



Brent Elementary School Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Dear Brent Families,

We hope this letter finds you and your families safe and well. We want to take a moment and officially welcome you to the 2020-2021 Brent Elementary school year.

First, a big welcome to our new families. Under normal circumstances, this would be the time of year we would be gearing up for our Annual Picnic, a welcome back event for new and old families to get acquainted and reacquainted after summer break. We would also be planning for in-person fall gatherings, community events, and our three major fundraising efforts: the Christmas Tree Sale, Spring Gala, and the Annual Fund.

This year is of course different. First, the coronavirus pandemic cut our school year short and affected everyone in our community as we transitioned to remote teaching and learning. Then, the powerful protests sparked by the murders of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery ignited a long- needed, national conversation on the systemic racial injustices that have plagued our country for centuries. Finally, with a confirmed virtual start to the school year, and the continued presence of coronavirus in our community, we're facing even more uncertainty.

All of this feels overwhelming. So many families are struggling- physically, emotionally, and financially- and wondering how to do it all. But there is one beacon of hope and support in our incredible Brent staff and school community. We are made up of dedicated teachers, staff, and administrators who work tirelessly to improve the lives and academic achievement for every child. At Brent, all parents and guardians are automatically members of the PTA membership body where input, experiences, and ideas are welcome. Lastly, many of our parents and guardians volunteer their time in roles as problem-solvers, facilitators, and advocates to ensure that Brent reaches their goals in supporting every child.

Our mission as your PTA is to foster connections so expertise, service, and resources get allocated to the school in the most impactful way. This year balancing the academic and social-emotional needs of our children, while ensuring safety, equity and connectedness, are our top priorities. As we transition back to school these coming weeks, we wanted to take a moment to share some of the work we are doing to support our children, staff and community.

Virtual Learning

We are committed to supporting all work that goes toward improving the academic experience for our children. We recognize the anxiety parents feel around the effectiveness of remote learning while balancing busy careers and home school.

Brent is working tirelessly to find creative ways to maintain and improve academic outcomes and ensure that every child will have the set-up and supplies needed to be successful. The PTA will be reallocating most of its funds in the first semester to support this effort and will stay close to our administrators to best plan for the remainder of the year. Every family will be supported, and it is our hope that as a community we come out of this stronger than we were before.

Brent Elementary PTA & DWG

The PTA is extremely excited to be working more closely with the Brent Diversity Working Group (DWG) this year on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion to incorporate anti-racist practices. The Diversity Working Group (DWG) at Brent advances the school's commitment to recognizing, respecting, valuing, and promoting diversity by serving as a resource and liaison for students, families, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy.

With back to school right around the corner, the PTA and the DWG are collaborating on community events like play dates, back to school night, social-emotional community support as well as the dissemination of important school and community information.

The PTA and the DWG recognize there is a great deal of work ahead, but we are committed to learning best practices and are committed to dismantling anti-black racism in our community. The PTA will be collaborating with the DWG to identify ways to formally train parents in senior leadership positions at Brent on anti-racism and bias and to have these trainings serve as a prerequisite for future leaders. It's our hope that focused efforts like this engage people of color in our community and inspire volunteerism and future leaders at Brent.

If you would like to join the Diversity Working Group listserv please send an email to BrentDiversityWG@gmail.com.

CommUNITY Meetings

We are thrilled for the continuation of our monthly "CommUNITY" meetings, which launched last year. Held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, these meetings consist of parent education sessions, speaking engagements, and collaborative forums that meet us where we are.

Our first meeting was **August 12th** when Principal Lycknell outlined the important expectations for our first semester. She discussed items related to virtual learning, safety, school supplies and how equity is being considered in every aspect of virtual learning.

Beyond August, the PTA is looking forward to working with school administrators, the DWG and other parent leadership groups to build an agenda that we will publish. We are looking at things like "how to talk to your children about race" and the "social-emotional impacts of the pandemic and distance learning". We would love to hear from YOU if you have ideas, resources, or expertise that you believe could be valuable for these events.

While ending last year early was extremely difficult, school closing early afforded us a small surplus in our PTA budget that will enable us to support this work. The PTA budget is largely made up of the funds raised by members in our volunteer community. While fundraising will not be our primary focus this year, we still hope to plan for charitable events with an eye toward creativity and inclusiveness to truly support the lives of children, families, and *all* members of our community. Every year the PTA raises upwards of \$350,000 to help supplement limited DCPS budgets. While DCPS provides just enough money for teacher salaries, most of the day-to-day school costs are directly attributable to money raised by the PTA. The PTA supplements Brent's DCPS operating budget by purchasing critical supplies and equipment from technology in every classroom to basic janitorial supplies that will keep our school clean and safe upon an eventual return.

If you are interested in seeing how you can support Brent, or get more involved, we are still looking for volunteers. We are looking to fill one open Vice President position on the PTA Board. We are also seeking volunteers to help with the distribution of school supplies and to join the Green Team or Holiday Sale. There are so many ways to get involved, especially given the change we want to see this year.

Volunteering can be a great way to meet new families and participate in discussions that add so much value to our school and children's lives. Time commitments can range from only a few hours a day to a few hours a week. We would love to speak with you to see where you might be the best fit. Please reach out to see how you can join in making our community- and our school- stronger than ever!

Below is the list of the 2020-21 Brent PTA with contact information or you can email us directly at: Brentelementary-PTA@gmail.com

2020-21 Brent Elementary PTA Board	
Co-Presidents	Kiana Moore kiana.j.moore@gmail.com Tara Goldenberg taragoldenberg@gmail.com
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We acknowledge that there are more steps to take towards our goals of becoming an anti-racist school and more inclusive community, and we will continue to reflect deeply on ways we can make meaningful change. Stay safe and we look forward to hearing from you and seeing you all soon.

Sincerely,

Your 2020-21 Brent Elementary PTA Board

Brent B.E.A.R. - BRAVE, EMPATHETIC, ACTIVE, RESPONSIBLE

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