



**TALLEY STREET UPPER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
PARENT TEACHER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

**2617 Talley St  
Decatur, GA 30030**

**MEETING MINUTES  
August 11, 2022 6PM**

**Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Talley Street PTO Board of Directors was held via videoconference and in person on August 11, 2022 in the cafeteria. The meeting was called to order at 6:11 PM by Co-President Sara Weathersby.

PTO Board Members Present for Meeting:

Co-President: Sara Weathersby  
Co-President: Kelly Brown  
Co-Vice President: Gwendolyn Shaw  
Co-Vice President: Michael Shahriari  
Co-Treasurer: Tcee Bell  
Co-Treasurer: Hetal Rathod  
Secretary: Lindsay Hodgson  
Communications: Nydia Almond (virtual)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Member at Large: Briana Dayton  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade Member at Large: Jennifer Williams  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade Member at Large: Meredith Barnes (virtual)

**I. Presentation by Talley Teachers about the new House System**

Coach Kelly Nichols (PE)  
Jillian Farley (5<sup>th</sup>)  
Alicia Reno (STEM)

Friday, August 12th is the official launch of the House System at Talley. The presenters described three learning targets to the board: Describe purposes, show school spirit, support Talley by participating in the House System. In addition to the board meeting presentation, parents are encouraged to attend the upcoming curriculum night to learn more about the House System. The board watched a brief video about Ron Clark Academy and the House System. Talley leadership described the activities planned for Friday's sorting and provided an overview of how the House System will be incorporated into the school setting and Talley Rally. As one example, the school has procured a wheel, built and installed by parents, to be used at Talley Rallies to earn extra points.

Why are we implementing the Ron Clark Academy House System at Talley Street Elementary? As we begin the fourth school year, Talley Street wants to highlight the strengths of our school and our people. The House System will help Talley be a place where students, parents and teachers love to be every day. We are looking to build a positive culture and stand out as innovative leaders. This decision is the culmination of planning and research. Several teachers participated in professional development sessions at the Ron Clark Academy this summer.

- Culture of belonging. Students will have an opportunity to be recognized for behavior and academic achievements. Positive behavior contributes to the overall success of the team. Each house will be comprised of students from all grades and staff across all grades and disciplines. In future years, older students will welcome incoming third graders to the houses.
- School Wide Community. The House System facilitates a vertical culture. Allows teachers to make connections with approximately 120 students. Provides students with additional adult mentors. The connections across grade level will be natural and intentional.
- Character building Community. Achievement adds to the success of the collective group. Students earn points through an app towards a “house championship.” Knowing their friends might earn a point builds empathy and connections. Points for exhibiting IB Learner Profile attributes and tenets of the PRIDE pledge.

House meetings will be held every Tuesday. Talley Rally is being revamped to incorporate the House System. Fridays will include even more cheers and excitement. Students will sit with their House during Talley Rally on Friday. Every staff person will have a mobile app available during the day so that when a staff member observes positive behavior and achievement, the staff member can assign points to a student and/or their House. The goal is for students to support each other. The points system is not intended to reward simply “winning.”

Each House has specific traits such as: heritage country, language, cheer, call and response, symbolic animal, color, etc. After students are chosen, they should try to find a connection with the house symbols and meaning. The original set of cheers were written by students at RCA. After the first term, students can work together in their House to develop new cheers.

Q: Healthy Competition concerns. How do we channel this energy and House System components in a positive manner? How has the school thought about social-emotional safety and comfort?

A: Talley leadership is aware of concerns about competitiveness and is implementing strategies to avoid the negative aspects. Coach Nichols explained that students are practicing what to do when you lose during an activity and how to turn that into a positive lesson. Staff is explaining to students that if they don't succeed, show integrity and good sportsmanship. House points are not necessarily for winners. For example, clap for kids in STEM when something falls apart. This will be reinforced in house meetings with staff as leaders. Even where a student does not make the best behavioral choice, this can be a learning opportunity. Moreover, House points will not be taken away.

The presentation continued with a review of the six Houses.

Altruismo: The House of the Givers (Brazil/Portuguese/Snake/Black)

Amistad: The House of Friendship (Mexico/Spanish/Immortal Peacock/Red)

Isibindi: The House of Courage (South Africa/Zulu/Mute Swan and the Lion/Green)

Nukumori: The House of Kindness (Japan/Japanese/Dragon/Purple)

Onraka: The House of Unity (India/Tamil/Bengal Tiger/Orange)

Reveur: The House of the Dreamers (France/French/Unicorn and Wolf/Blue)

Q: What if a student is not present tomorrow for the sorting ceremony?

A: Students who are not present will be sorted at a future date.

Q: How will the school balance the size of the Houses if this is a random selection?

A: Selection is a controlled random. Mr. Heaton will count off 1-6 to set up each group. Once the students are organized in their number group, the staff will set off colored smoke bombs to reveal the House. In future years, the sorting ceremony for third graders might be with the spinning wheel.

Q: Will House information be on the Talley website?

A: Yes, this information will be on the Talley website. Information about the House System and a House System Handbook were included in the recent e-blast.

