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## October 10, 2023 General Meeting Agenda (2023-2024)

Location: Zoom

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

6:15pm - 7:45pm

1. Call to order & Welcome - Janiz Soriano & Cathleen Roque, Co-Presidents
  - Co-presidents Janiz Soriano and Cathleen Roque called the meeting to order at 6:18 pm with 54 participants.
2. Approval of Minutes - Leanne
  - Minutes from the September meeting were distributed prior to the meeting, a QR code was provided at the meeting, and a brief summary was presented for all those present to review.
  - Motion to approve and approved by Janiz and Cathleen.
3. Treasurer's Report - Christine Kovich, Treasurer
  - As of September 30th, 2023, our total cash balance was **\$65,805.31**.
    - i. Receipts for September
      1. Spirit Wear Sales = \$12,974.96 aug 31-sep 1
      2. PTA Dues = \$725
    - ii. Expenses for September
      1. Paypal/Square credit card fees = \$281.88
    - iii. The PTA approved 5 grants to support student activities = \$3138.86
      1. Money used to give grants to teachers and faculty
  - Any questions, please contact **Christine Kovich**, CSS PTA Treasurer ([PTATreasurer@columbiasecondary.org](mailto:PTATreasurer@columbiasecondary.org))
4. Principal & SLT Report - Principal Arora
  - Updates
    - i. School is off to a smooth start.
    - ii. The two morning gym classes are running well, allowing us to maximize space.
    - iii. We hope to have the playground available soon. We are all putting the pressure on the DOE & SCA to get it open.
    - iv. The Testing Room is operational. The faculty feedback is positive. AP Gordon is responsible for its success. Note: someone is always proctoring.
    - v. Testing days system is working out well: Fridays are the makeup day.
    - vi. The number of students taking Columbia University classes this fall, more than 3 fold jump from last year.

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1. We'll be pressing Columbia to have some classes on CSS campus. They agreed to look into this possibility.
  - vii. We're having weekly Monday meetings with the 26th precinct, Captain Jose Taveras, to take stock of school safety.
    1. Isis trying to get Captain Taveras to come to a PTA meeting
  - viii. The website update exercise is underway. Our faculty CS/Robotics teacher Joel Rodriguez is tasked to update the website.
  - ix. Saturday Math Academy is underway thanks to SONYC!
    1. Trying to expand the hours and frequency
5. Faculty Report - AP Flaherty (if you have any Qs about the topics below, please reach out to AP Flaherty directly - [erinflaherty@columbiasecondary.org](mailto:erinflaherty@columbiasecondary.org))
- Baseline assessments in ELA and Math are taking place this month.
  - The 1st marking period ends 10/24.
  - Tues, 10/31 Halloween - no afterschool MS/HS
    - i. 6th grade HW dismissing at 2:23pm.
  - Professors Aviles and Roit are working with Latinx Student Union for Hispanic Heritage Month.
  - We're anticipating the return of 1 teacher from PPL before the end of the marking period. There is one other PPL currently absent.
  - Peer mediation training has begun. It's a lengthy process, so we'll put it into practice in the spring.
    - i. Prof Pierre, who is the school social worker, is training all of the peer mediators right now.
  - QUESTIONS:
    - Q what type of training - the training comes from both the DOE (Tier 1 training) at Morningside Center and Prof Pierre's own expertise as a Restorative Justice coordinator. They will be ready to HOST peer mediation in the spring, after a semester of training.
      - V. Arora added that it's ruler-based behavioral intervention training
    - ii. Q - can we have a 12th grade meeting re curriculum changes.
      1. V. Arora - we can send a survey, and are open to it.
    - iii. Q - some subjects/grades are not in Google Classroom
      1. V. Arora - the difference between Jupiter and Google Classroom
        - a. Google classroom not mandated for teachers to put anything
        - b. Reach out to Prof Lynn for Social Studies
        - c. Reach out to Arora for math & science;
        - d. V. Arora asked for parents to keep sending specific reports of missing grades, as they need to know
        - e. V. Arora - Mandated courses (like Alg I) are state content requirements
  - Q - how is 6th grade exec functioning during study hall?
    - V. Arora - SONYC helps with MS. 6th grade M-F 3-4pm



