

Huntington School PTO

October 8, 2015

Board members present:

Leeann Wiess, President
Gia Palermo, Vice-President
Keith Gatling, Vice-President

Emily Pascale, Treasurer
Meghan Vitale, Secretary

10 parents signed-in, about 15 attended.

Welcome

Leeann welcomed everyone and introduced Board members.

Board member reports

Back-to-school event

Meghan talked about the back-to-school event. We feel it was a successful event, especially for the first time. We estimate 300-350 people attended. Feedback has generally been positive. A few people have suggested reversing the order next year, so that the open house portion occurs first followed by the barbeque. We will consider this in our planning. Any other feedback on the event is welcome; please talk to Meghan directly or email huntingtonschoolpto@gmail.com.

Karate

Leeann talked about the karate program. Registrations were limited to 25 students, although we ended up accepting 27 because two students are older and have been in the program for awhile already. Everyone signs behavior contract. There are some new students, and many returning students.

Picture Day

Leeann recapped picture day, which was at the end of September. We are looking for parent volunteers that would like to lead-up picture day. Leeann ran it with a couple of other volunteers, but would like someone else to lead. Make-ups are schedule for November 6.

Box Tops

Mary Beth Wise spoke about Box Tops. We have raised \$130 so far. Ms. Winters had the most for September. The goal for this year is \$1,000. Gia asked if Box Tops expire. There is an expiration date printed on the Box Tops, but it is usually at least a year out. Ms. Radley (3rd grade) asked for cards to go home to remind families. Mary Beth said they can just put them in a bag; they don't need to staple to them to the card. Leeann reminded staff that they should go in the special Box Tops mailbox, not the general PTO mailbox.

Mrs. Harlow stated that Target is no longer doing their RedCard education program. She noted that we're also registered with Tops.

Parent Involvement Grant

Meghan reviewed the draft Parent Involvement Plan application. (Copies were available in the room.) Our school district receives Title I funding as a result of having a high percentage of low-income students. Some of this money is distributed to schools specifically for parent involvement. All schools in the district receive this. Our allocation is \$5,000. We are required to submit a Parent Involvement Plan in order to receive our allocation.

For this year we propose spending the money as follows:

- \$2,151 for staff extension of service
 - 2 coaches, 22 teachers for curriculum night
 - 4 teachers for science fair
- \$250 for School Leadership Team representation (Leeann, Meghan, Gia)
- \$400 for supplies for curriculum night
- \$1,200 on a Wegmans card for back-to-school event
- \$96 to build/host PTO website (pending eligibility determination)
- Up to \$200 for a dedicated PTO cell phone (pending eligibility determination)
- \$702 on a Wegmans to support other parent events such as seminars

Meghan noted that we are not sure if the website and cell phone are eligible expenses. She contacted the Office of Special Programs regarding these items, and is waiting for a response. If these items are determined to be ineligible, we intend to move that \$296 over to the second Wegmans card and try to plan an additional parent seminar.

There were no questions on the proposed plan. No one expressed objection to the proposed activities.

New Business and Upcoming Events

Fundraisers

Genevieve's (coffee cake) sale is underway; orders are due October 14. We could use some volunteers to help on delivery day, which is expected to occur the week before Thanksgiving Recess. Contact Leeann or Angie, or email the PTO address, if you can help.

Raffle tickets have been distributed to teachers and should have come home with students. Drawing will be at the Family Dance on November 6.

Curriculum Night

Mrs. Harlow stated that curriculum night has been postponed (currently on the school calendar for October 15). It will be rescheduled, but no date has been set yet.

Girl Scouts

Emily spoke about the new Girl Scouts troop that is starting for fourth and fifth grade girls. An information session is scheduled at Paine Branch Library on Nichols Ave for October 19. Fourth and fifth grade girls should have received fliers in school. Contact Emily for more info.

Election Day Bake Sale

Leeann noted that the bake sale will be held on November 3, but we are no longer having students come through due to time constraints and concerns with allergies. It will set up near where voters come in. Students may come before/after

school if accompanied by a parent. Notices should be going home soon to sign up to assist and to bake items. Bring baked goods directly to the gym. Mrs. Harlow noted that November 3 is a half day (for parent-teacher conferences).

Picture Make Up Day

Picture make-ups are Friday, November 6. We have not received a date for the delivery of the pictures that were already done. Leeann will talk to two parents that helped with the original day and see if they can help with make-up day. A parent stated that she received the flier only 2 days before picture day, and this is not enough time to budget for pictures. Leeann stated that fliers were in teachers' mailboxes a week before picture day. Mrs. Harlow clarified that every student gets their photo taken, whether or not they have money in hand, so pictures can still be ordered. Parent expressed frustration that other items are not being sent home in a timely manner, and she feels this is due to the fact that her child's class has a long-term substitute. Mrs. Harlow will talk to the teacher about getting fliers home in a timely manner.

