

PTO Meeting Minutes – SEPTEMBER 22, 2008

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Ms. Johnson introduced Terry Teske, our window tinter, to the PTO. Terry reported that the project is taking much longer than he anticipated because the windows are not standard size and tinting sheets have to be hand cut. In addition, to get between the two panes of glass he had to custom make a tool because the bolts were not universal (standard) bolts. He will leave the tool he made with the school. He stated that we should achieve a 25% - 30% reduction in heat after all the tinting has been completed. Even though the job is not done, Terry asked the PTO for funds to pay his out of pocket expenses. The PTO approved payment.

Ms. Johnson also reported that the windows with dings (to which Terry could not apply tint) will be replaced by DPS with tint and vandalism proof glass and that the windows that broke as a result of the tinting process will also be replaced by DPS.

PTO PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sue Borgos, PTO President, reported that she will head up a group of volunteers to clean the evaporative coolers in the classrooms so they will run more efficiently. She also stated that finding a way to cool the building is still a priority and several people are exploring options including painting the roof with a light, reflective color. Rich McClintock continues exploring Polaris becoming a model "green" school through the US Green Building Council.

In addition, Tamara Bradley will get an estimate regarding how much it will cost to get a water filtration system for the Teacher's Lounge.

Sue also discussed the results of the school fundraising survey that was conducted last spring. The results indicate that the majority of Polaris families would like to see the fundraising methods stay pretty much the same -- focused on anonymous, SOS giving. The Polaris community would like to see more frequent communication regarding how much has been raised and by which fundraiser (SOS, grocery cards, jog-a-thon, etc.) The results and an Executive Summary to be written by Laurie Hipley will be sent out via e-mail and the Thursday folders, when it is complete. Sue also mentioned that some people have expressed concern that the PTO doesn't seem to be open to new fundraising ideas. Generally speaking, as the survey results dictate, the PTO would be happy to consider new ideas provided they don't require our children to sell items to family and friends. We also need to be careful that we don't get too carried away with all different kinds of fundraisers so that fundraising comes too much to the forefront.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Karen Nichols distributed a current balance sheet. She asked for clarification of a \$1,495 line item for "Dr. Howard's gift." Kim Benson reported that it was money collected from parents for the purchase of art display cases in Dr. Howard's honor. The display cases have not yet been ordered and/or made. Preliminary investigation indicated that to order them would be very expensive. It was discussed that it might make more sense to have them built. A cabinetmaker and father of a Polaris student has offered to help. Coach D. has suggested that ideally there should be enough room to display the work of three classrooms at a time. Kim indicated that she would send out an e-blast to see if someone would like to take the lead on that project.

Karen is looking into putting PTO funds in an interest bearing account.

SOS REPORT

Kirsten Kahn wants to take the SOS in a slightly different direction this year to respond more directly to annual budget needs. Therefore, the fundraising goal will remain \$70,000, same as last year, but will be reassessed in the spring when DPS provides the estimated 2009-2010 budget. This will shift the focus of the fundraising efforts to the spring. Donations, however, are accepted and encouraged throughout the year.

She is hoping to recruit a parent from each classroom to act as "resource" person. These individuals will receive some training so that they can answer general budget questions as well as more detailed SOS questions. She would like to make it as easy as possible for people to contribute and will make sure there are forms available in the office. Kirsten also wants to explore potentially helpful plug-ins for the website.

CSC REPORT

Kim Benson, CSC Chair reported that the CSC Committee had its first meeting this morning, which she summarized for the PTO. The main focus of that meeting was to discuss the DPS Administration's request that Polaris decide by October 1st, 2008, if it will continue its Advanced Kindergarten ("AK") program. Questions regarding whether or not the AK program advances the mission of the school have existed for several years. The testing for the AK program determines "readiness" for school, but is not necessarily a good indicator of giftedness. Therefore, many of the children who enter the school at the Kindergarten level who meet the District's criteria for AK do not, when tested later, qualify as gifted. Since Polaris may not ask families to move their children who later don't qualify as gifted learners, there is a growing number of children in the school who do not qualify as either High Achieving or Highly Gifted learners.