- Last year Colette Young ran the Executive Function as Dean. Since she's no longer official staff, she's only supervising cheerleading.
  - SONYC looking to hire someone to run Executive Function by January
  - 6th graders need executive function coaching
  - AP Flaherty - Executive Function fully enrolled for HS students. Reach out to her or Fletcher if interested
- iv. Q - ChatGPT tools, general approach?
1. V. Arora - urging teachers higher level engagement and rigor, synthesis, so ChatGPT can help but not complete it for them.
  2. Arora - Delivering PD on increasing rigor
  3. I.e. graphing calculators did not ruin mathematics - ChatGPT can accelerate learning
  4. N. Rohr - much in class is done by hand
- v. Q - ICT teachers
1. V. Arora - J. Rodriguez updating website
- vi. Q - how can there be better communication mid year faculty changes?
1. V. Arora - we can't disclose the details most of the time
- vii. Q - need a one page reference on Jupiter, NYCSA, Google Classroom
- viii. SPECIAL ED - AP Gordon - ICT teachers:
1. Guzman - ICT HUmanities
  2. Huzzy - both HS/MS
  3. Seaford
  4. Frampton HS/MS
  5. Martin HS/MS
  6. Hewitt - SETSS
  7. Jacola - MS
  8. Emmanuel - MS/HS
  9. Attridge - MS/HS
  10. NEW - Sears STEM HS, G. Kim STEM HS
  11. QUESTIONS - email AP Gordon
- Arora - please continue to get in touch with us!
6. CEC5 REPORT - Sheila Sweeney Suarez, CSS PTA Delegate
- [Sheila couldn't attend the General Meeting, but she provided a brief summary of the most recent CEC5 meeting] Desiree presented
  - Hello All – I am a mom to a CSS Senior and this is my first year on the PTA. I'm serving this last year as PTA Delegate to CEC5. I previously served on the SLT at Amistad School where both our children attended middle school.
  - District 5 CEC Meetings are generally held the last Wednesday of each month at P.S. 36. I attended the June (final for 2022-2023) and the September 27th meetings, at which both our Facilities V.P. Dave Thom and Co-President Janiz Soriano were in attendance. CEC By-Laws, Mission Statement and other items



of interest including Minutes from July, August and September (upon approval) are available at: [https://www.cec5.org/home\\_page](https://www.cec5.org/home_page)

- We introduced CSS to the new Council briefly in the public portion of the meeting. Our aim was to re-introduce the issue of a lack of Building Utilization Plan (BUP) to the new reps, which we did. This is a longstanding issue as most BUPs currently in force at DOE properties post-date (at around 2010) our arrival in the building (2007).. As the new library has just opened it is incumbent on the CEC to address scheduling matters of all three schools, per the published responsibilities which include “Holding joint public hearings with the chancellor (or designee) for any proposed school closing or significant change in school utilization.” Our impetus here is that high enrollment and demand for this important resource (the new Library) should prompt a thorough review especially in light of the longstanding BUP gap. We were encouraged by the Superintendent to follow up with newer reps at the Panel for Educational Policy and Borough President’s office.
- Please feel free to reach out to me at [sweeneysuarez@gmail.com](mailto:sweeneysuarez@gmail.com) with any questions on our involvement with CEC5.
- Townhall meeting at auditorium (Desiree) - initiatives in other schools (book clubs)
  - i. We invited them to visit and engage with us
  - ii. Desiree also spoke with the Chancellor - engaged and enthusiastic to meet us

