity, with the goal of securing many items before the end of the calendar year.

Later in the year:

Inspired Giving Week: mainly in charge of communications calendar, as well as any volunteers for dollar days collections at school

Inspired Evening - **May 2nd @** Edgewood Arts with Live classroom experience.

## **Beautification & Community Service**

Beautification more complicated with the rec center. *DPR meeting on Monday at the school.*

Seeking people who are interested in other ways that the school can be involved in community service.

### **Other Ways:**

Kiss & Go - wonderful way to meet families. New prize fairy!

You will hear about more opportunities as the year goes on.

### **Upcoming Dates:**

Need organizer for Third Thursday on October 17th

# School Presentation

**Debbiy:** Thank you to the IFA and families for the support and trust. The school has grown so much during my tenure with many families who have been with us since the building. Thank you for the support. And thank you to everyone for coming out and joining us.

## **State of the School**

Things feel really good. We had a great start to the beginning of the year with professional development for all staff. Many teachers volunteered over the summer to improve their skills and help others. Last spring we did a reorganization of staff; we needed some new shoulders to share the work we are doing. Suriya is now working on issues of equity across all families, making sure that everyone is having an equitable experience at ITDS. She is also taking a look at the work we are doing on assessments and looking at student success. What might be keeping a child from taking in everything that is presented to them every day. We are asking kids to take risks all day long and they need to feel safe in order to do that. I also always have an open door policy so please bring things to me.

## *Basement renovation*

We received a \$500K construction grant and we just signed all of the paperwork. Construction will begin in days//weeks that will be done on the ground level. This will be a partial renovation due to our finances, but will provide a flexible space to accommodate things like indoor play space, after school, etc... We are planning to do a full renovation in the future.

## *Quality site review*

This fall the DC Public Charter School Board is doing a site visit to review the school over a two week period. They will visit 75% of the classrooms to observe instruction and determine if we are fulfilling our charter. One of the reviewers was so impressed she asked to come back and film the teacher as an example of exemplary teaching. They will meet with school leadership in about 2 months to give an overview and then they will prepare a report that will be available publicly. What they observe this year will impact the charter review process in year 10 and will give some guidance on that process as well.

## *Edgewood Rec Center/Field*

If you haven't done so, read the letter from John as the board president. If you can, attend meetings about DPR and the work done on the rec center. Kate & Debbiy are in constant contact with DPR about the work and progress. The current small mulch space will also be disappearing soon as they continue to work on the field.

## *Audit*

We concluded our annual on-site financial audit today. The audits have always had the highest scores so there is no reason to expect that won't be the case this year as well.

## **PARCC testing**

Even if your child isn't taking the test yet, every teacher is part of the work and support they receive in preparation for the test. It is one of many measures we use. For example, how is your child while going to school and coming home from school - that is also a measure. PARCC is looking at college & career readiness. The country has grappled with education issues and are still dealing with it. At ITDS we want to be transparent.

April 20-May 15, 2020 is the testing window this year - we set our own internal testing schedule within that window. Results are received in late July under strict embargo. They go to the school first for review so they can see if they match how they predict the student would do ahead of time and who the entire class would do. Staff reviews accuracy of information and has a chance to contest if needed. Then once it's public, the school sends the information out as soon as possible.

Overall, the schools showed improvement in ELA - English, language arts. 4 is good and 5 is the whipped cream on the top. Students maintained growth from the previous year in math. When looking more closely, we see that students showed a high proficiency in calculations but not in explanation, which is a big part of PARCC. Why did you choose that operation and how did you come up with that. So this year the school is increasing time about HOW they are choosing their answers and solving problems. There is also an expectation that you will be able to analyze someone else's answer, argue it and eventually solve the problem in different ways. It is now about recognizing that it's not just about memorizing and also supporting students in approaching math problems in many ways. It's about knowing what is a possible way to solve a problem.

Q: How to help with homework when the language is so different then what we may be used to.  
A (school & other parents): Sometimes it's ok to let the child figure it out or not on their own. Other times ask them about different strategies. The Eureka workbooks have guides and there is also an online resource guide and YouTube videos as well.

