

PTO Meeting Minutes – DECEMBER 1, 2008

The meeting opened with an acknowledgment and thanks to the teachers present: Kat Zimmerman and Sean Semler. The PTO truly appreciates the valuable input that is provided by the teachers.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Ms. Johnson was present. No formal report was given.

PTO REPORT

Survey Results

Sue Borgos reported that the fundraising survey results have been finalized and are ready for distribution to the community. Sue's goal is to get them in this week's Thursday folders. Next month's PTO meeting will focus on the survey results and people's questions and concerns regarding fundraising. The meeting will be well publicized.

Sue discussed why the SOS chair and PTO had decided to wait until Spring for the big SOS push. She explained that it will enable the PTO fundraising goals to be tied directly to the DPS budget which is released in February. Kim Benson, CSC chair, also encouraged the PTO to coordinate all other funding requests with the February DPS budget release so that we have a very good understanding of the school's needs that can be communicated to the Polaris community. By waiting until late February or early March, we will know how much money we need to raise to pay the paraprofessionals, the librarian, and any other perceived shortfall not covered by the district's budget. This is a new approach and the PTO will be looking to see if presentation of more meaningful numbers to the parents will increase fundraising.

Even though the big push will happen in the spring Kirsten Kahn, SOS chair, will be reminding people to donate now if they want the tax advantage on their 2008 taxes. Additionally, in order to seize on the enthusiasm of the kindergarten families and to account for the waning interest of the fifth grade families, the SOS resource team has been and continues to contact them regarding SOS giving.

Water Filtration System

The water filtration system has been ordered. It will be installed in the nurse's office. If usage merits it, a bigger tank can be installed at a later date for minimal cost. It will, however, be visible. The system should be installed within the next few weeks.

Library Funding Requests

Gail Axt, the school librarian, is running out of space to shelve books. She obtained an estimate totaling over \$10,000 for shelving. However, she indicated that she did not necessarily need to order all of the shelves at once. Her initial need was for an extension to one of the existing shelves. This addition of 9 feet of shelving, costing approximately \$2,000, was approved. It was decided that the rest of the shelving should be purchased

over time. The World Books were also ordered. The cost was lower than what was approved by the PTO last spring. It was recommended that the library have an annual budget so that we can roll that into our fundraising goals.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Karen Nichols presented the balance sheet. The amount collected through SOS is down this year compared with last year. This is a source of concern of some in the community. However, given the delayed fundraising push, it was expected that the numbers would be down somewhat at this time of the year.

We talked about posting the Treasurer's Report on the website for the benefit of people not able to attend PTO meetings. Some were concerned that this may have unintended consequences such as other schools using it to compare their fundraising efforts or journalists looking at it and potentially reporting on it out of context. It was decided that a current copy of the report will be kept in a file in the office for anyone interested.

The amount collected through the grocery certificate program has increased this year over last. We have started collecting interest through the money market account recently established. The amount raised during the jog-a-thon is down roughly 20% from last year. Anecdotal evidence indicates that parents who had previously donated money to the Jog-a-thon, decided not to donate money this year, after being encouraged to have their children look to others, such as grandparents and extended family, to bring in outside donations.

Next up was a discussion regarding how much we should be paying teachers who go on overnight field trips with their students. There was some confusion regarding how much the teachers attending Balarat should receive. Last year we paid the fourth grade teachers \$100/day for the Crow Canyon trip. Those present supported continuing to extend this gesture of appreciation and felt the same per diem should be given the teachers who go to Balarat.

SOS REPORT

Kirsten Kahn was unable to attend the meeting. However, as discussed she is continuing to work with the SOS resource volunteers in their efforts to contact kindergarten and fifth grade families regarding SOS giving. Kirsten has also developed a document that we can use to reach out to extended family and friends regarding contributing to the Polaris Program at Ebert.

Kirsten has made initial contact with the developer of the property across the street to see if they would be willing to make some kind of donation (e.g. a match or the purchase of improvements). She said the conversations were positive and felt there was some interest in working with our school.

