

UNIS PTA Meeting Agenda
October 9, 2007
Conference Room 8:30am - 9:45am

(8:30-8:32) Welcome and Opening Remarks:
Sarah Garner, PTA co-chair ECC/ES

(8:32-8:40) Administration and School Announcements:

Note: Meeting for began at 8:00am with just MS/HS class parents, Susanne, Robin Hendrick, and Lesley Peacock.

Lesley Peacock, MS/HS Principal

- format of MS/HS Parent Grade Level meetings

R. Hendrick: Parents of MS/HS students often do not see each other, due to many reasons. One of which is because the kids prefer not to see their parents at their school.

Some proposed social ideas, by Robin Hendrick: Have social events by grade. It can be low cost, or if there are costs involved, the PTA can consider supporting such event. It can be something as simple as a potluck to a formal cocktail, and could possibly be held at someone's home. Last year, attempts were made to gather parents for social event at the cinema. The problem was, parents ended up dropping the kids off at the movie and so there were no socializing opportunities among many of the parents.

Another idea would be to have breakfasts/luncheons among the parents on a regular basis to talk about issues and concerns, or just for fun. Class parent(s) would need to facilitate the discussion to keep it under control. The class parent(s) then present the concerns/issues to the school/teachers. Therefore, the class parent would serve as a communicator for their class/grade.

The recent PTA social evening at Jafa's Restaurant was a huge success. About 100 people came. It was a very good opportunity for parents and teachers to get to know one another.

L. Peacock: In the climate survey, the outcome showed that parents found communications to be an area that needed improvement. Accommodation was made by having open office hours, but it did not work so well for various different reasons. New approach to suggest office hours which will alternate between morning hours (after class begins), and after school hours for working parents.

- Classroom Parents/UN Day

Joyce Miller, School Librarian

- Parents and UNIS Library
Library is for all, parents and children. Library opens from 7:30am-4:30pm. You can open your own library account which

will allow you to check out books. You can also access the library database, magazines, and newspapers.

The ECC/ES students/classes visit the library weekly. For the grades 6-12, will meet with them possibly twice more before Christmas holiday to help them with their projects on bibliography.

Special thanks to Ms. Christine and her crew for the security tagging. There are many other tasks, such as shelving of books, story time, etc., that are in need of volunteer. Please come to library if you're interested in volunteering.

The library was supposed to be painted during the autumn break, but unfortunately the contracting company was not able to start until Christmas break. One parent suggested instead of relying on outside contracting workers, we could ask for parent volunteers and/or student volunteer, the hours would then count towards their community service, i.e. CAS program. J. Miller will consider possibility. The CAS students are currently volunteering for the reading program for the younger kids.

(8:40-8:45) Board of Directors Rep Remarks: Jackie Kearns

Introduction: As the appointed person to communicate PTA information to the Board of Directors, Ms. J. Kearns will be attending all PTA meetings.

Background information:

- There are total of 9 Board Executive Members. 3 of which are UN appointed, 4 of which are parent elected, and remaining 2 are Board members selected. The selection criteria for the 2 remaining board members are based on skill sets which the Board members feel are possibly lacking on the team, and/or added assets to the team.
- The members are: (parent elected) Jackie Kearns, John Shirley, Michael Lademarco, and Quang Nguyen. (UN appointed) Edith Morch-Binnema, Margaret Sheehan, and Neil Reece-Evans. (Board appointed) Preben Hjortland, Steven Cresswell. They are listed in the school directory.
- David King is the Business Manager and Michael Wagstaff is the Staff representative.

Committees within the Board:

- Policy committee – Create policies for school. The policy manual is available for viewing in the library or from the PTA.
- Governance Committee – Currently involve in search for new Head of School as Mr. Cooper will be leaving at the end of this

school year. They are actively searching for candidates and the progress is going well. The goal is to have a Head of School that is best for UNIS, not necessarily best one that one can obtain.

- **Finance Committee – Oversees school budget and spending, etc.**
- **Audit Committee – This is a separate committee from the Finance committee. Their job is to audit the spending which was approved by the Finance committee. The purpose of this committee is to provide a double check.**
- **Search Committee - Recently because of the search for the Head of School, this new committee was created. This committee's main and sole focus will be on the search for the new Head of School for UNIS.**

Closing:

The Board members are here to serve you. You can approach the Boards about issues and concerns. The contact information is in the directory. However, there are proper channels for presenting problems and getting answers before the need for the involvement of the Board. Please follow these guidelines before reaching the Board.

