

Huntington School Parent-Teacher Organization

Meeting Summary

October 8, 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.

Melissa let everyone know that Michelle Ratchford will represent Huntington on the Superintendent's Parent Council this year. They will be meeting virtually.

II. Approval of previous minutes

Minutes from the May 28, 2020, meeting were available on the website. There were no comments. Ramie made a motion to approve; Maureen seconded. No objections. Motion carries.

III. Board member reports

Ramie reviewed the financial reports from June through August. There were a lot of end-of-year purchases in June, such as T-shirts. There was not much activity in July and August. The hotel for the NJHS trip to New York City issued a refund of the deposit that had been paid last year. There were also some refund checks to families that were cashed (Darien Lake trip). In August, any remaining class account balances over \$100 (from PTO fundraisers) were moved to the general account. In September, the PTO paid invoices for our two insurance policies. There were also two teacher appreciation events in September, and that was funded through both the apparel account and the general account.

Mrs. Harlow said that we should receive a reimbursement request for balloons for the first days of school; Ramie confirmed that Ms. Archie had submitted this request.

Mrs. Harlow noted that teachers had purchased baskets on their own (for kids to keep personal belongings in the classroom, as we're not using lockers or cubbies). Ms. Brown said that her team decided to buy laundry baskets at the dollar store, and others purchased similar items. Also, they have had to purchase more individual items – such as play-doh – for this year since these high-touch items cannot be shared between students.

Mrs. Joanne said that her usual allocation of funds for supplies has been reduced, although she has informed staff that there is some money available. No one requested these funds to purchase their “start up” supplies. Teachers have done a great job to make rooms look friendly and inviting. It was also noted that the teachers are responsible for cleaning the desk shields.

IV. Old business

None.

V. New business

There were no general fund requests or other new business.

VI. Administrative report

Parents asked questions about the hybrid instruction that just started this week, and Mrs. Harlow explained some aspects of this system.

Ramie asked why the hybrid students are now only getting two days of synchronous instruction, versus the four days of synchronous instruction when the district was 100% virtual for the first few weeks. He asked for clarification about what the students that are remaining fully-virtual receive. Do they receive instruction four days per week? Is this equitable? Are hybrid students going to fall behind?

Mrs. Harlow said that the fully-remote students are getting some synchronous instruction on each of their four days. She also stated that other districts in the region are live-streaming from the classroom, so everyone can get instruction simultaneously. Teachers are more engaged, and engaging, when they are teaching in the classroom with students. Everyone seems to want to ask the district: why aren't we live-streaming? What are the legalities and privacy issues around this, and why are these only concerns when the students are in the classroom (versus when all students are home, and they are essentially being live-streamed from anywhere)?

There was also a question about why Pod A or B can't join the fully-remote students on their at-home days. Mrs. Harlow then explained that the fully-remote group has become very large, as more families have switched to this option. They cannot continue to add to this group, as some elementary remote classes are now over 40 students. The district will likely split Pod D (full remote) into D1 and D2 groups, and may have to combine classes in Pods A and B, since some of these classes now have fewer than 10 students. Things will readjust in the next 10-14 days.

A parent asked if more families should just choose fully-remote, so that the school could focus on that model. Mrs. Harlow did not encourage this, noting how happy the hybrid students seem to be coming back into school. But there is clearly a lack of resources, and the district has not figured out – yet – how to allocate resources across all the “pods.”

Meghan asked what the teachers would like to see – would they prefer to be able to live-stream if this became an option? Is this the preferred model? And would that mean that classes could move faster through the curriculum (covering four lessons each week instead of two)? Mrs. Harlow asked the meeting

participants that are teachers if they would be comfortable with live-streaming. There was an indication that they would likely feel comfortable with this, depending on the actual set-up (no students on camera), but the PD that teachers are receiving this year has the pacing set for only two lessons per week; a lot of other things would need to change to make a live-streaming model effective.

Melissa voiced a concern, heard from parents around the district, that the fully-remote pod is moving faster, and asked for clarification. The teachers stated that this should not be happening, as they are supposed to be moving at the same pace as the rest of the grade. In kindergarten, for example, teachers are only giving two lessons per week, even for the fully-remote. Mrs. Harlow confirmed that the expectation for fully-remote classes is to receive two lessons each week in ELA and math, though teachers might spread those out over the week.

Right now, teachers are doing professional development each Wednesday, but many would like to see that transition to a planning day.

Melissa cautioned that if the district were able to live-stream and, therefore, students had to log-on during their at-home days to receive instruction (not just to do homework), this might mean that some students miss out on instruction. The district is aware that some hybrid students are not logging-on during their remote days at all. Before advocating for four day per week instruction, we need to make sure students are able to fully utilize the technology and have the support to be participating in remote instruction. Mrs. Harlow indicated that teachers are already doing a lot of tech support.

Mrs. Harlow spoke briefly about plans for Open House and parent-teacher conferences. Both will be held virtually, on Teams. Open House will likely be by grade level (one Teams link for the grade). Conferences are usually held on Election Day (daytime and evening), since there is no school for students that day. Mrs. Harlow is looking at other possible days for this year.

VII. Closing

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

Meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.

Next meeting: November 12 (via Zoom)