## 7. FACILITIES REPORT - Dave Thom, VP of Facilities

- CONSTRUCTION
  - i. Schoolyard is finished... but locked up! Parks and SCA won’t explain why or give us an opening date. Next week? Next month? Next year? Situation is so odd, and so interagency-dysfunctional, that reporters are starting to look into what is going on.
  - ii. Boiler project has started. Trailers installed all along the front of the school for the next few years. Work inside will mostly be after hours. Replacing original 100 year old boilers. Huge project. We are urging to try to do most work over summer
  - iii. Pool and basement cafeteria renovations still in the design phase
  - iv. We are making progress getting through to high-level DOE officials to help us out with the cumulative problems. Just last week we talked to the Chief of School Operations (Kevin Rand, spoke to at Townhall) and we hope to have his team on-site soon to see what can be done. Rand offered to bring his team to the school.
- SPACE SHARING
  - i. We continue to pursue a Building Utilization Plan for the building to improve space-sharing. We are talking to many officials and I am

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- hopeful, although it will take time. Our situation is so off-kilter for so long that it is hard for them to ignore.
- ii. Working on permanent signage for the school similar to KIPP and PS125.
  - o Please email your questions or reports of problems to [ptafacilities@columbiasecondary.org](mailto:ptafacilities@columbiasecondary.org) as it helps me with the above.
  - o PICTURES SHARED:
    - i. Finished and unused Schoolyard.
    - ii. Trailers in front of the school building on West 123rd Street.
8. FUNDRAISING UPDATE: Starr Peoples, Fundraising VP
- o October Bake Sale & Spirit Wear Sale was on Friday, October 6th.
    - i. Thank you to everyone who participated! We made **\$1200**, all of which goes to support student activities like our sports teams and the Harlem Rails, our award-winning high school robotics team.
      - 1. Next two bake sales are on **Nov 10 & Dec 1**. [click the dates in the presentation below to go directly to the sign-ups!]
  - o Turkey Trot:
    - i. Are you interested in doing the Turkey Trot?
    - ii. WHAT: The Turkey Trot is a series of race/walks for CSS Friends and Families
    - iii. Friends. These race/walks are lead by Race Captains and each is based in a different neighborhood.
    - iv. WHEN: The races are scheduled one per weekend during November.
    - v. HOW MUCH: The race/walk fee is \$20 or “pay what you wish”. CSS Students and anyone under 18 is free.
    - vi. Please sign-up [here](#) to attend the first planning meeting on Monday, October 16 from 6:15p to 7pm.
    - vii. Please sign up if you want to be a Race Captain, want to help with planning or want to be a runner/walker!
  - o Farm to People:
    - i. Every time you grocery shop on Farm To People from now until the end of December, 5% goes back to our school.
    - ii. How do I join? To join our fundraiser, simply create an account on Farm to People, add whatever you need to your basket, and enter code: CSSFAM
    - iii. Do I need to enter the code every time I shop? Nope! Once you've used the code during the fundraising time period, you're all set. Farm to People will automatically give back 5% on all subsequent orders until the end of the period.
    - iv. Plus we'll give you \$5 off the first time you use the code!
    - v. Do I have to subscribe? No, but for every 10 customers that subscribe to any item - EVEN AN ITEM FOR \$5 - during the fundraiser, Farm to



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- People will add a \$250 bonus to our school's fundraising check. However, you can always shop any of the items à la carte, no subscription required.
- vi. Who can join the fundraiser? Anybody who wants to support the fundraiser can join — parents, teachers, friends, and neighbors. Just spread the word and don't forget to share our school's code!
  - vii. Why Farm To People?
    1. Farm To People is a mission driven company working year-round with small farms and makers to craft the ultimate selection of unique, delicious, and nutrient-dense food.
    2. They pay their farmers and makers fairly: For every dollar sold on Farm To People, 50 cents go back to the farmer, while the national average remains below 15 cents.
    3. Farm To People donates approximately 1000 pounds of food monthly to multiple food rescue organizations.
    4. Their carbon neutral deliveries are delivered in recycled and recyclable packaging.
    5. [Thrillist](#) said it best: "The name summarizes the mission: Farm to People guarantees fresh and ethically sourced foods in a manner that more corporate delivery services simply can't compete with"
  - o Picture Day: This school year our picture vendor is Say Cheese Kidz! (Hit this [link](#) to view their portfolio.)
    - i. Picture Day will be held the first three Mondays in December.
    - ii. Monday, Dec. 4th is SENIOR Picture Day
      1. CSS Seniors traditionally take 3 poses
        - a. Formal Wear: The PTA purchased Tuxedo jackets & velcro Tuxedo Shirts for this option. A local fashion house donated ties and bowties
      2. Cap & Gown: The PTA purchased Caps, Gowns, Hats w/ Tassels for this pose
      3. CSS Uniform
  - MIDDLE School & 9th - 11th Grade Picture Day will be on 2 separate dates: either Monday, Dec. 11th or Monday, Dec. 18th
    - o All middle school students & 9th - 11th graders must be in uniform in a top/sweater/hoodie with the CSS Logo for Picture Day photos.
    - o Details will be announced as soon as possible.
  - o There will be a Sibling Photo option
  - o VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:
    - Helping with the flow of classes into/out of the auditorium
    - Organizing, distributing cards with student info to be given to each student for the photographer's use