Q: Computer games in classrooms for math. How is that helping with the explanation part of math?

A: Try not to worry about it too much at home because we are balancing it at school. And the games are one of many options to help bolster confidence while others will bolster other skills. It should all be part of a balanced approach.

Q: Student anxiety about PARCC tests and timed test. How to help kids deal with that?

A: PARCC is timed for general students and is generous. There is some prep time starting in 3rd grade with timed testing even if not the content. Eureka has a digital testing platform that is similar to the PARCC platform. In the past, the school had to spend time teaching them the computer skills to TAKE the test whereas with the 3rd graders now the Eureka platform is

helping. And the teachers are also looking not just at the scores but who isn't finishing and/or is getting right to the limit.

Q: Will a typing tutor be available this year again for students new to computer test taking?

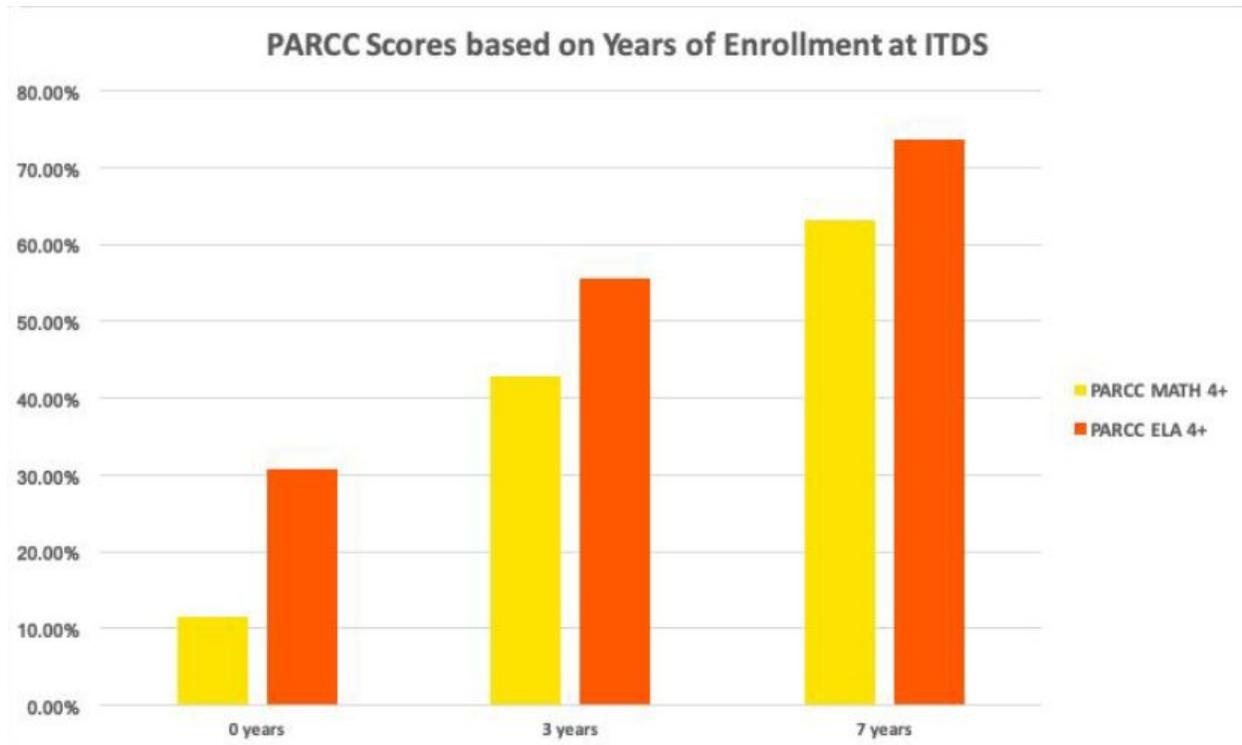
A: Will be coming out shortly

Students with special needs also doing well. Growth & Achievement are two different things and both are important in different ways. Significant growth in ELA again but are just maintaining growth in math. There is now a daily "IE" block - intervention & enrichment. This is a time for teachers to do specific work with students in groups to reinforce or grow. All our tools require a set amount of time but we also want time to allow for specialized instruction to allow students to achieve and grow.

