

## Arbor Community Council Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2009

### Highlights

Darlene began the meeting discussing what is the ACC – a forum, a bridge a discussion. The ACC provides an opportunity to raise issues and find mutual solutions to problems. The agenda is made up of speaking points contributed by parents. Other items are handled personally or as an attachment to the minutes.

#### **AMI Teacher Retention and Recruitment**

Alison Sherrill discussed recruitment of teachers at Arbor. She discussed a lot of changes this year in lower elementary (e.g., Emily) teachers. Alison has been working on a feasibility study to bring AMI training to Atlanta which would be a three summer training. Currently the training available in Atlanta is only equipped for the primary level. Arbor is currently posed to host the training but awaiting approval. This has to be approved in the U.S. and then the U.K. What will this mean to Arbor if approved? Arbor sponsors teachers to go to this training – hence, if the training is in Atlanta, Arbor will be able to sponsor more than one person at a time. Typically those that are trained are assistants or parents – usually someone that “we” know. It is very difficult to find elementary teachers at a high caliber. It is much easier to find primary teachers since there are more training centers in the U.S. Jan also commented that Arbor posts positions in several different announcements in the country.

*Question:* How does Arbor choose who to sponsor?

*Answer:* Most tend to be assistants already at Arbor so they are “known” (e.g., they have worked in the classroom with children and believe that they have a commitment both to Montessori and to Arbor). The individuals being considered are interviewed by parents and teachers and also submit a resume – similar to an interview process.

Jan Deason discussed retention of teachers at Arbor. The median length of employment at Arbor is 13 years. This is probably because of a number of reasons: Arbor is a great place to work; teachers have a lot of autonomy; faculty education fund is strong and provides opportunities to enrich teachers; and teachers at Arbor participate in running the school (e.g., participate on boards, committees).

*Question:* Are there things done in the classroom to help the children in the classroom.

*Answer:* Try to have the new teacher spend time in the classroom. Jan commented that it is usually harder for the parents than the child. Leslie commented that the role of the assistant is important/useful for the transition. Alison spoke briefly about how the curriculum, materials, and philosophy does not change between teachers which helps ease the transition for the children.

### **Schoolicity and Arbor Website – which one to use?**

Leslie began the discussion by stating that the website is “big” picture of the school and pertains to everyone; while schoolicity is personalized to your child and classroom. The update will always lead parents to the website (update and website are “sisters”). We are still in a transition period with using schoolicity. All forms are on the website – particularly for prospective parents. Reminders/calendars are on both sites (basically a bridge between both sites).

Several parents talked about the need to just “use” the new system to get comfortable with it. Another parent talked about how convoluted the system is now and how difficult it is to find a form (going between the update, website, schoolicity, google group, etc). A parent talked about perhaps schoolicity could serve as an informal hosting of information to share – e.g., summer camps, etc. Several commented about how much easier conference sign up was this year.

Leslie said she would provide information in the next Arbor update about where to go for information. Darlene commented about how important the *Arbor Update* as it is the primary source of finding out up to date information about activities and announcements at Arbor.

**Additional Topic.** A question arose about why the Arbor school year is not the same as Dekalb County’s. In response to this question, please see the statement below regarding the Arbor school year calendar.

*Each year Arbor begins preparing the school calendar by comparing the calendars for various private schools and the Decatur City, DeKalb County, and Fulton County public schools. The primary discrepancy between Arbor’s calendar and those for the public schools is the date for the start and end of the school year.*

*Arbor has made the decision that it will not start school as early as the public schools, primarily because many Montessori summer training programs and professional courses are not finished by the time the public school year starts. For example, most public schools began the 2009-10 school year on August 10, which means that teachers reported on August 3. The training programs for our teachers will not end in time for Arbor’s teachers to meet these dates. Most private schools in the area begin and end school the same week as Arbor.*

*During the summer of 2009, Arbor offered a camp during the week that public schools began their school year. The camp was offered to children ages 5-12 and 11 children participated.*

***For more information about school calendaring, see the ACC Minutes for October 28, 2008 and May 15, 2008, which were e-mailed to parents and are available upon request in the Arbor Office.***

## **Special Topic Presentation: What parents and teachers need to know about H1N1 Dr. Marty Cetron**

**Overview** – Dr. Cetron spoke about how influenza is a very unpredictable disease and provided a historical background about previous influenza pandemics (e.g., Spanish flu, Asian flu, Hong Kong flu). Major objective of response in the U.S. is to reduce illness and death and minimize social disruption.

**Lessons we learned from the Spring outbreak** – most unpredictable infectious diseases; came upon us very late in the flu season (mid-April). Flu usually goes away in the summer, but H1N1 did not go away (e.g., camp outbreaks). Flu usually starts late fall/winter – but we saw H1N1 early when school started this past fall. This spread the fastest around the globe – in a few weeks it spread to 165 countries. It disproportionately affects school-age kids, few cases among the elderly (which is the opposite of seasonal flu). It causes a wide spectrum of illness – most cases last about a week without any treatment, but in some cases, it can be quite serious and cause fatal disease rapidly. H1N1 seems to affect deeper in the lungs than seasonal flu. It has been socially disruptive, especially in schools. Dr. Cetron presented a map of the U.S. showing the spring wave and variable impact across the country which disproportionately affected mostly cities. Wave 2 occurred during the summer – at summer camps and other locations in the world – mostly in Southern Hemisphere (e.g., Argentina, Chile, Australia, Africa, Asia). High risk considered as those with: chronic lung disease, pregnant; cardiac disease; children under age 2; diabetes; immune compromised from disease or medication; sickle cell; morbid obesity; neuro-muscular, neuro-cognitive disorders. Dr. Cetron presented urgent reminders that are available on the web – e.g., WebMD, CDC website.

**Where we are this fall** – There are updates several times a day at the CDC. CDC has a surveillance system called ILI – influenza like illness – reported by ER discharge data. We are now on an upward trajectory of increasing cases. Once we get over 2%, it is considered an epidemic. Data were presented by cases by age group throughout the country by month. Marty commented that the rapid test to identify the virus is very insensitive (a lot of false negatives). Severity – how do we know how bad it is going to be – determining the anticipated severity (e.g., how many are expected to die), influences how to respond to the disease. Difficult to determine the severity in real-time. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to stop a pandemic – short of a successful mass vaccination campaign. Dr. Cetron also talked about how difficult it is to control transmission in the classroom given the close proximity of the kids in the room.

**Hot issues with treatment, vaccine, impact on schools, policies** – Dr. Cetron talked briefly about policy for school closure and the difficulty with doing this (i.e., once there are cases in the school, the school will close for a week). There are tremendous unintended consequences – e.g., lost work days, loss of pay or job, etc. CDC's basic principle is to keep the schools open and keep sick kids out of school. Dr. Cetron talked about some of the myths/concerns with the H1N1 vaccine. Primary recommendation is to “stay home” if sick.

Two take-home messages: (1) if you have a high risk condition – get a prescription for Tamiflu; (2) get vaccinated through provider or other distribution centers within state (e.g., health departments) – CDC will have information on their website of where the vaccine is available ([www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)). Even if you think your child had H1N1 – still get the vaccine since most kids were unlikely to have had a positive test.

**NEXT ACC Meeting:** Wednesday, February 3, 7:00 pm. In addition to our ACC meeting, we will have a guest presentation, “Playground Politics” from Julie Carnes, M.A., Clinical Coordinator, who served as the Educational Director at Arbor for 10 years and is AMI certified.