

Huntington School PTO
Meeting Summary
April 6, 2017

Attendees

Board members:

Leeann Wiess
Meghan Vitale
Angie Vigliotti-Martinez
Ann Yarka

Administrators

Mrs. Harlow

5 parents/staff members

Board member reports

Leeann reported that karate is going well. The students just had their test and tournament. Everyone did a great job and earned their next rank.

There was no report on Box Tops

Bingo Night was successful. There were about 30 families that attended. We are grateful for the many prize donations, including those from the Zoo, the MOST, SkyZone, Black Mamba Skate Park, and others. Also, every child received a small package of school supplies (purchased by PTO). Mrs. Harlow mentioned that there were a few families that brought children that weren't Huntington students, and these children were disruptive. Next year we'll make an announcement about behavior expectations.

Mrs. Harlow also talked about the need to plan more events that are attractive to all of our Huntington families, including our ENL families. Bingo Night attracted very few ENL families. Ms. Jones noted that ENL families might not know what bingo is. Ms. Stroman said that there were a lot of ENL families that attended the afterschool program safety event at the mall (families received admission to WonderWorks afterwards), and she suggested partnering with the afterschool program to plan and run events that are more inclusive.

Meghan noted that overall very few Huntington families attend PTO-sponsored events, so we really need to think about ways to get more participation from everyone, in addition to thinking about events that will appeal to ENL families. Leeann added that the PTO would certainly like to run more events for families, but in order to do this we really need more volunteers to plan and run these. There is a limit on how many events we can successfully run each year with the very small number of Board members that currently take on this task.

There was a discussion about movie night, including questions about why the event was canceled this year. Meghan and Leeann explained that the movie night initially planned for this year was canceled due to concerns about the licensing requirements. We recently were made aware that any public display of a movie requires the purchase of a license. This applies even if no admission is charged; in fact, charging admission to cover the cost of a license is allowable, so may be something we want to consider if we decide to go ahead with movie night next year. Meghan said she had contacted the district's communications office for advice and to see if the district has an "umbrella license" that would cover all schools, but we were advised to purchase our own license. Some suburban PTOs use a license purchased

by BOCES, but this is not an option for us since we're not part of the BOCES system. Ms. Stroman suggested that the Palace Theatre might be able to give us a reduced price if we held movie night there, but Meghan stated that they would have to purchase the same license that PTO would purchase so it is likely that the cost to us would be the same (this is why our students have to pay when they go to the Palace for a field trip – the fee covers the movie license in addition to the popcorn and juice). We'll continue to look into options for next year, and discuss the possibility of charging admission for movie night. All present agreed that past movie nights attracted a number of ENL families, so it is something we would like to do again in the future.

Ms. Stroman also suggested scheduling ABC night with the Book Fair again, as had been done in a previous year. She said that when these were scheduled together, sales at the book fair increased substantially. ABC night included the elementary concert, rather than the middle school concert (which coincided with the book fair this year, due to a snow day). Ms. Stroman talked about an event held at a school where she had previously worked. This event showcased student projects in each classroom, not just art work. Jenn voiced support for this idea, noting that it is frustrating for students that attend the art show just to find that they do not have anything displayed in the show. Ms. Stroman suggested that students act as "tour guides" during the event. Teachers would need to know to expect this at the beginning of the year, so that they could plan for a class project. There was some discussion about the need to differentiate between orientation and open house; what we currently call "open house" is really more of an orientation event (held at the beginning of the school year). An "open house" later in the year could be more of a student showcase, since more work has been created. Ms. Jones suggested a "STEAM Night" (science, technology, engineering, art, math), where each class displays a project.

Meghan talked about Family Dance. There were 70 students in attendance, including a few ENL families. Jeff Wise was the DJ again, and did a nice job as always.

Old business

Leeann followed up on the discussion from a previous meeting about disinfecting wipes. There was a proposal that PTO purchase wipes for classroom teachers. Leeann spoke to the custodians, who said that any teacher that asks can receive a spray bottle of disinfectant and paper towels. Therefore, PTO will not be purchasing disinfecting wipes for the classrooms.

Earth Day cleanup is April 22. Emily is organizing this with the Girl Scouts. Meghan will check with Emily to confirm the time (probably 10:00 a.m.).

Elections will be held at the May meeting. Nomination forms will go home after April break. In order to be President or Treasurer you must have been on the board for a year previously, so the only positions open to those not currently on the board would be Secretary and Vice-President. Secretary must be able to maintain electronic communications and the PTO website.