Family Dance

Family dance is Friday, November 6. The dance is for students in pre-K through grade 5. We will have the same DJ as the past two years. He does a nice job playing appropriate music that the kids enjoy.

Next meeting

Next PTO meeting is November 12.

Funding Requests

Discussion

Emily described the fund requests.

Mr. Ballenger (not present) requested \$120 for pizza delivery tip money. Mrs. Harlow explained the request. Peppino's brings four large pizzas to the school for free every Friday for students, plus a more extensive assortment of food once a month for the teacher appreciation lunch. Every week a class or group (sports team, chorus, etc.) is chosen to receive a pizza party for good behavior. Leeann noted that in the future, Mr. Ballenger should request the money for September deliveries at the May PTO meeting so that he has money available before the October PTO meeting.

Ms. Huyck (not present) requested \$125 in reimbursement for 7th grade end of year celebration that occurred last June. The total cost for the event was \$315. There was \$190 in their account, so the \$125 is to cover the remaining cost. Dr. Watkins explained that they played games outside, teachers and kids were very involved, it was a great event.

Mr. Ballenger is also requested \$60 for lunch activities. Mrs. Harlow explained that the administration would like to purchase games and other activities (coloring books, crayons) to have available on each table during lunch. The cafeteria is very loud, and they see this as a way to keep students focused. A parent expressed concern about this request: this would distract kids from eating (more than they already are), and that the sharing of games while eating could create a dangerous situation for students with food allergies. Multiple other parents echoed these concerns. Mrs. Harlow asked for the opinion of middle school parents on this issue. A parent expressed that middle schoolers tend to eat quickly and need something else to do. Gia disagreed, and felt this may lead to more issues in the cafeteria. Some children already complain that they don't have time to eat. Meghan asked if the idea is to provide something to do before students get

called up for the lunch line, or during lunch? Mrs. Harlow stated that the idea is more for middle school students after they eat because most of them eat very fast and then have significant time left.

Third grade requested \$200 to see Syracuse City Ballet Nutcracker. Ms. Radley provided explanation. The Ballet will contribute \$5 per student towards the \$7 ticket price. Bus cost will likely be around \$500 for two buses. Students will be asked for \$5, and there are about 100 students. They are hoping to use \$200 from their account to cover the balance. Emily indicated that the current financial records indicate that 3rd grade has no money in their account, so they will have to request more from the general PTO account. Mrs. Harlow expressed concern that \$5 is too much to ask families to contribute, and suggested reducing the contribution to \$2 or \$3. Some parents felt that \$5 was a standard request for field trips, and if we limited the family contribution for this trip, we would have to do that for all trips. PTO has always approved requests to provide additional funds for field trips to enable all students to go; we understand that there are some families that will not be able to contribute. Third grade will still ask students for \$5. Emily suggested that the request should be up to \$400 to cover students that don't bring money (any of that amount that is not used will stay in PTO general fund).

Motions

Erin moved to approve the \$120 for pizza tips; Jen Barr seconded the motion. No opposed. No abstentions. Motion passed.

Chris Murray moved to approve the \$125 reimbursement to 7th grade. Melissa seconded the motion. There was 1 opposed, 1 abstention. Motion passed. A parent stated that we shouldn't reimburse; all requests should be made in advance. Emily noted that this has been brought up, but every grade should have an end of year celebration. The Board will remind teachers that all fund requests should be made prior to the event, and that requests for reimbursement after-the-fact are generally discouraged.

Jen Barr motioned to approve up to \$400 for the 3rd grade trip to the Nutcracker. Gia seconded the motion. No opposed. No abstentions. Motion passed.

Keith motioned to table the \$60 request for lunch games until the November meeting. There was no opposition. We would like to hear a revised proposal that addresses the concerns expressed by parents.

Administrative Reports

Mrs. Harlow stated that the school year started off smoothly. The barbeque went very well and it was great to see so many families. There are a number of new initiatives this year, and these will be described in the principal's newsletter. Tomorrow is the first Panther Pride party for pre-K through grade 5 as part of the PBIS initiative. Students that received no more than 1 referral since the start of school will be able to attend a dance party in the gym. Eligibility determinations were made at today's school climate meeting; these meetings happen every two weeks under the new Code of Conduct to review behavior data. Some grade levels have 100% of their students eligible for the party, and only 2 or 3 kids in the higher elementary grades that are not eligible. Peaceful People is coming in to do some restorative circles with the students that aren't eligible. A parent commended the use of a behavior incentive that does not involve food. Meghan noted that another school held a students versus teachers soccer game as a behavior incentive. The

dance will be structured so that students attend in groups (pre-K-1, 2-3, and 4-5) for 45 minutes for each. Next opportunity to attend will be in another five weeks.

