

September Minutes 2024

PTO Monthly Meeting

September 11, 2024 - Location Countryside Library & Google Meet

7:00pm - 8:30pm

Attendees:

Principal Herlihy, Marianella Romero, Noorie Abbasi, Tayyaba Nazim, Nanda Campbell, Sahar Zaheer, Lixia Zhu, Adam Lipson, Maria Kechri, Tera Hickie, Beth Harmon, Jen Tomaneng, Julie Winsett, Erin Kapoor, Chelsea Boughan, Melissa Monokroussos, Steve Lee, Jill Tucker, Sue Johnston, Saurabh Saraf, Casey Allen, Janet Jackson, Bridgid Tsai, Brooke Sugaski-Hartman, Jess Lourie, Barbara Mauger, Melissa Hagerstrom, Heidi Schmerbeck, Amye Kurson-Collins, Kristin Lepri, Ayca Ozkumur, Amanda Wong, Rohit Anand

7pm-7:05pm Welcome and Introductions: Adam, Maria & Tera

7:05pm-7:10pm Principal's Updates: Principal Herlihy

-First Day Back: This is the first normal school opening since 2018. Time to bring back traditions, focus on belonging and have a School Spirit Committee. Read "A Little Spot of Belonging" to students. We want students to feel a sense of connection and belonging. Over the summer I read "The Anxious Generation". The book talks about overprotection in the real world and underprotection in the virtual world. Highly encourage everyone to check it out. I have been here since 1993 prior to cell phone use and I agree with the district's new cell phone/technology policies. You can call the main office to reach kids during the day. We need to try to be present with where we are now. How can we foster independence, perseverance, make mistakes and problem solving again? Need to bring joy to the classroom again.

-Building Update: Working with Stephanie Gilman. Project is moving quickly. Building plans are in Beth's office if anyone wants to see them. Construction starts in Spring 2025 and the parking lot will be closed. How will this affect Springfest and Field Day? May need a Plan B when the time comes. A community mural will be installed at the new CS building. Same artist who did murals at Angier, Cabot and Zervas will be used again. The artist will have kids draw images to be used in the mural. Will be installed around Fall 2026. PTO funds collected for a new playground will help with funding this mural since the new playground will be included with the building plans.

-Communication Update: Parent Square is being used for all updates. No complaints so far. Like that it is streamlined and has the language translation feature. Teachers and staff have not received official training on Parent Square yet so need to be patient as we figure out how to use it. Parent Square will pull information from Aspen. Will have QR codes at Curriculum Night to get the Parent Square app on cell phones.

-ELL Curriculum Update: 3rd, 4th & 5th grades are starting the new ELL program. Will have another Parent Coffee with teachers and staff to review the new reading curriculum.

7:10pm-7:40pm Discussion Topics: Adam, Maria & Tera

-Open Volunteer Positions: Adam, Maria & Tera

Most positions are filled. Will continue to send out new sign up sheets in the Newsletter for Committees who need help. Will try to reach out to new families to ask for help. Will have hard copy sign up sheets at Back To School Night. Would like to put sign up sheets on the website eventually so people don't have to look back at emails to find the information. Committee heads can reach out to the co-presidents if they need help getting volunteers for events.

Action Item/To Do: Post open positions in Newsletter and at Back To School Night.

-Budget/Reimbursement Process Review: Steve

Budget approved for 2024-2025 is \$72,000. A quick reminder on reimbursements. Need to submit 1 page form found on the PTO website along with receipts to the treasurer within 30 days. The treasurer has 30 days to give the reimbursement. New checks have been ordered and are waiting for them to come in.

-Annual Fund Update: Casey

The Annual Fund is the biggest fundraiser of the year. The request this year is \$135 per child. Request was reduced from \$150 to \$135 due to good fundraising efforts from last year's auction and Fun Run. Amye Kurson-Collins is helping out with the fundraising effort. The Annual Fund pamphlet will go out soon and plan to have a parent coffee afterward to answer questions. Will give out CS car magnets to people who donate. Interactive collection thermometer will go in email. Could try to post a thermometer outside of school and have students color it to update it, but may be tricky. PTOC has rules that state fundraising can not interfere with kids at school. Need updated head count and pie chart for this year's brochure.