(8:45 – 8:50) Communications Manager Announcements: Julian Carey

Communications Department is also here to serve you.

- **Apologies for the Tin Tuc downloading problems since the beginning of school. FPT moved server around without our knowledge and without informing us of their actions. At the moment, it is functioning well. Only had 4 out of 1580 parent's email bounced back. And there are only 5 parents without an email address.**

Parent Question: Since the Tin Tuc are now delivered electronically, has there been any negative feedback, because not everyone knows how to access or have access to the internet?

J. Carey: There have been no objections to having the Tin Tuc delivered electronically. It's been working well. A lot of papers are saved as a result. Especially in the MS/HS. Last year, MS/HS students' lockers were filled with the Tin Tuc, which meant that the Tin Tuc never made it home to the parents. In retrospect, 4000-5000 sheets of paper had been wasted. Hard copies of Tin Tuc summary are still sent home with the students weekly. Furthermore, hard copies of the full version Tin Tuc can be provided by requests in the communications office or the library. Your child can make the requests for you if you're unable to do it yourself. Furthermore, most people, or their spouses, do have access to printers at home or work. In

addition, according to the recent climate survey, there was strong support for the electronic shift.

- **Drivers notice – Please remind and educate your driver(s) that once they past the UNIS gate, and Ciputra gate, they are not to drive as though they’re in the streets of Hanoi. Please follow the rules and regulations of Ciputra Residential Community and UNIS.**
- **The Community Education currently has about 370 participants. Every Saturday, there are approximately 400-500 people on UNIS campus. After the autumn break, there’ll be new courses offered, like story time and dance classes for younger kids. Thanks to Ms. J. Miller for allowing usage of the room in the library, making it possible the cooking and language classes. Yoga class, however, will be cancelled.**
- **Portal – will be launched to all parents very soon. Need parent to volunteer for trial period during the autumn break. Please sign up if you’re interested. On sign-up sheet, or email to communications office, parents to provide their name and their child’s name. On the portal, you will have access to events, HIWC exhibition, information on sports and tutors, and Tin Tuc. There will be a notice board for posting “for sale” advertisements and classifications. There will be links for PTA, mother tongue program, and a “blogue” page. There will be a staff listing, but not a parent listing. If there are changes or new information, a hard copy will be provided for inserting into the directory. Would like to have parent feedback before officially launch portal access.**

(8:50-8:51) PTA Treasurer’s Report: Annie Hirabayashi

Current balance is 16,235 USD. Not much has changed since last meeting, aside from PTA social evening expenditures. This was balanced out by the snack sale and boutique’s income.

(8:51-8:55) Label Fundraiser: Jessica Pidgeon

- **Volunteers needed**

Last year these labels were “tested” as a mini-fundraiser. 15 families participated in the trial. Result was big success. Official Label Fundraiser will commence 2nd week of November.

Labels were put to test: plastic containers with the label were put through dishwasher/microwave and the label never came off or was damaged; the label was also placed on shoes which were worn almost everyday by the child, and again it never came off or was damaged; on lunchbox the label was tagged on with metal chain.

Ordering process: Fill out forms with personal information, choice of logo designs, colors, sizes, and preference receiving products (can have products sent home or be picked up).

Turn-around time is 6 weeks, so if order by 2nd week of November, by December should have product, in time for Christmas gifts. No promises can be made.

UNIS gets 22% of total sales, which means substantial returns. Shipping is always FREE through the fundraiser. And most importantly, this helps support UNIS.

(8:55-9:15) PTA Committees Reports:

- 1. Boutique (Mayumi Kobayashi) – Book and Bake Sale coming up. Will have a table for selling these items. Need volunteer to help at table.**
- 2. Class Parents (Sarah Garner/Robin Hendra) – Classes that still have vacancies are: KH, 2R, and 5W. Head Class Parent is Kylie Aman.**
- 3. Food Services (Susanne Gromotka) – Had 1st meeting and only 1 person showed up. Reason being Monday is not convenient for most, due to other commitments such as volunteering in library. However, the one person who attended was Ms. Chernelle, who possesses the following valuable background: she participated in a similar committee in the UK and is a qualified chef. She feels Canteen is in better shape than most other she's seen, but there's still room for improvements. Next meeting is tomorrow, Wednesday October 10th at 8:00am.**
- 4. Funds (Hilda Pillay Cajon) – 4 requests pending follow-ups. 1) Student Forum. Only presented idea, but no figures were given. 2) Student senate for Graduation Ball, again no figures given. 3) German Mother Tongue – funding provided by UNIS. 4) PTA. If money is not spent, funds will be taken back.**
- 5. Snack Sale (Mika Ishii) – Thanks to PKR, 1W, and 2H for providing snacks last month. Only 5 families failed to contribute. PKR had 100% participation (16/16), 1W had 13/16, and 2H had 14/16. There were 15 volunteers, involved in set up, selling and closing. No commercial products were used and there will not be anymore commercial products purchase. One parent commented that advertising the percent participation from each class is a good strategy for getting parents to become aware of their lack of participation as well as encourage parents to strive for the 100% participation goal for their child's class.**
- 6. Social: (Anh Quan) – Venue at Jafa's Restaurant. Very successful. 100 people came. Great door prizes. Looking forward to next one. Parent commented that the timing**