Meghan provided an update on the building renovations. There was a community meeting held at the school on March 23. About a dozen people attended. The district staff and their design team gave a presentation, similar to the January PTO meeting but with a revised site plan. The revised site plan includes moving the playground to the west side of the rear of the building, and adding more staff parking in the current playground location, as well as minor tweaks to the front layout (but still with the proposed bus loop). Air conditioning is not included, but the district staff assured those present that the

new windows will reduce solar gain, all windows will be operable and have roller shades, and teachers can request box fans for their classrooms. Mrs. Harlow said that we will be looking at playground plans next. Ms. Stroman stated that at other schools in the district, the street in front of the building is closed to traffic during arrival and dismissal, and she suggested a similar restriction on Sunnycrest Road in front of the school to provide a safer environment for our walkers. There was some debate over whether these are full closures, or one-way traffic restrictions. PTO will look into these examples (Franklin, Webster, Seymour). Ms. Jones also suggested looking at the parent pick-up and drop-off procedures at Salem Hyde, where there is a small parent loop. Meghan and Leeann talked about the need for parents to understand how dismissal will actually function with the proposed site plan, and that the discussion about procedures should be happening concurrently with the discussion about the physical plan. For example, there have been suggestions to dismiss busers first, and only dismiss walkers once all the buses have left. That would address a lot of parent concerns about the safety of the proposed bus loop, but so far that is only speculative.

Fund requests

Henninger has once again asked if Huntington PTO will fund two \$250 scholarships for former Huntington students that are graduating from Henninger. This has been a tradition for many years. The students could be chosen by Henninger staff, or by some combination of PTO and Huntington staff. Ms. Jones stated that she feels it is unfair to limit the scholarships only go to Henninger graduates because students are now being encouraged to choose the high school program that is the best fit for them, individually, so many Huntington students go to other high schools in the city. Ms. Stroman suggested a teacher committee should choose the students. Meghan expressed her opinion that this money should be spent on current Huntington students, not on graduates because that is what parents expect when they participate in fundraisers. Others noted that spending the \$500 on, for example, buses for a field trip will impact a lot more students than the two scholarships. Leeann suggested that we have options: we could approve the request as-is, we could open-up the scholarship to any two students that were former Huntington students, or we could decide not to continue funding this scholarship. Mrs. Harlow said that keeping the money here at Huntington would impact more students, and that \$250 isn't a lot of money in the larger picture of college expenses; it's a nice gesture, but not very useful. There was a motion to approve the request, and the vote was unanimous to deny the request (i.e. to not fund the scholarships). Leeann will let Henninger know that we will discontinue this going forward because our fundraising has decreased over the past few years and we need to retain funds for our current students.

Administrative report

Mrs. Harlow talked about the ELA assessment, which students took last week. The State requires that schools have at least a 95% participation rate on each test in order to qualify as "in good standing" (among many other criteria). About 65 students opted-out of the test, resulting in about 88% participation, although this may increase slightly due to some make-ups for absences. Third grade and 5th grade had almost 100% participation. The 8th grade had the greatest number of opt-outs. Ms. Jones clarified that exempt ENL students don't count against our participation rate. Angie asked if the administrators call to verify that parents actually chose to opt-out. Mrs. Harlow confirmed that the administrators do call parents of all students that submit an opt-out letter, but sometimes parents did not know what they were really agreeing to. The math tests will be May 2-4, and the district will do another PR push to encourage participation. Huntington usually does better on the math test.

The participation rate impacts our school designation and can impact fund availability. This past year we were redesignated as a “local assistance plan” school, from our initial designation as a “school in good standing,” due to scores on the 4th and 8th grade science tests specifically within the subgroup of black students. Scores are tracked by many subgroups. Students will be doing test prep over the next few weeks. Science tests are scheduled for the beginning of June. Students taking regents algebra do not take the Common Core math assessment, and they are not counted against our participation rate.

The annual school review will be conducted next week. This examines how well we’ve met the goals set during last year’s school review. Mrs. Harlow has developed a parent survey, and distributed this to parents at the meeting. She is looking for about a dozen responses. PTO will help distribute the survey to additional parents.

The third marking period is over. Report cards will come out around spring break.

There is no school on April 14 (this was not a contingency day). Students will attend school on all contingency days due to the number of snow days we had this year.

There were no added agenda items.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45 p.m.