

Huntington School Parent-Teacher Organization

Meeting Summary

November 12, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

Meeting held on Zoom due to COVID-19

Board members in attendance: Ann Yarka, President; Maureen McCarthy, Vice-President; Ramie Miller, Treasurer; Meghan Vitale, Secretary

Administrators: Joanne Harlow, Principal

Office of Family Engagement: Melissa Hidek

Others: 1 teacher, 2 parents.

I. Welcome

Ann welcomed everyone.

II. Approval of previous minutes

Minutes from the October 8, 2020, meeting were available on the website. There were no comments. Maureen made a motion to approve, Meghan seconded the motion. No objections. Motion carries.

III. Board member reports

Ramie reviewed the financial report from October (Meghan shared via Zoom). There was no activity in the account in October, although one check is pending to Ms. Archie for the first day of school balloons (that reimbursement will come from the apparel account). Total account balance as of 10/31/20 is \$23,918.68, which includes \$3,593.10 in the PTO General account, \$15,510.96 in NJHS, \$852.07 in class accounts, and \$3,962.55 in other special accounts.

There was a discussion about doing another apparel sale. Ann suggested that families might be interested in Huntington apparel for holiday gifts, especially if items can be shipped directly to homes. Ann will look into the possibility of doing a sale.

IV. Old business

None.

V. New business

There were no general fund requests or other new business.

VI. Administrative report

COVID-19 update

Mrs. Harlow provided information about the impact of the “yellow zone” designation that the Governor recently placed on the City of Syracuse and some other parts of Onondaga County. One of the

requirements of this designation is that schools must test 20% of students and staff for COVID-19 on a weekly basis in order to remain open for in-person learning. SCSD will need to start this testing within the next week or two (the timeframe is not solidified yet). An online survey has been sent out via email, Facebook, Twitter, etc., asking families to consent to this testing. However, parents will still be required to register for specific testing times when the County Health Department is at Huntington. We do not know the exact dates yet. To date, the response to the survey has been very low, at Huntington and across the district. Huntington has only received 68 responses to date, with only 41 responses indicating willingness to test.

At this time, the plan is to test students in the cafeteria, then they can go back to class. It is a rapid test, with results in about 15 minutes. If a student's result is positive, they will be pulled out of class and a parent will be notified. The student will have to be picked up from school immediately; the district is prepared to provide transportation if necessary. Parents/guardians will be allowed to accompany students for testing; however, parents are not allowed to be tested at the school sites.

Mrs. Harlow stated that there are still questions about whether a student can attend in-person if the parent doesn't consent to testing. That answer is not clear yet. But, the school must eventually test everyone – i.e. they cannot test the same 20% each week. Also, the requirement is for 20% of the total people in the building, so 20% of the total of both students and staff.

Huntington is averaging about 190-200 students in the building each day, with slightly lower totals on Thursday and Friday because Pod B is smaller than Pod A. Some teachers are working remotely, so there are only about 130 staff members in the building each day.

It is not clear yet if buildings that cannot reach the 20% threshold will be required to close, while other buildings in the district could remain open. The procedures are being set by the County Health Department. They intend to try to register 30% of the people in the building for testing each week, in order to meet the 20% minimum.

There was some discussion about the low response rate to the survey. Mrs. Harlow and Melissa both pointed out that the survey had not been translated, so many of the families in the district could not complete it. There also may be some confusion about the purpose of the survey, especially since we are now being told that families will still have to register separately for testing. Also, Meghan noted that there have been questions online about student numbers – parents don't know where to find the student number, but the number is required to complete the survey.

Each building has to provide staff to assist with registration and check-in for testing. The intent is to do two schools each day. There is a "trial run" scheduled for Friday, November 13, in the East Syracuse Minoa district.

Mrs. Harlow indicated that principals were told that school could be required to close with little advance notice, so the building staff are preparing take-home materials now in case of a closure. Also, it is unclear if staff will have to report to the building, as in the first few weeks of all-remote learning, or if all staff will work from home.

Mrs. Harlow and Ms. Brown both indicated that very few staff members seem willing to be tested at school.

Mrs. Harlow reviewed the district's cleaning procedures, with deep-cleaning taking place every Wednesday and Saturday. To date, the case numbers are very low among students. But staff are increasingly having to work remotely due to potential exposures from outside of school or from their family members.

Parent-teacher conferences

Parent-teacher conferences were held November 2 and 4. Elementary school had about 60% of families participate, which is higher than in past years. Pre-K, kindergarten, and 5th grade had high participation. Middle school only had about 12% of families participate, but their numbers are typically lower. Ms. Brown indicated that the remote option was convenient for many families, and it is something the school should consider offering in the future even when in-person meetings are allowed. Mrs. Harlow thought that some families chose not to attend a conference because they already have a high level of communication with the teachers, either through the weekly "wellness checks" or during the remote instruction sessions. The district is distributing a survey to collect feedback about conferences, but we're going to wait to distribute this because there are too many surveys being circulated right now.

After-school program

Mrs. Harlow provided some information about the 21st Century Learning Communities program, which will run virtually this year. The funding rules allow for programming to be delivered during school hours, so Mrs. Harlow is considering asking families if they would like to have students participate on their at-home days during school hours. She will need to send a survey or form indicating this option and see what families would prefer. Then, they will need to find staff for either during or after school hours. Only 11 students have registered to date.

Title 1 Parent Involvement Plan

Mrs. Harlow has received information about this year's Title I funding. Once again, \$6,000 is allocated for Huntington. Mrs. Harlow will forward the information to the Board. We may need to schedule a separate public meeting to review the draft plan, as we don't have another PTO meeting until January.

VII. Closing

Meghan made a motion to adjourn, and Mrs. Harlow seconded. No objections.

Next meeting: January 14 (via Zoom)