CSC REPORT

Kim Benson, CSC Chair, reported that they have made a decision regarding home-school students participating in electives. They discussed the issue with teachers and the appropriate DPS Administration officials. The decision is as follows:

“Participation in the Polaris Electives Program, currently on Friday afternoons, will be available only for home-school students dual-enrolled in the Polaris Program through Denver Public Schools in that school year. Electives enrollment will be coordinated through the Electives Coordinator or their designee within the schedule stipulated by the Electives planning calendar.

To assure safety, students would be brought to and picked up from Ebert Elementary within five minutes of electives starting and ending unless the family has arranged additional curricular involvement with their designated Ebert teacher in advance. Appropriate behavior is expected at all times so that all classes can progress through their prepared curriculum. Parents who home-school are encouraged, as are all parents, to support the electives program with their time to teach or co-teach classes or assist in program coordination.”

The decision was based primarily on resources and the costs associated with funding electives. Although the school wants to maintain connections with the wider community, other discussed approaches seemed arbitrary and discriminatory. For example, if we opened it up only to qualified HGT/HA students that would be discriminatory and arbitrary because some of the children at Ebert don't meet that criterion. The teachers concurred with the decision. Ms. Johnson will notify the 5 or 6 families that have asked to participate in the electives program.

Kim then discussed the issue of principal retention. She stated that we can bypass the formal interview process and recommend that Ms. Johnson's temporary appointment be made permanent. Alternatively, we can follow the formal interview process, with Ms. Johnson being a potential candidate. In both instances, DPS Administration is entitled to reject our recommendation. Kim has asked for parent input (with an opportunity for people to make anonymous comments.) A parent forum will be scheduled in the next few weeks for additional parent input. The CSC would like to do everything it can to ensure that we undergo a thorough and thoughtful process so that Ms. Johnson's future authority is not undermined.

COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

SCHOOL SAFETY

No report.

GREEN COMMITTEE

Rich McClintock has set up an audit of the school with the US Green Building Council on December 4. As previously stated, the focus will be on heating and cooling the school. Other issues that people present would like to see addressed through our greening efforts are: a better recycling program; getting rid of the Styrofoam trays in the cafeteria (Ms. Zimmerman and Ms. Turino have talked about approaching the district to get this policy changed); and, starting a recycling/composting elective. Rich believes that a good approach would be to look at the whole issue in terms of how we can reduce our carbon footprint.

Rich believes we should also be identifying potential funding sources as PTO and district resources are limited. He recommended that we track a bill that should be going through the legislature this year regarding solar energy for schools, as some funding may be attached. Judy Harris said that she would like to talk to a contact that she has at EPA

regarding integrating the arts and the environment. Additionally, the conversation with the developer of the property adjacent to the school should be continued (see SOS report).

VOLUNTEERS

No report.

STAFF APPRECIATION LUNCHESES

No report.

COMMUNITY DINNERS

Judy Harris reported that attendance at the community dinners is down this year. Some felt monthly dinners were just too much. It was suggested that we try doing quarterly dinners. The purpose of the dinners was reiterated -- it is community building. Any dollar amount raised is just a bonus. We should, however, continue to see if the restaurants we choose are willing to provide any type of teacher perk. It should be made clear that purchase of a meal is not required. Everyone should be encouraged to come and socialize. The more simple dinners seem to be favored. For example, people really loved the Wahoo's dinner last spring when people purchased their food and then came and hung out on the school playground. Finally, a movie night was suggested where we order food and let the kids watch a movie.

CLASS PARENTS

No report.

WEBSITE

No report.

TECHNOLOGY

No report.

ELECTIVES

The idea of the electives coordinator position being a paid position was introduced. The job requires a lot of hours and a lot of responsibility. The idea floated at the meeting was to hire the coordinator as a part-time paraprofessional and run the checks through DPS. It would have a job description attached so that a parent could apply, but in the event a parent didn't want the position an outside person could be hired. The discussion was tabled until next meeting.

DIVERSITY/COMMUNITY OUTREACH

No report.

MISC. BUSINESS

Sherry Beardshear is scheduled to speak to someone from the city this week regarding the two-hour limit on parking on all the streets adjacent to the school. She will see if she can get an increase in the time allowed or perhaps get some temporary passes that could be kept in the office to allow for longer times for parking on occasion.