Action Item/To Do: Steve L or Adam L to give updated pie chart graphic. Principal Herlihy to give current student/family headcount.

-Room Parent Coordinators: Janet & Beth H

We are in good shape for room parent volunteers. Ms. Bannon and SPARK are the only classrooms with no volunteers. Will keep posting open positions in the Update/Newsletter until mid-Oct. Room parent coordinators organize the Winter and End Of Year staff gift collections. Older grades may choose to not organize a playdate or classroom craft. An introductory letter is ready to go. New template is available from co-presidents.

Action Item/To Do: Co-presidents to give new letter templates to room parent coordinators.

-Welcome Committee: Beth H

Will need more volunteers to help with the Welcoming Committee.

-Kindergarten Play Date: Bridgid Tsai

Kindergarten play date was organized by Bridgid Tsai. Held after the open house which was nice. Handed out popsicles.

-Website Design Update: Maria, Beth H & Melissa H

Website has been redesigned to make it more user friendly. Want to prevent parents having to search emails for sign up links and information. Need to test it out before opening it up to the community. Will have screen shots at Back to School night to show people what it looks like. Newsletters and new templates have been updated to contain less text, be shorter and easier to read. Lunch menu has been added to the Update email. Will be using a general PTO email address so information can be easily passed down from committee head to committee head each year. Less will need to be on individual emails. Evite has a sign up sheet, easy to use and less ads. Ayca made a good point about trying to copy lists from year to year and right now most people use Sign Up Genius. Will need to look at how easy it is to recreate this in Evite platform.

-Directory Update: Chelsea & Tanya

The directory will be out in mid Oct. Need to wait for the official update from Aspen. If parents need a class list, they can reach out to room parents or look in the Membership Toolkit. We can work off of last year's permissions so Membership Toolkit is as updated as it can be right now. Could also remind parents to enter info into Membership Toolkit and Aspen in the Newsletter.

Action Item/To Do: Remind parents/guardians to update contact information in Membership Toolkit and Aspen.

7:40pm-8:10pm Community Events

-Back To School Night 9/19: Principal Herlihy, Adam, Maria & Tera

Will have specialists, principal talk and PTO talk to give information to parents. K-2 classroom presentations will be at 7:00-7:30 pm. Grades 3-5 presentations will be at 8:00-8:30 pm this year. No child care will be provided.

-Costume Swap 9/27: Chelsea

This has been done for the past 2 years. Less than 10 costumes were swapped previously. May have been related to being done too late in the year. May be more successful this time since it will be done earlier. Event will be done with the New Families Coffee. 2nd date TBD. Principal Herlihy will put it out there and it will be included in the Newsletter this week.

Action Item/To Do: Post Costume Swap in PTO Newsletter and Principal Herlihy letter

-New Families Coffee 9/27: Principal Herlihy & Beth H

New Families Coffee will be held at the end of the month. This allows families to learn about the things they don't know yet and bring questions to the meeting. Principal Herlihy would like a member of the PTO to be there to answer questions about Newton specifically regarding summer camps, classes, sports programs, etc. Janet made a reference sheet with this information so it can be easily shared.

Action Item/To Do: Janet to give Welcome Info Sheet to Beth H or Principal Herlihy

-Picture Day 10/2: Ayca

Would like someone to shadow Ayca this year to learn about how to run the event. We have enough forms for 376 students and forms will go home with the kids in the next few days. You can also order online. People can contact the social worker if they need a scholarship package. The name list is downloaded and will need a runner to go get each classroom since cell phone service does not work outside the school. Retake day has not been scheduled yet. Usually gets booked on Picture Day. The PTO has popup tents if needed for better lighting outdoors. Can also use the outdoor classroom if need a shaded area. Coffee Pond contract ends this year. Do we want to renew with Coffee Pond again? The contract is for 3 years and the PTO gets a sales commission, the percentage of which depends on the number of orders plus an extra 3% for the 3 year contract, students receive a free class picture and all students get photographed. May shop around to look at 2-3 other companies before signing a new contract. Ayca will email with the pricing options.