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- Supporting students in looking their best. Past volunteers have brought hand-mirrors, wipes
  - A SIGN-UP GENIUS WILL BE SENT OUT AS SOON AS PICTURE DAY TIMES ARE FINALIZED.
  - Christmas Wreaths - more details to come!
  - SPIRIT WEAR SALE - Josie Torres, Spirit Wear Director
    - Once a month on Fridays, same day as the monthly bake sale!
    - Had a bunch of awesome volunteers for this month's sale, raising about \$3300!
    - We're aware that the school is enforcing uniform protocol. If someone is desperate to get their hands on spirit wear before the date of the sale, they should reach out to Isis Ramos directly.
      - iii. Same day / Once a month on Fridays!
        1. November 10th
        2. December 1st
        3. January 5th
        4. February 9th
        5. March 1st
        6. April 5th
        7. May 17th
        8. May 31st
    - Have Questions? Want to volunteer?
      - i. Email Starr Peoples (Fundraising VP & Josie Torres (Spirit Wear Director) at [PTAFundraising@ColumbiaSecondary.org](mailto:PTAFundraising@ColumbiaSecondary.org)
9. FRIENDS OF CSS - Dr. Min Hong, David Lurvey, Solenn de Kersauson. Nydia, Leanne, Kit, Kian also in attendance
- Miriam Nightengale - We need to raise the FoCSS profile.
  - Dr. Min Hong gave a special story about the PTA, and thanks to the CSS PTA. (Miriam presented)
    - i. Introduced the other board members present.
  - The purpose of FoCSS is to enhance the educational experiences of the students, teachers and staff of Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science, and Engineering, a New York City public school in upper Manhattan that serves a diverse population of academically talented students.
  - Friends of Columbia Secondary School for Math, Science, Engineering, Inc., is a New York State charitable corporation that was formed to support the academic mission of CSS. Made of current and former parents, students and staff who serve on a volunteer basis and meet monthly. Current members are listed in slides below. (The CSS Principal and PTA President also sit on the board.)

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- FoCSS is a listed 501c3 on GuideStar and Cause IQ, which are websites where 501c3 organizations are registered. We are audited and file financial reports with the IRS. All donations tax deductible.
  - FoCSS is a group of current and former community members who work together to provide the personnel, activities and programs that set CSS apart from other schools!
  - It is separate and independent from both the PTA and from the DOE, although the friends and PTA regularly consult to coordinate efforts where appropriate
    - i. Sometimes DOE funding is restrictive
    - ii. Deadlines in March and April.
  - FoCSS is the second-biggest employer at CSS after the DOE
  - They fund multiple salaried positions, as well as provide supplemental funds for staff who engage students in after-school activities (not PSAL teams), from the musical to sports to field trips to robotics! Our funding pays CSS staff to provide the extra-curricular activities that make CSS special!
  - Friends of Columbia Secondary School for Math Science and Engineering enhances the educational experience of students, teachers, and staff at a New York City public 6th through 12th-grade school. They support popular after-school elective programs and purchase engineering and technology equipment. Their approved programs include experiential learning field trips and other activities.
  - Also known as...Foundation for Excellence in Education
    - i. Program areas at Friends of Columbia Secondary School for Math Science and Engineering
    - ii. After School - experiential learning field trips and other activities.
    - iii. Academic - popular after School elective programs and purchase of Engineering and technology equipment.
    - iv. College counseling - college guidance and advice.
      - 1. a personalized college prep program that separates CSS from other public schools
  - Multiple salaried positions - per recent IRS filing +40
  - WHERE DO FUNDS COME FROM?
    - i. Columbia University provides \$100,000 - \$150,000 per year.
    - ii. An endowment of \$5,000,000 set up by a donor in 2011 has provided support and salaries for our college office and supplemented the cost of college trips over the years. This endowment is managed by Columbia University through the Provost's office.
    - iii. You! Parents and community members are important sources of funding for FoCSS. Our community has helped support FoCSS-funded activities by:
      - 1. Direct contribution. You can donate through our PayPal account or through check or even cash!