Principal Heaton. The House System is aligned with diversity principles. The decision to implement the House System was not done on a whim. Administrators have invested many hours leading up to implementation. Everyone is very excited for the next steps.

Q: How will parents be involved?

A: We expect kids will want to learn more about their House and internalize the qualities. Houses will have room parents who can support House activities and events. The Houses will also incorporate community service opportunities. Once a student is assigned to a House, they remain in that House for their entire time at Talley. Eventually there can be parent nights and competitions for the entire family.

Q: What is the history of the Ron Clark Academy and the RCA House System?

A: The Ron Clark Academy opened in 2007 and serves students in 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The House System was implemented to build community and character.

Q: When is the curriculum night at Talley?

A: August 25<sup>th</sup>

Q: How do students and families learn about points from staff?

A: Throughout the week, staff will observe behavior. All staff have a mobile app that contains student information. When positive behavior is observed, staff can find the student on the app, and assign points to the student and/or the House. Additionally, there will be a large screen inside the school that will display House point updates. The app and the monitor display will update regularly and serve as a motivator to the students.

Q: Talk more about the end of the year goals.

A: At the end of the year, Talley will hold a House Championship. This is not about getting a giant trophy, rather the House Champions will have other categories of rewards, such as having the assembly decorated in the House color. The House Champions might lead the entire school in their cheer. The ultimate goal is to move away from extrinsic rewards and adapt the students to intrinsic motivation. There is a Parent handbook with more detailed descriptions of the Houses and the reward system.

During Talley Rally, each House selects a team member to spin the wheel for extra points. The House System will encourage students to demonstrate leadership qualities. Eventually, House leaders will be selected from upper classman based on their performance. Student leaders will gain more responsibility so that students are the House leaders and staff facilitate.

Q: Will students receive House shirts at the Sorting Ceremony?

A: The House shirts were not quite ready in time for the Sorting Ceremony. Every student will receive a shirt for their House. Parents can purchase accessories and logoed items from the Ron Clark Academy but no purchases are required. Families could also choose to find items that match their House color, even if the items are not logoed. Staff are also acquiring accessories for each House.

Q: Will FAVE implement the House System?

A: As of this time, FAVE has not chosen to implement the House System. Talley can be the leaders on this endeavor and show others how successful the House System can be for our students.

Q: What costs are associated with the House System?

A: The main costs are for professional development, which is \$545 per day per teacher to visit RCA for a professional development session. There are no upfront costs for parents. Staff will work on equity between the classes.

Q: Is Talley seeking PTO support for the House System?

A: Yes, we would welcome parent and PTO support through volunteering and acquiring materials for the Houses. The PTO is buying t-shirts for every student and staff person.

Q: How much will we encourage parents to purchase logoed House items?

A: There is no pressure for parents to purchase items. This will be at each family's discretion.

Q: Please provide more detail about how House System contributes to student equity?

A: Every student and staff member will be connected to a House. Therefore, each student has additional staff that can serve as mentors, this could also be described as vertical teaming. All grade levels and job positions are represented in each House. One goal of the House System is to expand each student's network to include more students and staff that they might not get to know otherwise. Students will have an opportunity to form friendships with different peers. Students might also discover they have a connection with a staff person in their House that they might not have known without the House System. We want every kid to be seen and feel supported.

In addition to expanding the network of student relationships, the House System can improve staff connections. This is the fourth school year at Talley, but only second year fully in person. Teachers appreciate the House System because they are able to connect more broadly with their peers beyond their grade level team.

Q: Are parents allowed to join Talley Rally tomorrow?

A: Tomorrow is a special time for students and faculty. The school has an Instagram account called TalleyTigerGram. Videos and pictures from the sorting ceremony will be posted on Instagram and Facebook.

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At the conclusion of the House System presentation, the meeting transitioned to the remainder of the PTO meeting agenda.

## **II. Principal's Report**

Principal Heaton provided a principal's report to the PTO. He stated that the school year is going really well so far. Some parents have made inquiries about inside versus outside lunch. Principal Heaton articulated several key reasons why Talley will hold indoor lunch. The primary reason for indoor lunch is that Talley lacks a confined space where kids are safe from outside dangers that might approach from the parking lot. The only other outside option would take away the playground. This choice would have the consequence of limiting recess time.

Principal Heaton noted that the lunchroom has an industrial size air filter as a mitigation measure. He estimated that about 30% of student are wearing masks. If 70% not wearing masks in school, they are already making choices in other parts of the school facility. The brief amount of time students could spend for outdoor lunch as a mitigating factor is undermined by classroom interaction, where students are largely unmasked. As a reminder, schools are no longer allowed to enforce mask mandates for students.

Another reason to have indoor lunch relates allergies (airborne allergies, ants, bees, etc.). There are medical reasons that make outdoor lunch difficult. For example, some students require epi pen access due to allergies or because of bees and wasps that can be attracted to an outdoor lunch area. Lastly, Principal Heaton noted that outdoor lunch creates staffing complications because outdoor lunch is more difficult for custodial staff to manage and adversely affects teacher schedules and planning time.

