

PITTSFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARENT-TEACHER ORGANIZATION

MEETING MINUTES – January 14, 2020

GENERAL MEETING called to order at 6:05pm.

Attendees – Dawn Keech, Lindsey Wolfe, Rachel Brichta, Denise Chevalier, Kelly Pfeifer, Jason Prince, Kelli Gase, Dave Doettl, TC Collins, Uri Coward, Karen Hulsebus, Lily Sacks-Hubbard, Jessica Lapp, Jessi Murphy, Tim Vaduva, Ashley Vaduva, Melissa Kierdorf, JJ Martinez, Melita Alston, Heather Miller, Rez Kayto.

Guest Presenter – AAPS Behavior Specialist Harold Wimberly

- Intervention Specialist at Scarlett Middle School; worked previously in the juvenile justice system
- ACE Master Trainer with Michigan ACES Initiative
- Gave presentation titled “Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES); Building Self-Healing Communities”
- Discussed the impacts of early adverse childhood experiences on youth and adults
 - o Kids can suppress memories but can’t always connect current feelings with past events
 - o Can lead to behavioral challenges
- We all need to stop asking kids, “What’s wrong with you?” and start asking, “What happened?”
- Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANT) can lead to depression, suicidal thoughts
- Kids coming to school are not usually equipped to share their stories or have access to trained therapists
- Teachers can be victims of secondary trauma in trying to help their students
- Traumatic experience during development generates predictable patterns of brain architecture, behavior, and traits
- Humans are made to only be under stress for about 20 minutes at a time – long enough to prepare for a fight or to hide/flee
 - o Experiences causing continual production of stress chemicals can have impact on development
- Adaptations vs Expectations
 - o When biology collides with social expectations we run into trouble. If we put a person on a benevolent path into a chaotic and turbulent environment, the person is going to struggle unless he or she has learned some very specific skills.

- A child on a malevolent path needs to be taught the skills required to succeed in this context just as we would have to train a child from a benevolent path how to act in a chaotic or dangerous environment.
- Lindsey Wolfe asked: When we have students commingled, how do we help all students in a classroom when one (or more) students are acting out due to dealing with trauma?
 - Must address immediately with parents
 - Pull the child out and reassure the child that he or she is safe – they are acting out of fear.

Principal's Report – Melita Alston

- Teachers and support providers are dealing with secondary trauma as they work with students dealing with trauma
- 4th Annual Peace March will start at 3:00pm on Friday, January
- NWEA testing now through February 4th
- NAAPID – Monday, February 10th
 - Building support team (literacy, EL teacher, Title I teacher) will be guest speakers at luncheon
 - PTO sponsored breakfast at 9:00am

President's Report: Jason Prince

- Upcoming Events
 - Winter Dance 2/7 – need another volunteer to help coordinate: Karen Hulsebus
 - Thank you to Melissa Kierdorf for volunteering!
 - “Neon Night Dance Party” theme
 - MLK Day 1/20 - no school
 - Science Olympiad
 - Aaron Kraft is recruiting coaches
 - Introductory workshop for coaches at Pioneer on January 29th
 - Mobile Dentist on site 2/11
 - March Is Reading Month - volunteer needed to coordinate a school assembly
 - Family Movie Night 3/6
 - Ice Cream Social 6/5 - volunteers needed: Kelly Pfeifer
 - Tickets/publicity – OPEN
 - Sponsorships/75th anniversary - Dawn Keech

- Food - OPEN

Open Discussion

- Lily Sacks-Hubbard proposed an idea to create a buddy bench on the playground; a nice place for kids to go if they need a friend or aren't sure who to play with
 - Ms. Alston: Maybe we can find a service organization, or make this into a 75th anniversary project
- Several parents (Lily Sacks-Hubbard, Lindsey Wolfe, Tim Vaduva, Jessica Lapp, Karen Huslebus, JJ Martinez) raised concerns about aggressive and violent behavior in the classrooms, hallways, and play areas. The concern is for all involved, children, teachers, staff, and parents. There is concern about the educational environment and about the perceived lack of communication and transparency with parents. Some families have left the school due to this. There is concern about safety for everyone. Children are witnessing challenging behaviors and many may be experiencing secondary trauma. Parents want to be informed so that they can help their children work through the issues. Parents recognize the need for confidentiality but feel more communication would be helpful for everyone involved.
 - a. Ms. Alston noted the following resources are available at the school:
 - i. Teachers and staff – 80% have been trained on non-violent crisis prevention, which addresses how to break down challenging behaviors
 - ii. Social worker – can help families connect with agencies
 - 1. The former school social worker was on leave and then was assigned to another building. A new social worker has been assigned but is also now on leave; this person will be full time at Pittsfield once their leave is over.
 - iii. Psychologist
 - iv. Behavior specialist – Edward Broom (shared with another school)
 - v. District level support team
 - 1. Behavior consultant/analyst (three in the district)
 - 2. Executive directors
 - 3. Dr. Swift (superintendent)
 - b. Ms. Alston also stated that she and the school's teachers and staff are being mindful and intentional with what they are seeing and what they need. She

would love an additional social worker and more staff based on particular needs (and not necessarily enrollment numbers).

- c. Ms. Alston responded that the school is in a position to share what needs to be communicated to those who need to be communicated to. She is taking feedback.
- d. Ms. Miller and Ms. Kayto stated that this isn't something the staff is tolerating; it's affecting the teachers and staff members lives every day. The solution is not as simple as moving a problem somewhere else. It is a complex situation.

Announcements – Jason Prince

- Ms. Avenall is requesting parents to come in during lunch hours to work with students on STEAM Fair projects, especially kids who don't have the support/resources at home. She will send a sign-up genius closer to the April 30th STEAM Fair date.
- The Garden was awarded a grant by the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. We will plan on setting aside time on the next PTO meeting agenda for an update from the garden coordinators.

BOARD MEETING

Holiday Shop – Thank you to Kelli Gase and Dawn Keech for making it happen!

- Made a bit of money and we have items left over to use next year or at other events
- Kelli will do it again next year (thank you!)
- We were able to give around 80 \$2-credits to kids who didn't have money with them
- Suggestion to have a wider variety of less expensive items for kids with less money

PTOC Report: Rachel Brichta

- The last meeting focused on best practices for PTOs
 - o Focus on how to support kids who have extra needs (particularly financial)
- Rachel will keep an ongoing Google document including notes from each meeting

Meeting Minutes from October and December meetings

- Both were approved (motion by Dawn Keech, second by Rachel Brichta).

Treasurer's Report: Denise Chevalier (10 minutes)

- Budget is in a good place for this point in the year
- Rachel stated that Ms. Avenall reported she will only purchase STEAM Fair boards for those students who actually need boards. We already have many boards, so we probably won't need to spend the budgeted amount.

- Heather should have some updated numbers for 5th grade camp soon.
- Denise will set up an Amazon account for teacher purchases so they won't have to front their own money.

Adjourned at 8:03pm