

Hall School PTO Meeting
January 10, 2017 – 6:30-7:30 pm
Hall School Library

- **Direct Appeal**
 - Total of \$16,050 from 26 donors raised so far

- **Upcoming Events**
 - Winterfest
 - Planning is continuing
 - Cake walk sign up needs to be created and sent out
 - Spring fundraiser
 - Concern about whether a lack of babysitter could be a deterrent to parents' attending
 - We could consider partnering with a high school as a fundraiser
 - PATHS has an early childhood program we could maybe partner with, have parents pay a fee for childcare, proceeds go to program
 - We should connect with Tina to coordinate this if we want to proceed
 - Community potluck
 - Will be February 10th

- **Vision for new Hall School**
 - Guest speaker – Superintendent Botana
 - Emphasized there is not a goal to dismantle Many Rivers program
 - Many of the things that make the program so valuable will be continued
 - Many Rivers began at a time when the approach was vastly different from the typical classroom instruction, but over time that has changed and there are not as many differences between approaches now
 - Important characteristics of Many Rivers program include:
 - Staying with group of peers/students over time
 - Small learning communities
 - Project based or in-depth learning
 - Student voice and choice within the program
 - Integration of the arts
 - Focus on the region/community
 - Family involvement
 - Out of district families will still be able to have their children attend Hall
 - District is committed to keeping these elements of the program

- Seeking to engage families to leverage their commitment to the program to build up the community of the new Hall School as it moves forward into the new building
- Dawn Kenniston and John Dickerson – Administration view and goals
 - History of the Many Rivers program:
 - MR began in 1985, prior to that, the entire school was a more traditional approach to education
 - Between 1985-1995, ~20% of Many Rivers were neighborhood families
 - Lots of interest in the program at that time
 - Wait lists
 - 1995-2005
 - The neighborhood program became more collaborative, moving towards team teaching
 - ~50% of the program was made up of neighborhood families
 - 2005-2015
 - Less distinction between programs and teaching teams between Many Rivers and neighborhood program
 - ~80% Many Rivers students are neighborhood students
 - 2016 +
 - Looking to identify what works best in both the neighborhood program and the Many Rivers program, bringing those concepts forward to identify best practices
 - Trying to identify which programs best meet the varied needs of students
 - River Groups
 - Teacher/staff teams of 8-10 people have been meeting
 - They include techs, teachers from both Many Rivers and neighborhood programs
 - 6 “Rivers”
 - Goal is to share ideas and experiences and identify best approaches
 - Goals for the new Hall School
 - Want to group teachers into smaller groups as the school community will be over 500 students in the new school
 - What is the best approach? Design is open – could be three groups of teachers, all with different approaches;

could be that they all have the same approach, etc. – To be determined.

- VERY early in the discussions and planning process. School administration would like to have monthly check -ins with parents to update us on progress and gather feedback.

- Teacher feedback

- It's enlightening to "think forward" while also holding on to what they value and love most about Hall school
- The bottom line focus is on creating a safe, loving community for the students
- Val Vassar is very excited about these discussions and to see the interest and support for the approach of the Many Rivers principals – we have come a long way and she is excited to see where we go. Has seen innovation in the school through both programs.

- **Q&A**

- What is the financial burden of Many Rivers on Hall?

- None. Just like other classrooms in the school.

- Parents seemed to agree with the important aspects outlined in Dawn and John's presentation (several mentioned) but had many questions about whether those will be the defining characteristics of the new Hall School.

- These aspects are:
 - Multiyear relationships
 - Project based
 - Community involvement
 - Focus on the arts
 - Varied structures and settings to meet needs of all students
- This is an evolution – administration is seeking lots of perspectives and a commitment to consensus so we can move forward with a vision everyone is committed to. Too early to define exactly what this will look like.
- Goal is to take the best of Many Rivers and Neighborhood program practices and integrating – a commitment that best practices will be applied

- Several parents express confusion/unsettled feelings about fate of Many Rivers program
 - Admin response is that we are very early in the process and working to be as transparent as possible and get voices to the table to make it a collaborative process
- Would there be parent choice?
 - Too soon to say
- Will it be identical to what exists now?
 - No
- Some challenges with Many Rivers in recent years
 - Turnover – high as of late, though two teachers did stay in it for many years until retirement. Among the current group of teachers, longest tenure in the program is 3 years.
 - Since 2009, some of the curricular autonomy has been lost due to requirements related to learning standards. There are more mandates on teachers that were not there in the past, which does more closely align the grade level instruction that is occurring across both the neighborhood and MR programs
 - Sociodemographics and diversity were challenging in recent years as the MR program was not very diverse. In the past year, that has really seemed to change.
 - This is due to the neighborhood program classes being full, and MR 3/4/5 having space, so all new students went into the program, so it's more reflective of the community now, and not as much of a reflection of more diverse groups opting in.
 - Final comment from PTO Co-President Mary Wellehan – sounds as though there is a lot of divisiveness and thinks that it is very important that we are all looking at this as being part of ONE Hall School and how to best position moving forward.