

## **PTO Meeting Minutes – August 25, 2008**

This was the first meeting of the school year. It was well attended.

### **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

Ms. Johnson reported that the first week of school went very well. She discussed the first faculty meeting where she and the teachers came up with Ebert Norms for Collaboration. The underlying assumption is that meetings will always involve some conflict. The goal is to create a safe community where diverse thoughts are honored. The norms they came up with were as follows:

- Listen first to understand, and then be understood.
- Suspend certainty
- Assume best intentions of others
- One conversation; avoid sidebars
- Influence and be willing to be influenced
- Honor others' truth
- Agree to disagree
- Honor confidentiality
- Take care of yourself

The faculty would like to see these norms trickle down to the parents and students. To that end, the character trait program will be altered. Instead of having one character trait selected each month, everyone will spend the year working on the character trait of "respect". Instead of each teacher selecting individuals each month, each class, as a whole, will work collaboratively to produce an artistic presentation that conveys how to respectfully work with each other.

### **PTO REPORT**

Sue Borgos, PTO President, stated that her intent is to improve communication within the school community. She plans to use the website, e-mail, and the newsletter to keep parents informed regarding PTO activity. She wants to encourage people to come to the PTO with any "hot topic" so that we can address it. She also wants to encourage civility during PTO meetings along the lines of the faculty norms outlined above. She asks that people be considerate of each other -- raise hands, speak one at a time, back down sometimes.

Sue gave an update on some of the work approved during the 2007-2008 school year. The windows are in the process of being tinted to help cool the building. It is taking longer than expected, however, because of dings in the windows. If dings exist then applying the tint can cause the glass to shatter. It has happened once. Ms. Johnson needs to find out if DPS will replace the glass, although she doubts that they will.

A discussion on cooling the school took place. Last year \$2,400 was approved by the PTO to purchase portable evaporative coolers for each classroom. However, the teachers have complained that the evaporative coolers are noisy and that they don't cool anything more than a very small area. Rather than waste money on an inferior solution, we have decided to look into other alternatives. In the meantime, because some of the older evaporative coolers are not working properly, several fans were

purchased and 2 small window air conditioning units were bought for the Kindergarten. Less than \$200 was spent on these items.

The following alternatives were discussed:

- Rich McClintock would like us to explore becoming a "green" model school (a sign-up sheet for a green school committee was distributed). In line with this, he mentioned that the US Green Building Council is looking for some Denver schools to participate in a pilot program. He would like to work to get us to be a part of this program.
- Rich McClintock also indicated that windows in the older part of the school were designed with more efficient cooling in mind. The windows can open from either top or bottom. If they are opened from the top, the heat can more readily escape from the rooms.
- Jackie Kruszek would like us to consider partnering with local developers to see if they might be willing to fund a cooling system. She will look into this further.
- Sue had spoken with an HVAC company who estimated it would cost \$3,500 per classroom to adequately cool the building. She asked if anyone knows of another company or person to approach for ideas.

Another item that was approved at the end of last year was a new computing system for the computer lab, the library and the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Sue indicated that the new system is a combination of Dell PCs supporting dumb terminals using controller cards purchased from nComputing. One PC can support 4-7 simultaneous users. This cut our costs substantially. Cori Loehr reported that the new computer labs in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, library and tech lab are up and running. She estimated that the cost will come in right at or under the \$48,000 the PTO approved for the new system and the peripheral equipment (white board and projectors). Teachers and the library were provided with the laptops from the old lab and desktops from around the school were positioned in each classroom to provide mini-labs of 3 workstations in each of the lower grade classrooms.

Heidi VanSickle brought up the water filtration for the teacher's lounge that was approved at the end of last year. Sue was not aware of this item and said that she would look into the money approved for this and check with Tamara Bradley, who had brought it to the attention of the PTO initially.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Karen Nichols reported that she has not received the final numbers from John Joram yet. However, she did say that the SOS had raised at least \$70,000 last year. The financial report, which was the one John Joram presented in April, is attached to these minutes. A more current report will be prepared in time for the next meeting.

## **SOS REPORT**

Kirsten Kahn has taken over as director of SOS. She is working on creating an SOS calendar. She reported a preliminary review of the Survey results seems to indicate that people still want to give individually and want to maintain anonymity. In addition, they want a little more transparency in terms of how much money each type of fundraising effort raises.

Kirsten wants to explore having what we used to call “askers” act more as classroom resource people for those with questions about SOS. She would like to approach families with a more streamlined message and not bombard them with requests for money.

## **CSC REPORT**

Kim Benson, CSC Chair, reported that she and Kelly Perez will be serving their final year on the CSC (a committee that interfaces with the DPS Board with regard to school issues and budgetary items). Two vacancies exist. She has been approached by several people who are interested in the open positions. A discussion followed regarding options for selecting new committee members – a small committee or a school-wide vote. It was decided that a school-wide vote would be held at back-to-school night.