We still have an achievement gap. It's beyond white students achieving differently than students of color. We also see gaps between genders, native English speakers and English Language Learners: these gaps are targeted during the IE block for every student.

If you go to <http://results.osse.dc.gov/school/3064> you can look at the performance summary for ITDS. You can see how are students are doing over time, against the city, as groups, by grade and a number of different parameters to dig into results. ITDS is the 4th highest performing school in ELA. As a school we look at a range of ways students learn and grow. We are striving for a balance in PARCC testing and preparation with the rest of their schooling like specials and recess.

"The longer students are enrolled at ITDS the more likely they are to be proficient in ELA and math" Debbiy



## Other Questions

Q: Ground Floor Construction & PreK students

A: We are assured that they those students won't be disturbed.

Q: Anything ITDS wants from rec center

A: Please attend. We would like to have access to the courts. They will be asking about programming.

Q: Drop-off. Can Douglass be on-way?

A: We tried before but the community has to sign off on it. There have been some conversations with neighbors and Kate is continuing work on crossing guards.

Q: Kiss & Go. Is that window earlier now?

A: Staff on duty starting at 8am. Families volunteer :)

Q: Sustainability and limiting waste, especially at breakfast, e.g. no more disposable containers.

A: That is a great idea but we can't take that on right now.

Q: Is there a better app than Edlio?

A: This is our first full year with it and we want to give it a full year. Have everyone use it and then get real feedback. Plan on it being here for at least 2 years. If you have questions get in contact with Monisha Karnani about getting on the right pages.

Q: PARCC comparing to other assessments like iready & PARCC predictability

A: Iready is pretty accurate within statistical variance. We sometimes find gaps because iready doesn't require students to explain thinking. That's when we look at other things like the Eureka app.

Q: Early indicators for students that need extra support

A: Teacher observation of students in the classrooms is the best strategy across the many ways the teachers are interacting with the students. Teachers can then use the IE time before the student may work with the formal support team.

Q: Accommodations with IEP and 504

A: Those are made when the plans are made and are varied depending on the plans and needs. Those accommodations go throughout the entire year - they aren't just for PARCC.

Q: How do you meet the needs of different students in one class

A: The programs we pick help us lean into these different strengths and levels to meet students where they are and help them grow.

Q: Are there opportunities to pair older kids with younger kids with math like we do with reading partners?

A: Looking into it now that we're getting everyone on Eureka. And it has also been a good way to get the older students to model how to explain their thinking when you ask them to teach it to a younger student.

Q: School Psychologist

A: We contract out when we need it. We have 1.5 people on staff currently.

Q: The decision regarding Spanish

A: Work in progress and how to deal with the staffing we have. There are questions about what we can deliver and how deeply we can go.

Homework - Suriya

Suriya led an exercise to understand the different ways families appreciate and/or struggle with homework. There was great variance in how families experience homework -- it is different for every child. There is not one homework policy that will fit every family and child.

We lean on you to communicate with the teacher about the needs of your child with homework - it needs to be more challenging, it needs to be able to be done in aftercare, etc. The purpose of

homework is not to learn new skills. If they don't know how to do the homework that is a data point that your child's teacher needs.

We are working on vertical alignment to ensure each grade is building on the earlier grades for homework expectations. Families shared there needs to be stronger horizontal alignment within grades to ensure consistent expectations and support. There also needs to be a system for feedback to students on their homework. This is a work in progress to create a unified system. Each principal is working on this alignment. Any families with continued concerns about homework for their child(ren) is asked to reach out to classroom teachers and principals.

The upcoming IFA December 12 meeting will also feature a discussion with school leadership about academic standards.