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2. Matching grants: Many employers provide matching funds which can double the impact of your contribution. Check with your employer!
  3. Identifying grants, foundations and donors which/who may be able to support CSS's unique academic and extra-curricular activities through monetary donations or grants.
  4. The Principal sets priorities on funding
- There is currently a revenue shortfall (\$60k) and our assets are declining.
  - Details of the last two slides are below.
    - i. 2022 Funding Detail
    - ii. How has funding changed over time?
  - How can you help? Donate, become a Board member
10. REIMAGINING CSS - Ezra Ju (12th grade) 2nd year leading it & Prof Rohr, Faculty Advisor
- Club started during pandemic = 4th year, with 3 committees:
    - i. Curriculum
    - ii. Hiring
    - iii. Discipline
    - iv. All focused on making CSS a more equitable community.
  - Mission statements (see in slide below)
  - Prof Rohr, faculty liaison:
    - i. Student Survey (see slide below)
    - ii. AAPI celebration - thank you PTA!
      1. We now have an AAPI club!
    - iii. "Breaking Bread together" (see slide below)
11. UPCOMING ANNOUNCEMENTS
- HHM! October 13! to include performances, presentations and potluck dinner in the 6th floor cafeteria. Reach out to Isis Ramos for more info.
  - CSS Family Game night & Fall Festival - Sat 10/14 4-7p, at BUUNI (4300 Broadway) Free entry & snacks, but limited capacity. See link to RSVP.
  - SAFE HAVEN LOCATIONS: with the recent incidents in the neighborhood, the PTA reminded parents of the Safe Haven symbol that can be found in stores/shops/restaurants in the neighborhood. See photos in slides below.
    - i. Your Youth Coordinating Officers (YCO)
      1. 26th Precinct / Twitter @NYPD26PCT
        - a. Officer Jimenez: 917.318.5119
        - b. Officer Tavarez: 929-273-8845
      2. 28th Precinct / Twitter @NYPD28PCT
        - a. Officer Hanna: 917-207-4052
        - b. Officer Johnson: 917-912-4740
      3. Chaplain Rice: 212-470-4852

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- ANNOUNCEMENT TO SHARE? Send your news to Alina Wickahm at: [ptacommunications@columbiasecondary.org](mailto:ptacommunications@columbiasecondary.org) for inclusion in our weekly mailing.
  - i. We want to celebrate all the wonderful things our CSS students, teachers, coaches, and staff are doing to make our school - and our world - a better place.

12. CAFETERIA FOOD survey - surveys will be sent to ask how folks feel about the DOE breakfast & lunch. Please participate!

13. FUTURE PTA MEETINGS:

- **November 14, 2023** 6:15-7:30 P.M.
- December 12, 2023 6:15-7:30 P.M.
- January 9, 2024 6:15-7:30 P.M.
- February 13, 2024 6:15-7:30 P.M.
- March 12, 2024 6:15-7:30 P.M.
- April 9, 2024 6:15-7:30 P.M.
- **May 14, 2024** 8:30-9:30 A.M.
- June 11, 2024 6:15-7:30 P.M.

14. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 7:52pm.