We recognize that other schools in the district may be holding lunch outside, but their circumstances are different than Talley. Glenwood has 160 students whereas Talley has around 700. FAVE has areas with fencing that facilitate safety. In light of the facility and staffing resources, the school stands by the decision to hold lunch indoors. At this point in the school year, approximately 15 kids have been identified with reported or presumed cases of COVID. Mitigation measures like hand sanitizer and hand washing remain in place.

Principal Heaton shared several academic updates with the PTO. Talley is excited about the addition of the STEM curriculum. The school obtained additional resources for Sra. Souki to explore world languages in addition to Spanish. Talley has welcomed four new teachers this year.

### **III. Approval of Minutes from the July 12, 2022 Meeting**

The board reviewed the July PTO meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes of the July 12, 2022 meeting was made by Sara Weathersby and seconded by Kelly Brown and Jennifer Williams. The minutes were approved by a show of hands. Motion carries.

### **IV. Treasurer's Report**

Co-Treasurer Hetal Rathod provided a treasurer's report. For the month of July, the PTO received approximately \$704 in passive fundraising primarily through Kroger, Publix and the Delta Foundation. The expenses for July were approximately \$2900, mostly to purchase staff t-shirts and spirit wear. At the end of July we have approximately \$58,000 in the PTO bank account.

### **V. Committee Reports from the Board**

Co-President Sara Weathersby provided an administrative update about the PTO bank account. Wells Fargo has contacted the PTO regarding an address verification. After extensive effort to resolve the Wells Fargo question regarding the business address for the PTO, Sara provided her home address to verify the bank information.

Co-President Kelly Brown reminded the board that there is a reimbursement form (check request form) on the PTO website under the resources tab. Please review and use as appropriate. Co-Vice President Michael Shahriari asked members to please be as descriptive as possible for reimbursement purposes. Finally, it was noted that PTO is in the process of preparing for an audit. Reimbursement forms and related documentation are being gathered to facilitate the audit.

## **VI. Standing Committee Reports**

Spirit Wear Committee: Co-Chair Ellen Narain provided an update regarding spirit wear. The committee is working to incorporate spirit wear and House merchandise. For this year, we have a new Talley t-shirt that lists the House attributes. The Board is researching whether to procure additional RCA House System merchandise. Ellen reports that the PTO sold about \$2300 of spirit wear at the popsicle social on Saturday August 6th. The committee is inventorying the existing stock and would like to see if there is interest in submitting additional spirit wear orders. The current estimate is that a pre-order of sweatshirts would be approximately \$1200-1300, and \$1500-1700 to pre-order adult shirts. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade MaL Jennifer Williams asked could the PTO purchase a Talley themed shirt in the House System colors? This suggestion was received favorably but more research will be needed.

Fundraising Committee: The fundraising committee has events planned through the fall. Committee Co-Chairs Kim Mohl and Tiffani Edney provided a summary to the PTO. The tentative schedule for fall events are as follows:

August 17<sup>th</sup> 2:30-8:00 Cremalosa

September 15<sup>th</sup> Naan Stop

October 12<sup>th</sup> Raging Burrito

November Kafenio (the committee is working on final confirmation of Nov 8 or 15)

This fall's Reading Rally is set to occur Oct 14 to Oct 21 and will coincide with a book club offered by Jambo books. The tentative date for the book club is Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>. Those participating in book club could count their minutes as part of Reading Rally. TigerFest is scheduled for April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The fundraising committee is coordinating with Ms. Long and Dr. Muhlhausen. The PTO is actively seeking event sponsors for TigerFest. One feature under consideration is to offer white t-shirts with a TigerFest logo that families could then tie dye at an event station. The color schemes offered could coordinate with the House System. Lastly, the fundraising committee reported that the Minted fundraiser for holiday cards will occur again this year. A reminder to PTO members about the Publix, Kroger, Box Tops and Amazon Smile passive fundraising opportunities.

Room Parent Committee: Room Parent Coordinator India Epps provided updates to the PTO. The committee is excited to report that there were more parents willing to serve than in past years. Each of the teachers who needed a room parent has at least one and often two room parents. A room parent orientation is scheduled for next week. RP are currently reaching out to teachers and after the orientation, will reach out to their class parents. Classroom fund will resume this year to support teachers. Class fund pool operates through PayPal account managed by RP Co-Coordinator, India Epps. The process should be fairly straightforward. PayPal pool is no longer available. The friends and family option within PayPal avoids the fees. The PTO expressed its collective thanks to India Epps and Lynda Kim for coordinating the room parents. Parents who would like to volunteer but were not able to sign up should consider serving as a House room parent.

## **VII. Old Business**

New office holders were asked to please contact the PTO Co-Presidents if they need assistance.

### **VIII. New Business**

The PTO collected many committee sign ups at the popsicle social. Committees should reach out to the PTO if they have questions or need support. The garden committee reports that a parent inquired about launching a sustainability committee. There was a sign up to set up for the sorting ceremony tomorrow morning.

### **IX. General Housekeeping**

PTO officers were asked to review the conflict of interest policy circulated via email and to sign the related form.

### **X. Adjourn**

There being no other pending business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Talley PTO Board of Directors is scheduled for September 8, 2022, at 6:00 PM.