

# Scottsdale Parent Council General Meeting

## Minutes

November 9, 2011-11-09

### Saguaro High School

Meeting called to order by Heather Heroldt at 9:00am

Attendees were welcomed by Brian Corte, Principal at Saguaro.

**Dr. Eric Meyer – Overview of Make Your Tax Credit Count presentation** - Dr. Meyer introduced himself as both a SUSD Governing Board Member and member of the Arizona State Legislature, but was attending this meeting as a *parent* of a SUSD student. Dr. Meyer is concerned about class sizes and says that district parents have come to him with concern on this issue as well. In searching for a solution to the issue of class size, he looked at Tax Credit dollars offsetting expenses from M&O. The District can hire teachers with that M&O savings. Going into next year will see more budget cuts from the State. The Arizona Legislature has cut \$1.2 billion in education funding to the state and SUSD has had to cut \$30 million out of the \$170 million M&O budget.

**Gwen Parker and Kim Hartman – SUSD Parents - Invest in our Future – Invest in our Kids presentation** -

-Schools in SUSD have collected about \$1 million in Tax Credit money so far this year. Two million was collected in 2010. SUSD could generate as much as \$30 million in Tax Credit money if every family gave the maximum of \$400 per family. This can only be done with education to our parents on the benefits of Tax Credit to our district.

#### THE NUMBERS:

-Tax Credit money is not a donation – it is a credit on Arizona state tax that you get back at the end of the year.

-Tax Credit money needs to be used for Extra Curricular and all kids need to be able to participate.

-In past 3 years class sizes have incrementally increased due to loss of \$1.2 million in state funding.

-Class size in the state of Arizona averages 34 kids per classroom.

-The national average – best practice is 20-25 kids.

-We have gone from 150 to 180 kids per middle school and high school teacher. Teachers need to focus on a large number of children.

-If we could go back to the staffing level of 3 years ago, we would get back to 25 kids per class.

-\$1.5 million in Tax Credit dollars would reduce SUSD class size by 1 child.

-\$1.6 million in Tax Credit would reduce class by 4 children.

-\$7.5 million in Tax Credit would bring class size down to 25 children.

Benefits of Tax Credit – It can free up money from M&O. We need to use Tax Credit money to pay for things that M&O would normally pay for.

*Q: Can you explain how Fine Arts and Foreign Language could be affected with Tax Credit?*

Tax Credit would free up M&O dollars. At the Elementary level, it could pay for noon aides. Schools could use Community Schools or the YMCA to provide those services with Tax Credit dollars. Then M&O money for noon aides is freed up for other purposes.

Foreign language and additional fine arts programs can be provided after school through Community Schools.

Athletics - Another example of how to benefit from offset M&O dollars is athletics. Instead of paying only the cost of \$150 for a student to play basketball, a family could give the full \$400 to offset the cost of the Basketball program. This again offsets M&O money so the District can hire teachers.

Why is Tax Credit important?

- Improving our Community – great kids build great schools which builds a great community.
- Great schools and communities attract new companies.

Who can contribute - All state tax payers can participate and need to in order to reach this goal. You do not need to have a student in school to participate in Tax Credit. Neighbors, relatives and friends can take advantage of Tax Credit and local businesses might match donations.

-How is it applied - Tax Credit money can go to general fund or a specific program. Your contribution form will ask for you to specify a school, general fund and/or program. Contribution forms and online payment instructions are available at [www.susd.org](http://www.susd.org). Click Tax Credit.

Tax Ambassadors – They are looking for a Tax Ambassador from every school to help inform parents about Tax Credit. Please give your name to Dr. Eric Myer if you are interested in this position.

Tracking – You can now go onto SUSD website and use your student’s ID number to find out how much you have contributed so far this year.

-SUSD mailer describing Tax Credit and how to contribute, will go out on Thanksgiving. The mailer will be self addressed, and stamped for easy return.

Please see these sites for further information and clarification.

[taxcreditforschools@gmail.com](mailto:taxcreditforschools@gmail.com)

[www.scottsdaleparentcouncil.org](http://www.scottsdaleparentcouncil.org)

[www.susd.org](http://www.susd.org)

Dr. Eric Myer 480-607-0660

Kim Hartmann 602-448-4898

Gwen Parker 602-321-0761

*Q: Jamy Minotto -VP of Tavan PTO. He issues a challenge to all: There is a feeling of hopelessness and apathy at Tavan due to the economic situation there. Challenge is how to make a grass roots effort to get word out to every member of school community and tax credit can help.*

*Q: The newspaper said that 60-70% of state tax revenue is spent on education. How do you tell people that it is better to spend money on field trips than general budget and M&O offset? 45% of our state budget is spent on k-12 education and another 10% is spent on state universities. By directing tax credit dollars to public schools you can both increase enrichment opportunities at our schools (like tutoring, field trips, athletics) and help save M&O dollars to be spent on other things. There are extracurricular programs that the district is funding with M&O funds. If those programs could be funded by tax credit instead, those M&O funds are freed up. Even though the law requires that tax credit funds be spent on extracurriculars, we know that enrichment programs enhance education.*