Kim also indicated that the CSC is looking into developing a policy regarding non-enrolled students participating in electives. Five or six home school families have approached Ms. Johnson regarding this issue. Several of these families have already been participating in the electives program. A discussion was had regarding the desire to keep our school open to the community but at the same time ensuring it won't strain our already limited resources (who pays, do we have the teachers, the space, etc.) or open us up to liability issues. Kim Benson will ask the appropriate district administrators for some direction.

## **COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS**

### **SCHOOL SAFETY**

Rich McClintock reported that anecdotal reports indicate that a lot more people are sending their kids to school on the bus. This is the school's preferred mode of transportation because it lessens the traffic issues around the school. He indicated that people should be patient with bus service these first few weeks because of increased ridership, traffic delays caused by the DNC, and general beginning of the year kinks in service. He reported that parents are doing a good job (with a few exceptions) with the pick up and drop off procedures.

Ms. Johnson contacted the families of several students who were on the playground unsupervised before and/or after school. She indicated that appropriate arrangements were made and that should no longer be a safety concern.

Kim Benson worked with the paraprofessionals to ensure that 3 paras are on the playground to supervise lunch recess. Susan Brad, who serves on the safety committee, has spoken with Coach D about coming up with some civility guidelines for the children. Parents who want to help with guidelines should talk to Susan. Someone else suggested that guidelines be developed for the adults supervising the children so that we have a uniform approach to resolving conflict. A discussion about whether or not we need to ask parents to volunteer to supervise during lunch recess was had. We decided to wait and see if the extra para on the playground is sufficient.

Mark Herlinger is the parent representative on the Emergency Response Crisis Management (ERCM) team. He recently attended a DPS Administration-sponsored meeting where he received a manual containing district policies/recommendations for all types of crises from weather-related disasters to evacuation procedures. He will review it to ensure compliance with district policies and report back. Copies of the district manuals are stored in the office and can be viewed by asking Yolanda.

Mark is the new chair of the School Safety committee. He wants to get the pulse of the community in terms of how they feel about school security -- how secure do we want the building? He discussed things we could do to make the building more secure with the resources and policies we already have in place. For example, he indicated that we should limit access by having a system in place to ensure that all doors are locked when they are supposed to be and we should make sure the contents of our safety backpack are working properly – i.e. no dead batteries in walkie-talkies or flashlights . Many at the meeting indicated that we don't want to create a culture of fear by overemphasizing safety, but that we should always be aware of who is going in and out of the building. Ms. Johnson will send safety-related notices to families throughout the year.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Kim Brummond, chair, is creating a database of all volunteers.

### **STAFF APPRECIATION LUNCHESES**

Kim McGrigg is chairing this committee.

### **COMMUNITY DINNERS**

Judy Harris, chair, is scheduling the first community dinner in September. While the primary goal of these community dinners is community building, these dinners earned the school over \$2,000 last year.

### **JOG-A-THON**

Jackie Kruszek, Mitch Simon, and Diane Brogden are chairing the Jog-A-Thon committee. Preliminary fund-raising survey results indicate that the school community does not want individual prizes given for those who earned the most money. The committee is looking into an all-school reward from a corporate sponsor, perhaps. They need volunteers.

### **CLASS PARENTS**

Cheryl Fleetwood, chair, said her committee's primary job is to support teachers and build community. She is currently looking for people to serve as room parents.

### **WEBSITE**

Alexa Taylor is the chair. She is looking for people to serve as "web-parents" for each classroom.

### **TECHNOLOGY**

The position of Committee chair for this committee needs to be filled. The committee works to help Cori Lohr where needed and provides independent review of technology needs and proposed solutions and reports its findings to the PTO. Cori indicated we shouldn't have any big technology needs for another 2 – 3 years, so there wouldn't be much for this committee to do over the next few years, other than to possibly help the school write up technology grant proposals.

### **HEALTH**

Rich McClintock, will promote walk-to-school day and would also like to address healthy eating and increased physical activity. However, he'd like to do this as part of his Green Initiative and does not want a separate Health Committee per se.

## **ELECTIVES**

Sherry Beardshear, chair, said that this has been a particularly difficult quarter finding enough teachers. Adding to the problem has been the loss of Ms. Patterson and her choir and drama electives. Both classes had more students than the norm, so extra classes needed to be created to fill in. However, there was a shortage of folks available to teach these extra classes. We may have to reconsider how we staff/fund electives if this pattern continues.

## **DIVERSITY/COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Kelly Perez, chair. No report.

## **MISC. BUSINESS**

Heidi proposed, the establishment of a Staff Hospitality Fund to help Ms. Johnson feed the staff during their meetings. Heidi proposed to raise the money through bake sales at various school events, starting with the Sock Hop.

Leigh Benson discussed the need for \$5,000 to match a National Endowment for the Arts grant that we were awarded for two artists-in-residence. These funds had already been approved at the last PTO meeting last year. However, we would like to have Leigh discuss the details of this program and we ran out of time at this meeting. We hope that she can report back at a future meeting.