was good because MS dance was at the same time so parent could drop off kids and head over to the social evening.

7. Welcome (Julie Rogers) – Organizes coffee and tea mornings to welcome new families. Committee was informed of 100 new families, about 20 people came to coffee/tea morning. This is a great way to get to know one another, learn important contact points, and meet other parents. Will organize another one in couple months or depending on the demand.

8. Events

- (Book & Bake Sale (Nov 16)

Volunteers Needed

Need donations of new and used books, magazines, DVDs, etc., which can be for adults or children.

Classes from ECC to grade 8 to compete for top donation. Winning class to have pizza party for lunch. Last year, event made \$1700 USD. Top donating figure was approximately 360-370 items.

One parent suggested advertising this figure, which committee will consider.

Philippa Wood volunteered to chair committee.

Ronnie to give her the logistics of the committee.

- *UN Day (Oct 26!)*

PTA responsible for organizing lunch

For ECC/ES, lunch to be organized thru the class parents. Notice will be sent home and parents to response as to the type of food they are providing, i.e. entrée, appetizer, or desert. Forms to be sent via email as well. And reminders will be sent out after autumn break.

(9:15-9:30) Special Topics: UNIS Admissions Policy

Remarks from Co-chair, Sarah: Ms. Jessica Pidgeon has generously agreed to provide explanation of admissions process, in hope to clarify rumors. With this being a private school, it is not compulsory to dispense such information. However, the wish is to correctly inform parents of such policies and process. This is the front line of communication in any school. And Ms. Jessica is doing great job. We would like to emphasize that this discussion be amiable and relevant.

Admissions: The policy for admitting students is base on a “first come first serve” basis, which means the first “opportunity” when it becomes available. The term “opportunity” is used because the admissions office needs to consider the demographic and EAL criteria in addition to other admissions policies. When categorizing students as EAL, it means that these students attend English language class instead of another foreign language class, such as

Vietnamese, because English is their foreign language. In grades 1 thru grade 8, the EAL cap is 30%. This means that 70% of those grade level students are non-EAL. Non-EAL means that these students have certain level of English that does not require extra assistance. In ECC, the percentage of EAL students admitted is 50%, meaning the composition of that grade level can be 24 EAL and 24 non-EAL students. It cannot be *more* than 24 students, however, it can be less than 24 students.

Another criterion that must be considered is maintaining the cultural diversity of the school, in terms of nationality. Each nationality has a maximum allowance of 20% school-wide, however, admissions also need to keep in mind the diversity across the individual grade levels as well. The school makes great effort to maintain such diversity by grade, but on occasion, when enrolment in grades drop, the percentage may inch above 20%.

Parent: Are there any sibling priority, meaning if one child is admitted in the school, does the sibling automatically get priority over the other students?

Admissions: The school will try to accommodate the family as best as it can, however there is no “sibling priority” in the policy. The policy weighs heavily on the “first come first serve” motto, so it would be a violation of policy to allow such priority.

Addressing specific questions and rumors about admissions process:

Question: Is it true that the admissions office is closed, and that it is not open for non-UNIS parents to contact?

Answer: The admissions office is never closed. However, the office has stop receiving applications for certain grade levels as there are too many candidates already on the waitlist. It would not be fair to accept the application, which requires a non-refundable application fee of \$250, and place the child on the waitlist for, in some cases, 2 years or more. It is better to have an honest and upfront approach and decline the application, instead of taking the money from parent even though the possibility for immediate admission is nearly zero. Once the waitlist shortens, admissions will re-open again for that particular grade. For those grade levels that are currently not accepting new applications, we are recording the information of those parents and will contact them as soon as the waitlist re-opens again.