*Q: - How can I help get teachers interested in doing after school clubs? Community Schools is the answer and they can hire people that can come into schools and teach after school enrichment. Since we had to reduce number of teachers they are very overloaded and less inclined to take these things on with their current workload.*

*Q: Who is in charge at schools for getting after school enrichment programs? It is a partnership between Community Schools and the site Principals. Enrichment should augment and supplement the regular curriculum. You can also make a regular donation to schools that is not Tax Credit if you do not pay state tax or if you have reached your maximum Tax Credit contribution. All donations are welcome whether they are tax credit or not.*

How Tax Credit can affect Elementary schools – If you help fund Community Schools and use Tax Credit money to send your child to a program, the District takes a cut of Community School's money that goes directly into M&O. This is not about field trips – it is about extending children's educational opportunities and curriculum beyond the regular school day.

Community Schools is a revenue generator and gives schools the opportunity for professional enhancement programs. Visit the Community Schools page at [www.susd.org](http://www.susd.org) for a full list of programs available. Site Councils and Principals make decisions on which Community Schools programs to offer. Please contact your school Site Council if you have a recommendation on a program through Community Schools.

*Q: Advised by Bonnie Sneed to inform people to consult their tax accountant regarding Tax Credit donations. If you do not pay AZ taxes, you will not get the money back.*

Heather will try and put a Q&A page on the SPC website regarding this issue.

Site Councils - Eric or someone from Dist would attend Site Council meetings to provide clarification on Tax Credit.

**Dr. Dana Sherman – Prevention Chair for SPC.** Dr. Dana is holding a Parent Action Committee meeting November 30 at 9:00 at Coffee Plantation on Scottsdale and Shea. All are welcome. Parents can give her suggestions on what would make our schools safer and more supportive for our kids. If there are concerns or issues, please share with Dana. Her goal is to take the information gleaned from these PAC meetings and make a formal framework that SUSD leadership can use. She is looking to set goals. If you want to voice your concerns, please attend. Email Dana at [dana.sherman@cox.net](mailto:dana.sherman@cox.net) if you are coming so she has an idea how many will attend. SPC will also communicate about this in the Learning Curve.

**Kim Obert– Drug Free AZ** – Several Programs are available at schools and they are free.

Guiding Good Choices – 4 schools are doing this. This evidence based program began in 1980's and tracked people who went through this program and are now parents. These people are still showing evidence of it's success. There are 5 workshops – 2 hrs each. Kids come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop and are taught refusal skills. Mohave did this program a few weeks ago with very positive feedback. It is geared toward parents of 4<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders. Classes are limited to 24 parents. Next series will be at Cocopah on Jan 10 and any parents can attend. Feb 21<sup>st</sup> at Desert Canyon Middle, April 10 at Supai.

Epidemic Video – 6 minutes long. It is among the online resources available at SPC. She has 10 copies available today and other information available today. Contact Kim Obert, Program and Communications Manger for DrugFreeAZ at [kim.obert@DrugFreeAz.org](mailto:kim.obert@DrugFreeAz.org) or visit the website at [www.DrugFreeAz.org](http://www.DrugFreeAz.org)

### **Dr. Jeff Thomas – Asst Superintendent of HR – Site Councils**

Copies of policies and regulations for Site Councils were distributed today to attendees from the SUSD schools. He plans to post on the SUSD website soon.

Governing Board policy gives us direction on work of Site Councils.

Policy KB-Parental Involvement – The superintendent is responsible for development of procedures for parental involvement.

Policy CFD – School Based Management - “The authority extended to the school council(s) is to provide input to the design of curricular and instructional strategy/enrichment models that promote the District mission/goals statement.”

Jeff Distributed bylaws of every school site council to attendees at the meeting.

Jeff has learned that most of the focus at Site Council has focused on Tax Credit and spending this money, but authority of Site Councils should focus on instructional strategy and enrichment models that promote the District mission.

Student Fees, Fines and Charges – Site Council determines how non-specified Tax Credit contributions should be used.

Governance and Membership of Site Councils – The Principal should be Chair as they are responsible for instructional duties at school.

*Q: Is there anything in policy that dictates who (classified, certified, etc) has to serve on the site council?*  
No

*Q: Is there anything in policy that dictates how openings are filled? It seems to be that easy people to work with are those who are tapped to serve on Site Council. When you sit on site council you are a representative of constituency group and have the responsibility to engage with constituents. Make sure that you refer to your site's bylaws when there are openings.*

*Q: Does each school have bylaws on their website?* No. The goal is to have them both in a centralized location and on the individual school websites.

*Q: What if parents on Site Council do not show up and therefore leaves a disproportionate number of teachers to parents?* Do what you can to hold meetings at a time that works for everyone, and also maybe have alternates. Put required attendance in the bylaws.