Mrs. Harlow clarified that Huntington is not on the list of 18 struggling schools, and she made data available on student achievement for the past 3 years. Letters should be going home to parents of last year's third through eighth graders with test scores soon. Our scores overall are higher than the district overall, but we still have lots of room for improvement and a lot of work to do. The school is working to establish a positive culture and climate, while also keeping academics a priority. We have four new academic intervention teachers this year. Last year Huntington had almost the highest percentage of parents that opted out of state assessments. This year administration will do a big push on the importance of having students take these assessments to reduce the number of opt-outs. It was a surprise last year, and probably did affect our results. Mrs. Harlow will talk about assessments in future meetings – communicating to parents the importance of taking assessments.

A parent recently contacted the school and asked for information on bullying. The Code does have policies and procedures surrounding bullying. Mrs. Harlow distributed relevant pages from Code. If students come home with reports of bullying, please call the building administrators. The school must comply with the Dignity for All Students Act. A parent asked if the rules around bullying also apply on the bus; Mrs. Harlow confirmed that the bullying rules also apply on the bus. Gia noted that the McMahon-Ryan agency will be coming into classrooms this year to provide an anti-bullying program for grades 3-5, and grades 6-8 will focus on internet safety. PTO is trying to organize a seminar for parents in January along these same topics. A parent asked again for the Code of Conduct in large print, and expressed that the lack of a large print copy is discriminatory. Leeann noted that we looked into this last year and that we would need the original file to enlarge it. It was suggested that the parent call the district offices to make this request, specifically to Mike Hennessy in communications or someone at Parent Partnership Network.

Mrs. Harlow reviewed upcoming dates: November 3 is half day and parent-teacher conferences, no school November 4, no school November 11 (Veterans Day), November 19 is half day again for parent-teacher conferences (also in evening). We need to get clarification on the "go home early emergency drill" that is listed on the district calendar for November 24. Parent-teacher conferences are for all grades, including middle school. There was a question about how parents will sign up for conferences, since this used to be done at open house but we're not having open house this year (since we held the orientation instead). Mrs. Harlow said that letters will go home, and parents will be able to express a preference for timeslot. A parent asked about apparel order forms; Ms. Gannon said that the date to order has been extended. Order forms should be available in the office; it was also included in the September PTO email.

After School Program

Melissa Bland spoke about after the school program. More than 75% of the after-school staff are district employees, mostly from our building. Enrichment programs this year include tennis, drawing, dance, swimming, DJ club, technology, GameStar mechanics (video game creation), robotics, fitness and nutrition, step dance (by LeMoyne step team), peer mentoring/mediation training (by Peaceful Schools), brother-to-brother and sister-to-sister. The after school program promotes project-based learning and they would like to work with PTO to develop service learning opportunities.

Cornell Cooperative Extension is working with fitness and nutrition class to offer nutrition lessons to middle school. Cheryl Neill from Cornell Cooperative Extension spoke about their programs. In addition to the after school program, CCE can work with parents within the district (see brochure). They work with kids to help make healthier choices, teaching them to read labels, what's in food, what they need. She could do a presentation for parents, as well as family cooking classes (4-6 weeks, 4-5 families at a time). Adult education is available to any parent in the district. PTO will look into this opportunity.

Added Agenda Items

Leeann noted that we try to keep meetings to an hour, but we also want to address all of the topics on the agenda and this might mean going over time. We'd like parent feedback on this.

Pool windows

The pool windows were supposed to be replaced last year, but nothing has been done (they have a lot of graffiti). She thanked the custodial staff for fixing the pool lockers so that they don't have sharp edges. Mrs. Harlow said that they just did the building walk-through with people from Facilities Department two weeks ago, and they are starting to plan for the expenditure of the Joint Schools Construction Board funds. PTO Board will submit a request for information on the status of JSCB work.

Halloween

Mrs. Harlow stated that the staff decided that there would be no parade and no costumes this year. Honor Society will still do haunted house for elementary only (less scary than past years). Classroom teachers can still have parties at the end of the day. Parade has been a tradition, but it's been a little overwhelming in the past couple of years. Too many parents came into the building very early in the day to help with costumes and the building was too crowded. The parade and preparation overtook the day. The school has a policy of no masks, very scary costumes, and weapons, but too many kids ignored this and it led to disagreements. Gia reminded everyone that Halloween used to be a half day, but the decision to make it a full day was made at the district level. Mrs. Harlow reminded parents to check with individual teachers regarding in-class parties. A letter from Mrs. Harlow will go home tomorrow explaining the situation.

Dismissal safety

There was recently a fight near Stafford Ave at dismissal. Students appeared to be fighting over an electronic device. Mrs. Harlow said she is aware of the situation. A mailman broke up the fight. It was videorecorded by a student and reported to the school that afternoon. All parents were called immediately and the students involved were interviewed. Consequences were assigned and restorative conferences happened. However, there is a gray area when incidents happen off school grounds. Parents in this case supported the school's involvement in the incident. Leeann noted that a ban on cell phones for students walking to/from school would be undesirable because some parents want kids to call as they are walking for safety.

Other

A parent asked for neighborhood dogs to be kept on leashes. This was acknowledged by other parents as an issue.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.