There are two questions that are generated as a result: 1) Are we serving the population we were created to serve? (i.e. are we fulfilling our mission?) 2) Is the school potentially doing harm to children's self-confidence who continually can't keep up with their classroom peers?

Last year was the first year in which DPS allowed the school to see the results of the AK qualification tests along with the GT test scores for the same Kindergarten class. The evidence showed that the original AK qualification at the 85th percentile brought significant student numbers to Polaris who are not gifted learners. As a result, one of the Kindergarten classes was eliminated to allow for an additional entry point at first grade

for children testing as HGT and High Achieving. In addition, the admissions requirement for AK at Polaris was changed to a score of 95% or higher. Since there is currently no plan within the district for gifted testing at the preschool level, it was hoped that using the current methodology, those who score at the 95th percentile might be more likely to test as gifted learners later on. The testing data for the current Kindergarten class will not be available until spring and the CSC would ideally like to see that data before making a permanent decision on AK at Polaris.

Another important component of the Polaris mission is serving the diverse population in the NE quadrant. An argument was made that eliminating AK could also increase diversity. For example, removing one of the Kindergarten classrooms allowed the school to add another 4th grade class of newly identified children within the district. Children identified in the neighborhood are given admission priority.

The CSC has sent out an e-mail explaining the situation to all Polaris families. It will also hold a meeting to hear parent concerns. Rich Ashburn, Sean Semler, Amy Turino, and Gail Axt agreed to talk to the entire faculty to ensure that their concerns are heard as well.

COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

SCHOOL SAFETY

No report.

VOLUNTEERS

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

STAFF APPRECIATION LUNCHESES

Kim McGrigg is developing a list of dates for the Staff Appreciation lunches.

COMMUNITY DINNERS

Judy Harris scheduled the first community dinner to take place tomorrow at Wahoo's Fish Tacos. She will have more dates and locations in time for the next PTO meeting.

JOG-A-THON

The committee is looking for more parent volunteers for the day of the Jog-A-Thon. They will set up "Sly-Reply" to efficiently solicit and organize the volunteers. The PTO wants to encourage children to bring their own water bottles to cut down on waste. Water will be provided in the event some children forget.

CLASS PARENTS

Cheryl Fleetwood held her first meeting today for room parents. Danika Stromberg has agreed to serve as the teacher liaison.

WEBSITE

Alexa Taylor reported that she has a "web-parent" for nearly every classroom. The class web pages are coming along.

TECHNOLOGY

No report. We are still looking for a chair.

HEALTH

No report.

ELECTIVES

Sherry Beardshear requested a \$4,000 electives budget be approved (what she spent last year) so that she does not have to ask the PTO so frequently for smaller dollar amounts. She thinks she will have to pay more teachers than usual because of the faculty schedule changes (the choir and drama electives that Corilee Kielmeyer taught siphoned off quite a few children. With her out on leave, we need more than one teacher to handle the inflow of those students into other electives). Danika Stromberg will check to see if any Metro State College students in the teacher certification program would be available to teach electives.

In addition to the need for more electives teachers, there are also some new electives costs. There are entry fees for the Spelling Bee elective and a Chess Club competition as well as Nutcracker tickets that need to be purchased for a Nutcracker-related elective. To allow for these added activities, the PTO approved a \$4,500 budget.

DIVERSITY/COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Kelly Perez will look into ways to let the community know that the deadline for GT testing is November 3. There was some concern that the early deadline may make it harder for Polaris to attract children from the community because of the difficulty in finding an effective way to get the word out to the surrounding neighborhoods.

MISC. BUSINESS

Kim Brummond presented the marketing brochures that were designed for the school. Kim obtained bids ranging from \$430 to \$1500 for printing the brochures. The PTO approved \$500.00 for printing 1000 copies. It was suggested that a call-to-action section be added. Kim agreed to look into that. Kirsten Kahn will attempt to make some suggested changes before the final printing.

The PTO also discussed whether or not Polaris should participate in a DPS-wide parent-driven program aimed at increasing parent involvement in their children's education. Cheryl Fleetwood will look into it further and report back.