

Huntington School PTO

Meeting Summary

October 13, 2016

Attendees

Executive Board:

Leeann Wiess, President
Ann Yarka, Vice-president
Meghan Vitale, Secretary
Emily Pascale, Treasurer

Administration:

Mrs. Harlow, Principal
Dr. Watkins, Vice-principal

Parents/staff/public: 11 attendees signed in

Welcome

Leeann Wiess welcomed everyone and introduced this year's board members. Leeann asked that if anyone has comments or questions during the meeting, please introduce yourself prior to speaking.

Board member reports

Back to school BBQ

Meghan reported that about 300 people attended this year's bar-b-que, which was just about the same as last year. Ms. Stroman suggested collecting RSVPs next year to cut down on wasted food.

Jenn Barr said that it's hard to get to each classroom with multiple children. Also, kids were running around, which was distracting. She also commented that the event started too early for parents that have to get there from work.

Miranda McCormick noted that a parent didn't turn off their cell phone and it was disruptive.

Ms. Jones noticed that a lot of ENL parents did not come, and suggested that if it is held that early in the school year again, we should do some outreach over the summer to encourage them to attend. Ms. Stroman noted that ClassDojo can translate, so we could use that to notify ENL students at the end of the previous year.

Emily Pascale also said that the start time for the BBQ was too early in the evening. Stephanie Moon expressed appreciation that the BBQ was announced on the website and on Facebook. She also suggested that it start later, although she said that it would also help just to make clear on the flyer that you don't have to be there right when the BBQ starts – that food is available for the whole hour. Stephanie said there were only 3 families that showed up in her daughter's class.

Mrs. Harlow stated that we'll think about doing it differently next year, and maybe not combine it with Open House. Open House is taking on a more crucial role in the school year. A lot of the really important

information that used to be shared at an Open House will be shared at Take Your Parent to School Night this year. She suggested that we might separate the BBQ and Open House next year.

Stephanie said she really appreciated the opportunity to visit the classroom and the teachers early in the school year. She also felt that kindergarten orientation was inadequate.

Ms. Guiffrida asked for clarification on the time for Take Your Parent School Night. Start time is 6:30 p.m., and it runs until 8:00 p.m.

Box Tops

Mary Beth Wise reported that Mrs. Long's class collected the most Box Tops for September. Each month the "winner" gets a treat. Ms. Stroman asked if Box Tops is promoted anywhere. She suggested that the top class could be offered Dojo Points – can we get that into announcements in the morning?

Emily noted that we received a check for \$391 from last year, but there should be one more from last year. Mary Beth noted that, technically, Box Tops is only for elementary school, but middle schoolers can still bring them in (but no classroom contest). Leeann suggested putting the collection sheet up on the website.

Karate

Leeann reported on the after-school Karate program, which is run by PTO. The program is limited to 25 kids, and is full for this year. There are a lot of returning students this year.

Raffle

Raffle is ongoing. Ticket printing was donated this year, which saved us about \$200. Prizes are a Nook, iPod Nano, and movie ticket gift card. Tickets are still available if anyone wants more. Winners will be drawn at the Family Dance on November 4.

Genevieve's fundraiser

Orders are due tomorrow, October 14. Leeann asked for any volunteers for sorting orders when they arrive.

Picture Day

Leeann reported that we had a new photo company this year (the previous company went out of business). There was a scheduling issue with elementary on the first day. Middle school (second day) went really well. We are interested to see how the pictures come out. We expect them earlier than they used to be delivered. Pricing was comparable to previous company. Stephanie said that she liked being able to pre-pay online (and it wasn't charged until after picture day), and she had a good experience with their customer service.

SU graduate student project

Dan and Kevin from Syracuse University administration graduate program spoke about the project they are completing with our school. They are taking an organizational management course. They have four weeks to work on a problem identified by the principal. Their focus will be on ENL students. Huntington

has a very wide spectrum of languages spoken in the school. There are a lot of resources for Spanish-speaking families, but much fewer for other languages.

They are going to create some resources, such as a welcome video or Powerpoint, that can be translated for ENL parents. They are going to start working in our top-spoken language, which is Arabic, but will leave us with resources and directions for replicating the work in other languages. There will be six graduate students working on this. Focus is more on parents than students, although there will be orientation-type tools for students on their first day.

Dan Romeo asked if there is data available on ENL students. Arabic, Somali, Nepalese, Karen, Swahili, are the most common languages spoken by our ENL families. There are 23 different languages spoken, with about 180 total ENL students including elementary and middle school. Ms. Jones clarified that students can test out of ENL status.

When the project is completed, the graduate students will present their work to the PTO.

Updates on Old Business

Leeann talked about progress on revising the PTO bylaws. The Board has been working on revising our bylaws and procedures. They are outdated. It is taking more time than we expected. We need to be able to make them available for public review before we can vote on them. Board will continue to work on this.