Question: How many people review and oversee the admissions process besides Mrs. J. Pidgeon?

Answer: There’s not one person, but a team of people who makes decision on admitting an applicant. Mrs. Pidgeon oversees the waitlist and is the first person to contact the potential applicant.

The applicant's information will be circulated among the team, which consists of a minimum of 3 people.

Question: How are the students tracked into EAL/non-EAL seats?

Answer: The criteria for whether or not to test a child is based on the dialogue with the parents, family background, mother-tongue language, language spoken at home, and educational background including where and when the education started, e.g. home schooling, Korean school, etc. Finally, this will be confirmed by the EAL coordinator. For example, in a European family where English is spoken at home. But the mother-tongue language is not English. The applicant will be tested when a space becomes available, if the UNIS team cannot predetermine whether the child will require EAL assistance or not.

The following fictitious data was created to help provide a better understand on how the Admissions Waitlist works and was handed out at the meeting:

* ____ How Does the Admissions Waitlist Works? ____ *

Example of Grade 3 Wait List

		Nationality	EAL Status	App. Complete	Notes
1	Student A	Korea	EAL-I	13/12/2006	Attending HIS
2	Student B	Denmark	To be tested	16/01/2007	Sibling enrolled; 2 years in International school
3	Student C	Spain	to be tested – Overseas	02/03/2007	Wants enrolment in Jan. 2008
4	Student D	Vietnam	To be tested	06/03/2007	Status unknown
5	Student E	Korea	Non-EAL	22/04/2007	Entire schooling overseas in international schools, sibling enrolled
6	Student F	China	To be tested	31/04/2007	No overseas experience, 1 year of private tutor in English
7	Student G	England	To be tested	05/05/2007	Mother is Vietnamese, child has been attending local schools; Father is British
8	Student F	New Zealand	Non-EAL	18/07/2007	Both parents native English speakers

Scenario #1:

Non EAL space becomes available in Grade 3. UNIS has already reached 20% Korean students according to our cultural diversity policy. How does Admissions determine which candidate to place in to this spot?

1. Student A has been tested and cannot be considered for this non-EAL spot.
2. Contact Student B, collect updated records, schedule a test. Tested as EAL-I. Cannot join for the Non-EAL spot.
3. Space is for immediate placement in October, cannot consider student C.
4. Contact Student D, collect updated records which show zero English experience. EAL Coordinator reviews the application and determines the child is clearly EAL and cannot be considered. No need to test because
5. Student E has been determined by the EAL coordinator to be Non-EAL, but she cannot join because we have reached 20% for Korean students in that grade.
6. Same outcome for Student F as Student D. EAL Coordinator determines this child is EAL without testing.
7. Student G has had some significant exposure to English as the mother and father speak English at home. However, the mom's English is not grammatically correct and the dad is rarely home due to a demanding job. Child is tested and determined to be EAL-I.
8. Last student on wait list will be offered the position as all other options have been exhausted.

Scenario #3:

An EAL space becomes available in Grade 3. Admissions know that a non-EAL, Korean student is withdrawing at the end of this semester. How does Admissions determine which candidate to place in to this spot?

1. Student A was tested in April of 2007 as we thought there might be a spot for him. Collect updated records. Only 6 months have passed since the test so most likely he is still EAL. HIS quarterly report reflects that he is still in the EAL program at HIS and therefore would also be in our EAL program. Cannot place him.
2. Students B, C & D have already been ruled out because of their desired start date and the confirmation that they are EAL.
3. Student E is therefore the lucky winner and gets to join his sibling at UNIS

* _____ **End of Handout** _____ *

In summary:

- **Candidates will be considered one at a time sequentially down the waitlist.**
- **There is only 1 waitlist whether EAL, non-EAL, or undecided.**

- Each year the queue will be rolled over and applicants will remain in the queue in the sequence in which the applications were completed, not the day the family dropped it in (unless it was complete). Admissions will follow up with the family to see if they are still interested in remaining on the waitlist if space is not available immediately.
- All waitlisted candidates that are labeled “to be tested” or “undecided” (which does not affect position in queue), will be confirmed by EAL coordinator.
- The \$250 application fee need only be paid one time. It is non-refundable, non-transferable and includes the cost of one EAL test, if required. The application fee covers the expenditures and time invested for the review process until a final decision is made. The enrolment fee is payable when a student is accepted to hold a seat or an incoming, new student. This fee is payable only one time, unless a student withdraws from UNIS for a period of more than two years and seeks re-enrolment at UNIS.
- Applicants are placed on waitlist in the order of the date of *completed* application.
- The nationality quota is base on percent of total enrollment, not total capacity.

