

PTO Meeting Minutes – OCTOBER 29, 2008

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Ms. Johnson happily reported that the National Ballet of Denver was very complimentary of our students during a recent all-school assembly. They told Ms. Johnson that our children were the best behaved audience they have ever had. Ms. Johnson attributes their exemplary behavior to the fact that so many Polaris families expose their children to art performances and they bring the resulting appreciation and respect with them to school.

Ms. Johnson requested that we consider giving our substitute music teacher, Alisha Rigsby, additional reimbursement for what she did for our school. A misunderstanding between the district and Ms. Rigsby resulted in her receiving very little compensation for the outstanding work she did for our children during Ms. Kielmeyer's maternity leave. The PTO voted to give her \$500.00 for service above and beyond what she was hired to do.

PTO PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sue Borgos spoke briefly about the first meeting of the school Wellness Committee and introduced Cathy Schmelter to the PTO. Cathy heads the district's Wellness Committee. According to a national act passed in June, 2006, all school districts must develop a wellness plan. DPS has taken the approach that each school should develop their own plan according to what makes sense to their community. Some schools, though, have formed collaboration teams comprised of the elementary schools that feed into a particular high school and that high school to move the ideas along as the children move through the system. Cathy helps schools develop and implement their plans by, among other things, providing information and by identifying potential partners. Her goal is to create a cultural change in schools that is sustainable.

She met with a group of Polaris parents who are interested in this forming a Polaris "Wellness Committee". She said a lot of the discussion centered on the fact that recess is immediately after lunch which leads a lot of kids not eating their lunch, or much of their lunch, so they can get outside for recess. Other topics discussed included consideration of allergies, the amount of sweets our students receive, the quality of the food (e.g. too much refined flours/sugars) provided, and the amount of time spent watching movies.

Ms. Johnson was clear, and others agreed, that she did not want to make any of the health guidelines mandatory. She likes the idea of each classroom coming up with its own guidelines. She indicated that our community does a good job of limiting junk food, being mindful of children with allergies, and making time for physical activity. There seemed to be consensus around the notion that the school could and should offer guidelines to help our community make good choices around health, but not take a heavy-handed approach.

Sue Borgos mentioned that she would like to see the afternoon healthy snack program reinstated. As Sue noted, it was great way to get our kids to eat some of the vegetables they normally wouldn't eat by seeing their peers eat them. Cathy said she may be able to help us with that.

Rich McClintock mentioned the studies that have been done that show a direct link between increased learning and increased physical activity. He'd like to see some ways to encourage more physical activity throughout the day. To that end, he will continue promoting "Walk to School Day."

Sherry Beardshear mentioned that an elective centered on healthy eating might be another way to promote health in our school. Cathy mentioned Operation Frontline as a potential partner to offer a cooking class during electives.

UPDATE ON WATER FILTRATION

Tamara Bradley presented her findings regarding the cost to install a water filtration system in the teachers' lounge. She obtained three estimates ranging from \$350.00 to \$1,300 for a reverse osmosis filtering system and \$6,000 (plus \$225.00 annual maintenance) at the high end, for a home spring system. The companies who bid were Chuck the Water Man, Pure Water Solutions and Willner Engineering. There was also a bid for monthly water service from Rocky Mountain Bottled Water. The lowest bid was provided by Willner Engineering, which is owned by Tamara's father. The PTO appreciated Tamara's full disclosure and after discussion agreed to go with the low bid because the price was reasonable, it fit well within our budget and we felt comfortable with Tamara's confidence in the overall functionality of the system. After some discussion, we decided to upgrade to 3/8 inch tubing to allow the water to dispense at a faster rate and potentially accommodate a larger tank for an additional \$50.00. Furthermore, usage will be monitored to determine if an additional 4 gallon tank is necessary. It was also discussed that many teachers, as well as others get their water from the nurse's office and many of the first floor teachers don't even use the teacher's lounge on the second floor. Karin Johnson suggested that Tamara take a look at the arrangement in the nurse's office and see if it would be possible to install the system there instead of in the teacher's lounge. In the meantime, Ms. Johnson agreed to check with the teachers to see where they would prefer the system to be located.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Karen Nichols presented the balance sheet. She then stated that she has taken the first steps necessary to open a money market account for PTO funds. The interest rate is 2%. However, to complete the transfer of funds the bank requires the PTO to approve a resolution giving her the authority to open the account. Stephanie Bakken moved that the PTO give Karen that authority. The motion was seconded by Sherry Beardshear and carried unanimously. Since Karen felt uncomfortable being the only person authorized on the account, the PTO also approved a motion to add Stephanie Bakken as a co-signer on the account.