Site council reps in the room were asked to answer these questions:

Does your site council:

- Have a clear purpose?
- Identify individual roles and responsibilities? Where is this found?
- Meet on a regular basis?
- Have a method for decision-making? (Majority vote, Consensus)
- Clearly and consistently communicate with the constituencies represented? How?
- Make decisions beyond allocation of Tax Credit funds? What decisions? If not, why not?
- Have energy and commitment to making effective decisions?
- Lack energy and is a dud!

Make sure you have minutes and a secretary. Jeff recommends to Principals that they meet at least monthly. If you are not meeting that often you need to have that discussion with your Site Council.

Jeff's recommendation is that there are 2 ways to make a decision:

1. Consensus. Jeff likes the thumb rule – it is visible and what you say and agree to in the rule is same is what outside of rule.
  - Thumbs Up: I understood you, you understood me, the process was fair and I agree with the decision
  - Thumb Sideways: I agree with all above and although not my preferred solution, I support it.
  - Thumb down – I do not support it. Then they need to explain why they do not support it.
2. Majority vote if group can't reach consensus

Principal has final say in decisions.

*Q: Can you give example of something outside of Tax Credit that Site Council would discuss?* Yes – block scheduling, extending math instruction period during the day, school uniforms.

*Q: In perfect setting what is relationship between Site Council and School Liaison Committee?* Liaison Committee is completely composed of teachers but they should be communicating with each other and every other group, like teaching teams.

*Q: Should PTO be on site council?* Yes that is a good idea. Better decisions are made with full information.

What Your Site Council Should Have:

- Guidelines for membership (bylaws, constitution, etc)
- Procedures for conducting meetings (Robert's Rules)
- Established roles and responsibilities for officers and members
- Regular methods of communication (minutes)
- Posted meeting schedules

*Q: How many of your schools forward minutes, post minutes, communicate?* Most assume that people will go look for them if they want them. Francesca recommends that you publicize minutes and can improve relations.

## **Q&A with Dr. Andi Furlis – Asst Superintendent of Curriculum**

*Q: The newspaper says SUSD is eliminating Honors courses and now there is only AP (Advanced Placement).* Dr. Furlis reports that for the last 5 years she was part of improvement process called

Advanced Education. They looked at the question of why they were offering Honors courses when they also offer AP courses where kids can learn college credit. Currently we are only doing this in Social Studies. The newspaper should have said, "We are eliminating honors courses (2) that compete with AP courses where kids can get college credit".

*Q: The College Board stresses that colleges won't weight honors courses because they are not consistent across country. AP courses are more consistent and therefore viewed more favourably. This is part of the reason that SUSD has made this change and eliminated some Honors courses.*

*Q: What is difference between AP and IB?* These programs have two different focuses. AP is more fact based and content rich. IB is more thinking based with global focus. Both have weighted grades and are attractive to colleges.

*Q: Will 7<sup>th</sup> graders taking Algebra 1 be receiving HS credit?* Yes. We are in 3<sup>rd</sup> year for this.

*Q: Does same think hold true for Spanish 1?* Yes and it began this year and they will have the option to get High School credit for this class in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

*Q: Why can't kids speak Spanish who are in their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years of Spanish in high school?* Jeff Thomas says the reality is you do not become fluent in foreign language in the first 2 years unless you are in an immersion program. There is not enough time in the week to achieve a level of fluency. He recommends an immersion program and the goal of placing into Spanish 5 AP. Spanish 5 AP is an oral course and they look at that as the goal.

*Q: Parent orientation for Human Sexuality for some Middle Schools was last night. Parents wanted to see the videos and the school nurse is letting parents come in and view the videos. Can the District put these online somewhere for the parents who are unable to come in?* Due to copyright issues we can't do that.

We have had a 4 yr gap since SUSD last conducted Human Sexuality and new curriculum has been adopted. Dr. Milissa Sackos – Human Development was halted 4 years ago due to budget cuts, cost of training nurses and having outdated materials. School districts are not required to have sex ed, but if you do there are state requirements, including a parent night. The District will make sure these new materials are available for parent check-out at the Warehouse.

*Q: Will 6<sup>th</sup> graders in K-6 communities be offered this curriculum?* Yes – regardless their school configuration.

*Q: What info can I share with parents on the Middle School Task force?* To learn about happenings on the Task Force, visit the SUSD website. Click Directory, then Middle School Task Force. Milissa is the primary contact and a list of members are listed there for outreach. Contact any of these people.

*Q: With 2012/2013 calendar – how was it determined that half days are Wednesdays and not Fridays?* With the needs to offer professional development and also preserve instructional time, they looked at student and teacher absenteeism trends. The results showed that the middle of the week is a better choice for professional development days .

*Q: Cheerleaders were selling candy bars as a fundraiser. They were told they could not do fundraising like this since it does not match with wellness policy. The sale was not competing with lunch and was held only once or twice a year. How are kids supposed to fundraise if they are limited on this?* Dr. Sackos says while one club may not seem to be a problem, if many different clubs/programs were selling candy throughout the year then you have a problem which can violate the wellness policy.

**Julie Guildersleve** – if you have not provided Julie with contact information for the SPC directory, please see her.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30am

Respectfully Submitted,

Jenny Dorsch  
Recording Secretary