Funding requests

There was only one fund request. The request was from the Board, to approve funds up to \$150 for renewal of our website service subscription and domain name. Meghan Vitale noted that last year the subscription was \$100, with a free domain name. We expect it to be \$120 this year, but want to have a bit of a buffer in case the price increases before February, when the subscription expires.

Ann Yarka motioned to approve \$150 for the PTO website, Melissa Bland seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

New Business & Upcoming Events

Parent Involvement Grant

Mrs. Harlow provided an overview of the Title I Parent Involvement Grant. Every school in the district receives this money, but we have to put together a plan for how to spend it. Must be spent on parent-centered educational activities. Our allocation this year is \$6,000. Mrs. Harlow emphasized how well the collaborative-process for writing the grant application with the PTO has been working the past few years.

Meghan reviewed the draft application for this year. Our proposed use of the funding includes:

- \$3,750 for staff extension of service (Take Your Parent to School night and Science Fair)
- \$300 for parent representation on School Leadership Team
- \$1,950 for supplies and materials (including \$1,400 on Wegmans card, with about \$1,000 expected to be used for next year's back-to-school BBQ)

There were no comments from those present at the meeting.

Take Your Parent to School Night

Mrs. Harlow talked about the upcoming Take Your Parent to School Night. Each grade level has designed their own program. It's going to be different from previous years' "curriculum night." A lot of teachers will be demonstrating blended learning. Jenn asked about how the night will work for families with multiple students. Ms. Stroman noted that a lot of the programs are the same across grade levels, and Mrs. Harlow said that there will not really be formal presentations where you have to be there at a specific time. You may visit multiple classrooms throughout the night.

Other upcoming events

Science Fair is November 2, 5:30-7 p.m.

Family Dance is November 4, 6:30-8:00.

Middle School Dance on October 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m. It is not a Halloween dance.

Bake Sale

Bake Sale is scheduled for November 8, which is a day off for students. We would like to be open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., which are the hours for the polls. Parents will need to drop-off baked goods on Monday. We are looking for people to volunteer for shifts that day. Longer-term, we also need some new people to take over the bake sale. Both individually-wrapped and larger items are needed. There will be a flier that goes home about donating goods and looking for volunteers to work on the day of the event.

Genevieve's sale

Genevieve's delivery scheduled for November 16, tentatively – will be confirmed once orders are all in.

Administrative reports

On October 26, 30 middle school students will attend a Syracuse Opera performance. Ms. Stroman suggested that the all-city music students should attend. Performance is Cinderella. A bus has been reserved. Permission slips will go home soon. Mrs. Harlow asked for donations of "nice" clothes for students – dresses, shirts, ties, etc.

Parent-teacher conferences are coming up on November 8 (afternoon only) and November 15 (afternoon and evening). Letters should be going home to parents soon.

ClassDojo has been implemented in grades 1-8.

After school program started this week. Going well so far. More students keep signing-up. There are a few spaces left in elementary. Lots of academic and enrichment programs. Parents asked to come to meeting a few weeks ago to choose enrichment activities. The program is structure with 2 days academic and 2 days enrichment.

There will be no Halloween parade this year. Students should not wear costumes to school. Teachers can have a party in their classroom if they choose. National Junior Honor Society will do annual haunted house in library for classes to visit. Lights will be left on for kindergarten.

Mrs. Harlow spoke briefly about anticipated building renovations. The landscape architects and engineers have been in the building for walk-throughs, surveys, and measuring. They are still studying the building, watching arrivals and dismissals for traffic flow. They are looking at variations for bus routes, as well as what needs to be done in the building. Team was here today, but no new information yet. Bus loop is the big item. When they are done with research, they will put together a few renderings for presentation to the community and the PTO. Ms. Jones asked if parent drop-off traffic is being looked at, and Mrs. Harlow confirmed that this is part of the discussion.

Dr. Watkins spoke about schedule changes for middle school. They have 60-minute blocks this year. A staggered schedule was implemented, so the three grades do not change classes at the same time. All middle school students have an assigned mentor.

There is no after-school and no karate on October 31.

After School Program

Melissa Bland gave an update on the after-school program. There are 27 school staff working with program this year, which is an all-time high. There are 265 students registered, and more signing-up. Enrichments this year include: Irish dance, swimming, water safety, African drumming, guitar, piano (on keyboards), cartooning, Legos, garden club, Spanish club, recording with Sub-Cat studios, SMART Girls, Passport to Manhood (character building, team building, college and career prep, service projects).

Melissa introduced Desiree Phillips from Contact. Desiree will be working on family involvement, literacy, etc.

Ann asked for a copy of the list of enrichments, and Melissa said she could provide this.

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