Karen also looked into getting a system in place to allow the PTO to accept contributions via charge card. She discovered that fees are likely 2.74% per transaction, plus set up costs (varies according to the type of terminal chosen), and a \$5.00 monthly fee. Some people thought it might be appealing for those who use reward cards others were concerned about people going into debt to contribute to the school. It was decided, at this time, the return on the investment probably would not justify the expense.

Karen mentioned that she received a bill for approximately \$41,000 for the para-professionals. Ms. Johnson thought that some of that should be coming out of the general fund. She will look into it and report back at our next meeting.

According to the information received to date by Karen, the jog-a-thon earned \$7,598.00 this year. This is down from the \$9,200.00 raised last year. Kim Brummond thought that we perhaps had not received some corporate sponsor money that had been promised and she will look into that.

SOS REPORT

Kirsten Kahn was unable to attend the meeting. She and the SOS resource volunteers have met with Kim Benson, CSC Chair, to go over the school's budgeting process as well as SOS details. The intent is to get more people fluent in how the school's budget works so that they can act as information conduits to the entire school community.

CSC REPORT

No report.

COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

SCHOOL SAFETY

The committee met with Ms. Johnson to discuss what they are doing to improve the security and safety of the school. They have established a system for keeping track of children during preparedness testing and/or emergencies that require evacuation of the school. Each classroom has a laminated class roster so that they can take it as they exit the classroom and take attendance once outside to ensure all children are accounted for. If someone is missing, they flip the laminated list to the red side. The green side indicates that everything is in order. They have also replaced the batteries for the flashlights and walkie-talkies. The PTO will reimburse the committee for the \$55.00 spent on batteries and other incidentals. Rich McClintock has also asked that we authorize the purchase of some additional traffic cones. The requested expenditure was authorized. The PTO also authorized a total of \$100 budgeted for the safety committee to cover cones and other equipment.

A request for more supervision on the playground has been made. One way to approach this is to help the kids solve their own problems. Susan Robertson, a parent, has offered to teach conflict resolution. Ms. Johnson will follow up with her. An e-blast will also be sent out to see if parents are willing to volunteer their time on the playground.

GREEN COMMITTEE

Rich McClintock is still pursuing the idea of our school becoming a model "green" school. He has identified potential partners such as the US Green Building Council, the Governor's Energy Office which offers grants, and perhaps the developers building multi-family units adjacent to the school. Heating and cooling the school is the priority in terms of needed improvements. The US Green Building Council offers free audits that include heating and cooling systems as well as other low investment opportunities such as composting and recycling. He will follow up regarding scheduling an audit.

VOLUNTEERS

The founding members of the "copy brigade" would like to see more people volunteering to make copies for use by the teachers. We want to free up paraprofessional time and teacher time for more substantive endeavors. Sue indicated that she would send out an e-mail reminding parents of all volunteer opportunities and

how giving a little of their time can make a significant difference to our children's learning environment.

STAFF APPRECIATION LUNCHESES

The first staff appreciation lunch was a great success. More great staff lunches are to come.

COMMUNITY DINNERS

The most recent community dinner was held at Jonesy's. A few parents mentioned that they were a little uncomfortable having the community dinner at a bar-type restaurant.

JOG-A-THON

The jog-a-thon went very well. Diane Brogdon, committee chair, will give a full report at next month's meeting. See Treasurer's Report for additional information on the dollars raised.

CLASS PARENTS

No report.

WEBSITE

No report.

TECHNOLOGY

No report.

HEALTH

See Principal's report.

ELECTIVES

Sherry Beardshear said that 2nd quarter electives scheduling went a little better than the 1st quarter. She would like to see more parents get involved as the same individuals continue to volunteer quarter after quarter.

DIVERSITY/COMMUNITY OUTREACH

No report.

MISC. BUSINESS

Kim Brummond volunteered to approach the city 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 longer times for parking.

Sue Borgos discussed a need for funding to purchase supplies that can be used for various social functions. She would like to purchase a rolling cart with compartments to store plates, eating utensils and serving utensils. Further, she would like to purchase a few knives, pie and cake servers, spatulas and serving spoons. The anticipated cost would be around \$100. The PTO approved this expense and Sue will take care of the purchase. She will also include a request for volunteers to help clean up the basement and organize everything better, some time in November or December, after the church has moved it's stuff.