HoS: In the year 2003, when I first arrived at UNIS, there were large pockets of nationality throughout the school. The demographics were unbalanced. Sometimes in particular grades there were 38% of one nationality, even though the nationality quota for total enrollment was not reached. Whenever possible, we try to have a good demographic blend across the school by limiting each nationality to 20%. We try to keep it as harmonious as possible, but it’s not the golden rule.

Parent comment: Is it 20% nationality cap across the grade and 15% across the school?

HoS: It’s really a judgment call. For example if the sibling is already enrolled, we will allow the quota to go over 20%. We are human and we need to be realistic.

Parent: What about cases where the child has dual nationality?

HoS: The parents need to decide which nationality they want to use and will need to provide documentation supporting it.

Parent: The admissions has provided excellent examples. The admissions process and policies are now very clear and transparent. Thank you.

Admissions: There was a lack of communication in the past. We need to be upfront, clear and honest when informing the applicants/parents. We can’t be overly optimistic. A direct approach is best with all and new families of applicants. I can’t speak for what happened prior to the time of my employment. But this is how the

Admissions office is now managed. In addition, sometimes it may seem as though applicants jump the queue, but the appearance is such because of the admissions policy.

Parent: There should be a “sibling priority” policy. Currently at UNIS there is no preference for siblings. This needs to be improved because this is very difficult for family to face.

Parent: I agree, however I also understand that the admissions deal with difficult situations with all kinds and level of emotions and compassion, which unfortunately because of the policies that they have to abide by.

Parent: There are only 2 choices for schools here. The school can not accommodate everyone’s needs. It needs to be fair. It can not accommodate all students. People need to wait, just as we waited.

Parent: Parents need to educate other parents about admissions policy. If there are parents out there who are unclear, they should be directed to speak with the correct person, which is the admissions office.

Parent: This kind of information should be posted on the website for public access. It was very difficult for me to get such information before arriving in Hanoi.

Admissions: The criteria and admissions policy and process will not be posted on the website. The applicants need to speak directly with Mrs. Pidgeon or email her.

Parent: Parents nowadays have become very lazy. They always want “room service”. If they need information, they need to find it. The school should not have to broadcast every detail.

Parent question for the board: Are there plans for expanding the school?

BoD: The Strategic Planning process is working on projecting where we, UNIS, want to be in 5 years. For example, we want new buildings, but what kind of buildings? The nationality cap is 20%, should it be changed to 25%? The EAL program, school-wide increase in ECC/ES? There are many aspects of expansion and growth to consider and it all goes back to the Strategic Planning. And how we get there depends on the Policy committee.

Parent: Where did the November 1st cut off birthdate come from?

HoS: The U.S. Public Schools. However, at the moment this is being challenged. There’s been talk of changing it to August 1st, which would make more sense and would make a stronger admission platform. Other than that, there isn’t really any explanation why it’s November 1st.

Parent: Admission Policy is not fair. Why do we need to have an EAL quota? This is UNIS, the United Nation school, not a private English school.

Parent: I understand that this is a UN school, however, being a monolingual family who only speaks English, there are only 2 choices for schools, HIS and UNIS. The Koreans, for example, have option of Korean School aside from UNIS and HIS. Therefore I do not feel it is unfair.

Parent: This is an English speaking school. The curriculum is taught in English. Therefore, English ability is required.

(9:30-9:45) Open Discussion and any questions for UNIS Administration

- Follow up regarding background checks on local hires (HOS)

Follow-up questions: Can the background check for UNIS employees be retroactive?

HoS: Yes it can, but how far back, we don't know. Currently the process is as follows: get letter from landlord, stamped by local police, get criminal records checked, but record is limited to criminal conviction for only the time residing in Hanoi.

Parent: What about ADEN and the bus issue?

PTA: That needs to be discussed as a separate meeting

Parent: What about health checks?

Parent: For expatriate staff that are locally hired, during their probation period are they obligated to provide background check from their home country?

HoS: No, but this could be proposed to change.

Reminder of Upcoming PTA Events

October 12: Elementary Snack Sale (3D, 5W)

October 26: UN Day

November 9: Elementary Snack Sale (KH, KW, 1H)

November 13: PTA Meeting

November 16: Book and Bake Sale

UNIS website: www.unishanoi.org PTA email: pta@unishanoi.org