

Bigelow PTO Community Meeting #1 October 8, 2025

Bigelow Middle School PTO Meeting #1, 2025-2026

Bigelow Library, 7pm

October 8, 2025

Attendance: PTO Board Members Margaret Battat Silva, Rachanee Nelson, Lanni Isenberg, Jillian Feinberg, Principal Dan Green plus 15 6th, 7th and 8th Grade Parents

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

PTO President Margaret Battat Silva welcomed attendees and reminded everybody that Bigelow PTO membership is automatic for any caregiver who has a student at Bigelow. We have an annual appeal each year, but donations are not required. All are welcome!

Margaret named the current PTO Board members – Margaret Battat Silva as PTO President, Rachanee Nelson as the PTO Vice President (former treasurer), new PTO treasurer Janeen ???? and Principal Dan Green.

Attendees introduced themselves – name and their student's grade(s).

PRINCIPAL DAN GREEN'S REPORT

This is Principal Green's 2nd year at Bigelow (was in Weston before at an upper level elementary school). The PTO events and participation have been excellent. Was impressed by the Teacher Appreciation Events so far (multiple this year already) and is looking forward to the Freaky Friday Dance. There are 52 students on the Student Council this year and Dr. Green is eager to engage them and have them share their ideas. They've already submitted suggestions for the Freaky Friday Dance.

BUDGET

Rachanee Nelson, former PTO Board Treasurer, briefly described the PTO Budget snapshot from March 2025 (created just prior to the end of the year approval). The Bigelow PTO Annual Appeal is a big source of funding as well as corporate matching.

The fiscal year ended August 31, 2025. An updated budget will be available after October.

Some attendees noted that some big companies match for a percentage of gifts and some will compensate parents for their PTO work hours. Bigelow parents & guardians may want to check their workplace HR handbook for opportunities.

Bigelow receives some donations from Village Bank.

Boston Ski & Tennis will provide a percentage of equipment rentals to Bigelow if you mention Bigelow at checkout.

Other sources of revenue include Warrior Arena Skate Night (mention Bigelow when checking in during designated Bigelow skate night events) and the Ten Tables fundraiser. While the Bigelow Back to School

Bigelow PTO Community Meeting #1 October 8, 2025

Backyard Bash event and School Dances are funding sources, the money collected for those events typically pay for the event itself.

PTO spends funds on things to enrich the school and faculty.

BIGELOW EVENTS

The Back to School Backyard Block Bash was a success in September.

On Sunday, November 2nd, FORJ will host the Franklin Park Picnic.

The 6th Grade Potluck is coming up in October.

There may be a fall social for parents/guardians at The Social in Newton in November.

CAS typically has 2-3 programs for each grade each year.

There are usually about 2 Dances each year. (8th graders expressed interest this school year in having their own dance – PTO will get clarification if they'd like a dance during the school year or as part of their 8th grade end of year celebration)

December 2025 & January 2026 will feature Warrior Ice Arena Skate Nights fundraisers for Bigelow.

The 2nd Annual Global Diversity Night will likely be scheduled for early March 2026.

10 Tables Fundraiser will be in the spring.

FORJ's Boston Bowl – to be scheduled – possible other FORJ events to be planned (maybe topical discussion or movie night)

8th Grade Committee events for Year-End Celebration & Graduation

The PTO has 4 meetings per year – the fall meeting, 2 additional meetings (may feature guest speakers or topical discussions/presentations) and the spring meeting

Principal's Coffee

Superintendent visits in a PTO meeting once each year. Usually in the spring.

OPEN ROLES - VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Membership Toolkit – PTO Directory platform: Requires summer tasks of migrating graduated 8th graders into Newton North and entering new family contact information approvals

Communications role – update PTO website: Looking for a refresh/reset on the Bigelow PTO website. Can work with current Communications lead Jillian Feinberg, who manages the PTO enewsletter.

Beautify Bigelow Day – Fall outdoor clean up on the Bigelow grounds. Coordinate the clean-up effort. Receives some resources from the City of Newton (yard waste bags and yard waste bag removal). PTO can help coordinate promotion and volunteers.

Boston Bowl event in Spring – FORJ can use some help to plan this bowling event for Bigelow.

Newton Serves Day – Spring clean up event. City of Newton provides some resources (yard waste bags and yard waste bag removal and mulch)

Freaky Friday Dance – Friday October 17 – need chaperones, decorations donations and ideas, volunteers to help the evening of the event.

Parents/guardians said they had decorative items to donate, including inflatables, disco lights and other décor.

Dr. Dan Green reminded parents/guardians to submit their application to be on the School Council. Principal Green will review applications this week. The Council will start meeting in November.

Also open to other opportunities!

If interested in any of these volunteer opportunities or if you have other ideas, contact the PTO at bigelowbulldog@gmail.com

OPEN DISCUSSION

Question: How are field trips working this year? Will there be an overnight for 8th graders?

Principal Green: The 8th grade field trip to Level 99 is coming up. Not sure about the 8th grade year end celebration options or if an overnight will be allowed.

While the overnight event was a great way for the students to bond with each other and their teachers, CAPS and METCO students participate, and was fun for all, there are some safety considerations (requires a nurse to be along in case of medical emergency) and accessibility considerations (make sure *all* students are able to participate in the activities).

Last year, students especially loved the bus ride out to Western Mass and time spent hanging out in the hotel!

Question: Is the rafting trip happening again?

Principal Green: There were some safety concerns – again, requires a nurse to be present, and some accessibility concerns. Not necessarily insurmountable, but the field trip parameters are a District decision.

The group of Middle School Principals who meet to discuss middle school matters are talking about this a lot.

One parent suggested having SEPAC help find ways to mitigate any accessibility issues – either helping to identify locations that are more accessible, or help the District or the school navigate any concerns.

Question: How are field trips planned? By the PTO?

Principal Green: The teachers plan the day trips. Overnights and the 8th grade events are planned by parents and the school/the PTO.

One suggestion: Form a non-profit “Friends of Bigelow” as agency that could plan trips and take on liability.

Question: How does the PTO engage financially in the school?

Bigelow PTO Community Meeting #1 October 8, 2025

Margaret Battat-Silva: There are new fundraising guidelines that the PTO Council (PTOC) is navigating now. Leadership from each Newton PTO participates in the PTOC.

There are changes because of equity and to gain more clarity on how funds are used.

Some parents talked about their elementary school PTO not being allowed to fundraise during the school day, which is a challenge for schools where many of the families cannot participate in after-school or weekend fundraiser events.

PTO is not allowed 3rd party fundraising.

There were cuts so there is no CAS coordinator.

Looking at having CAS programming align with the curriculum. Superintendent is looking for more consistency across schools in the CAS programming. Potentially creating a CAS handbook – aiming for knowledge-sharing.

Principal Green: The Superintendent is tightening up on financing across the District. In terms of CAS, athletics and theater. Trying to find a good way to finance activities and keep the kids involved.

Question: What can Bigelow parents do to advocate for our school, specifically, since the school is smaller with different needs than the other schools?

School Committee elections are coming up. The School Committee members should hear from Bigelow about why it's different.

Follow-up info: Principal Green said he will get more information on the field trips.

Question: How are teachers and the school reacting to the new Accelerated Math Curriculum?

Principal Green: We want every kid to get what they need. We're creating pathways for kids to move into the appropriate math level for them. The system will likely continue to change, but we're ready to give this a try.

Meeting concluded at 8:15pm.

Meeting notes by Bigelow PTO Board Secretary Lanni Isenberg.