9/14/2026

PTA Meeting

1. Motion
    a. Elect Mary Pollard as teacher rep and Jess Thunes as PTAC rep
        i. Motion: Dee Edwards
        ii. Second: Amy Ford and Suzie O'Brien
        iii. All agree
2. Welcome and Introductions
    a. Dee Edwards, President
    b. Amanda Narod, President Elect
    c. Alex Robinson, VP Treasurer
    d. Stephanie Casway, VP Secretary
    e. Elizabeth Mallon, VP Fundraising
    f. Tiffany Del Rio, VP Community Outreach
    g. Kate Eltrich, VP Programs
    h. Raquel Hawk, VP Public Relations and Membership
    i. Jess Thunes, PTAC Rep
    j. Mary Pollard, Teacher Rep
    k. Suzie O'Brien, Past President
    l. Chris Finan, Principal
3. Finan Presentation and Remarks
    a. Not much is new this year at GMES
    b. The start of the school year was very smooth
    c. We have over 100 new students this year
    d. Fully staffed (last minute 3rd grade position was filled)
    e. Some transportation hiccups; CF has been in contact with Dr. Pena (COO) to iron out the kinks in transportation
        i. All buses showed up on time today for pick up (first time); working on the morning; several drivers are doing double runs
    f. Hosted an assembly on expectations (the dragon way)
        i. Really honed in on bus behavior
        ii. Over 90% of students take the bus (like 340 of 360)
        iii. The bus is a privilege, not a right
        iv. Reminder to put smart watches and phones in their backpack
    g. Finishing up MAP testing (reading and math)
    h. VALLS testing is ongoing (foundational reading for K-2, some in 3-5 if they didn't pass the SOL)

i. Conferences coming up 10/1-10/2, teachers will share information on how to sign up
    i. Half day on 10/1 and no school on 10/2
j. School picture day is Friday, 9/18
k. Next Thursday and Friday is Lunch on the Lawn (PTA providing popsicles)
l. No school on Monday, 9/21, for Yom Kippur
m. Questions
    i. What is the status of the new space?
        1. Meeting regularly to plan transition, everything is on track
    ii. Tell us about the new playground
        1. The younger playground will be more appropriate
        2. No information on shade; plans are available online but hard to read
    iii. Will new playground be fenced?
        1. Playground will be fenced, field will not
        2. CF would like to see the field fenced (issues in the past with dogs and strangers on the field, CLP could use the fence for safety)
        3. We can reach out to city council to request it
        4. Suzie suggests we start the ask again next semester (ACPS doesn't want to push on it now, they want they project closer to finish)
    iv. Concerns with busses arriving late; want communication from city if there won't be a bus (111 doesn't have a driver)
        1. City says they are trying to hire someone and someone has to pick up the route
        2. No notice on the app if things are running late
        3. Parents should reach out to Dr. Pena with concerns
        4. Suzie suggests we email every day that the bus is late
        5. Kids won't be marked tardy if the bus is late
        6. CF noted that the school can't track the buses; school wants access
        7. What happens if a kindergartener gets taken back to the school? You can call the school until 4:15, after that you have to call the transportation department (concern that no one picks up)
        8. Would be great to have some type of transportation hotline for these issues

v. GMES test scores, specifically the SOL scores
    1. This could be an entire session
    2. We are off track for Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students; last year was the first year the state started identifying schools for this
    3. We don't have enough EL students in certain grades to allow reporting
    4. We are #2 (20%) of schools with students who have IEPs and take the SOLs (this is a factor, not an excuse)
    5. School is working on strategies to meet the needs of everyone
    6. School is not being reactive to changes in the data; continuing with strategies that are proven to work
    7. Trying to increase family engagement this year, especially among families from Arlandia; partnering with the FACE center to engage in new ways
    8. Reading was stronger (big focus the past few years) than math; we have a new math coach
vi. Props to the school and teachers on lots of communication and making them feel welcome

4. PTA Overview
    a. Join the PTA
    b. Helps with field trips, special events, grants
    c. Dragon families get a blanket this year
    d. New families get a yard sign
5. Financial Review and Budget Approval
    a. We are budgeting to spend more than we raise; don't worry, we have 67k in the bank, which we need to spend down
    b. Budget could be very different next year when we pick up more families
    c. We raised 59k last year
    d. Spent around 72k last year, we are budgeting 88k this year (we will likely underspend)
    e. Expecting more income from bake sale this year
    f. Saving some money this year by not having a movie night
    g. Party on the Patio, aiming for 42k of income (we did around 37k last year); 6k for expenses
    h. Fifth grade trip budget has increased (4k)
    i. Might bring back Dragon Fest this year

    j. Increased budget for class t-shirts (more kindergarteners this year, up to 1k)
    k. Increased budget for food pantry
    l. Budget has doubled for Baroody (more scholarships and two coordinators)
    m. Increase in book fair scholarships
    n. Increase in grants for teachers
    o. Increase to $150/teacher for supplies
    p. Vote to approve as written
        i. Move to approve budget as written: Suzie
        ii. Second: Stephanie
        iii. Board and group approve the budget
6. Updates from VPs and Committee Chairs
    a. Reflections (Amy)
        i. Information coming soon (PTAC is doing a Zoom with the reflections chairs soon)
        ii. Spoke at Campagna today
        iii. Deadline is 10/30
    b. Fundraising (Liz)
        i. Tomorrow is Los Tios night
            1. 5pm-close
            2. Can get takeout; order through them
        ii. Jeni's next month
        iii. Silver Diner in November
        iv. Maybe a bingo night in December
7. President Final Remarks
    a. Nurse needs clothes donations, especially K-2 clothing (email Dee, you can drop off or his wife will pick up)
    b. School is working on a new vision statement, will need input from students and families
8. Next PTA Meeting and Topic
    a. Monday, October 19th, 6:30 PM
    b. AAS
9. Q&A