Action Item/To Do: Ayca will research new school photography companies to secure best pricing. Will email the PTO with the findings prior to signing a new contract.

-Halloween Party 10/26 5-8pm: Barbara M

Would like someone to shadow Barbara this year to learn about how to run the event. This event will need more volunteers to run it. K-2 time slot will be 5:00-6:30pm. 3-5 time slot will be 6:30-8:00pm. This is not a drop off event. Alumni are welcome. Will have DJ Stacy, inflatable gaga pit inside, concessions, dancing, games, photo booth. Costume rules are no masks, no fake weapons. Barbara is looking at decorations and will buy some new stuff if needed. Space for SPARK or sensory needs was held in the aftercare space last year. Parents ended up hanging out in the sensory space so it was not as quiet. Could move the sensory space to the library, but will need to keep the kids from going upstairs or in the hallways. Will need to buy a new tub of kinetic sand or ask for a donation for sensory space. Could have Halloween crafts for kids who want to be quieter, however will need more volunteers to man these spaces.

Action Item/To Do: Principal Herlihy will look into sensory space options.

8:10pm-8:25pm Additional Updates/Recap on Past Events

-Welcome Back Parent Coffee Recap 9/3: Tera

Event was held outside in the front of the building. Mr. Repta helped move tables. Event was well attended and ran out of coffee. Had a lot of interest in sign ups.

-Teacher Welcome Breakfast Recap: Melissa

Provided bagels, yogurts from the Greek market and other yummy goodies similar to last year. Had a lot of help from the committee and it went well.

-Back To School Picnic 9/9 Recap: Melissa

Event was well attended. Liger Bots were there and NCE did face painting. Swag raffle winners will go out tomorrow AM.

-Gaga Ball Pit Installation Recap 8/30: Melissa

Thank you to those who helped put it together. Principal Herlihy said the gaga ball pit has been a good addition. The students really like it. Mr. Smith has a slide deck for teachers to show kids how to use the gaga ball pit and he practiced it in gym class. Gaga ball is made of heavy duty metal brackets and composite board. It is very heavy, but will be bolted to the ground by Parks and Rec. The gate is ADA accessible and is locked so it does not get broken by overuse. Teachers have the code. Students can jump over the walls or go through the back. This gaga ball pit will move to the new school.

8:25pm-8:30pm Misc Items, Discussion

Input/Ideas

Spirit wear: Chelsea

9/24 will have a flash sale with free shipping and delivery to the classroom. Have two cool tie dye designs this year. Principal Herlihy suggested nostalgic designs for next year since will be moving to a new CS building.

Green Team: Julie W

3rd - 5th grades can join. Will be held the 4th Thursday of every month. Ms. Woodhead confirmed they can use the art room again. The Green Team does trash pickup, plays in the garden, does tree scavenger hunts. There was no back to school clean up this year, but anyone can let the Green Team know if some spots need cleaning up. Beth H had mentioned that it would be helpful if the Green Team could clean up the playground area after PTO events. Sometimes people leave behind wrappers, juice boxes, etc.

School Supplies Feedback: Jen Tomaneng & Principal Herlihy

The parent school supply list is created after needed supplies are cross referenced with the NPS annual order. The annual order prices went up due to inflation and the order was placed late this year. Teachers are still waiting on the PTO stipend. Steve is still waiting for the checks to come in. School supplies are a part of the equity budget and cannot be purchased by the PTO. Jen T said the supplies were low this year. For example she only got 5 students who bought supplies ahead of time and were delivered to the classroom. Other classrooms have also experienced the same issue this year. Jen T sent out a Google Form to teachers to see what supplies are still needed. Will go over missing supplies at Back To School Night. Probably best to put out the supply list in Spring so parents can order. 1st Day School Supplies had the best prices. Our contract is up for renewal so could look around to see if there is better pricing. Chelsea volunteered to head this committee.

Action Item/To Do: Chelsea will look into new school supply companies for next year. Jen T will provide PTO with teacher feedback on missing school supplies and will discuss at Back To School night.