

## **The Connection Meeting**

Friday, January 16, 2015, 8–9AM

**Attendees:** 13 attendees, including School Administration Manager Catherine Serrano

**Cultural Holiday Project:** At the February 2014 Connection meeting some caregivers inquired about how the Peabody School could more consistently approach cultural and religious holiday traditions. The creation of a task force was approved by Principal Jennifer Ford, and a small group of parents met with her in early December of 2014 to outline a process for engaging Peabody teachers, parents and administrators in transparently and respectfully gaining consensus on how our school approaches holidays. The time line is still in draft form. Rough outline: In winter/spring 2015 a survey group of teachers, administrators, and parents will create and disseminate a survey to the entire school community, and they will hold a community coffee to answer questions about the overall process. Community members will then be openly invited to participate in the task force that will analyze the survey data and create proposed options for moving forward. They will present those findings and proposals at a community-wide meeting in the late spring, and finally make recommendations to Ms. Ford. The goal is to adopt new guidelines for the start of the next school year/September 2015.

**Room Parent Program:** The topic of reintroducing Room Parents to each classroom was raised at the October Connection meeting, and we are getting close to launching the program. The room parent could act as a liaison between the teacher and other parents to help disseminate classroom needs as well as help with school-wide events such as the Staff Appreciation Lunch held every spring. The specifics of what a room parent would do would depend largely on the teacher's needs from classroom to classroom, and we are also seeking help for our specials teachers (art, music, phys. ed.). In November KB Mello created a Survey Monkey tool for Principal Jennifer Ford to distribute to teachers. With this school-wide teacher feedback, Becky Harmon created a flyer, which was emailed and sent home to caregivers in backpacks on December 23. Next, Family Liaison Nicole Sullivan will gather respondents and work with The Connection to link teachers to caregivers. Goal is to connect teachers with room parents by the end of January.

**BOKS Update:** BOKS (Build Our Kids' Success) is a research-supported initiative developed by Reebok that promotes the profound impact of physical activity on a child's mind, body and community (website: <http://www.bokskids.org>). BOKS is for K-5 students and takes place in the Peabody gym on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 8:00–8:40AM. Paula Akiba and Sue Hargrove are lead trainers. Paula reported that attendance has leveled off and is steady, mostly K-2 students. Paula wondered how we might attract more grade 3-5 students. While schedule and format will remain the same for this year, attendees talked about polling grade 3-5 students this winter or spring to get a better feel for what, if anything, might motivate our older students to attend BOKS.

### **Friends of Peabody Update:**

Friends of Peabody (FoP) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization comprised of parents and teachers at the school who want every child to have the opportunity to participate in field trips and experience cultural events. Through donations from parents and other friends of the Peabody community, FoP is able to provide grants to teachers to benefit as many students as possible. The Friends of Peabody Benefit Night on Tuesday, January 13 was a tremendous success. The turnout from the Peabody Community was fantastic and Flatbread was pleased with the amount of business generated. Friends of Peabody are very grateful for the support of the school leadership in supporting the event and to the Peabody families, teachers and staff. As a result of the pizza sales on Tuesday evening, FoP will receive a check from Flatbread in the amount of \$787.50. In addition, t-shirt and raffle ticket sales brought in approximately \$1,800.00. Friends of Peabody are now working on ways to market the 2015 Peabody shirts to those who couldn't make it to the event on Tuesday.

### **Open Houses for Kindergarten Lottery:**

Ms. Serrano informed attendees that the Peabody School holds an open house for prospective students and families in October. We do so in the fall because the deadline to submit school choices is early January. Attendees liked the idea of The Connection again hosting a welcome coffee for new families when we hold an open house in May for students and families actually placed at Peabody School.

**Service Days and Year of Service:**

A question was raised about what we were doing at Peabody to commemorate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Ms. Serrano mentioned that we discuss in classroom curriculum, and John and Ellen reminded attendees that the City of Cambridge holds a day of service to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. Related to volunteerism, Ms. Serrano mentioned that the Peabody School used to offer a “year of service” with different activities every month, something Nicole Sullivan had also mentioned at the November Connection meeting. Through this initiative, every month we would promote a different volunteer or service activity within the Peabody community. Potential ideas include trick-or-treats for UNICEF, December mitten and hat drive, spring clean-up. Attendees agreed we should keep this on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Important Note:** Caregivers wishing to volunteer, in any capacity, must complete a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) form, which takes two minutes to complete in the front office.

**Next Connection Meeting:** The Connection meets the third Friday morning of every month. Due to February vacation, the next Connection Meeting will be Friday, February 27, 8AM, at Peabody School library.