

## **PTO Meeting January 8, 2008**

**Attendees:** Len & Joanne Errera, Dawn Wolf, Randi Thureson, Stephen Bennett, Gail Pellegatto, Dora Cordeiro Trommer, Maureen Callahan, Sandi Girolamo, Marina Wright, Sharon Lichota, Eileen Colonese, Jaycee Perkins, Nancy Galarza, Marilyn Wilsey, Rob Barresi, Stephen Foresi

**Old Business:** Dawn Wolfe indicated that at the last meeting it was decided that minutes from previous meeting would be looking at on the website by attendees. Dawn asked those who reviewed the minutes to motion for acceptance. Motion to approve October, 2007 minutes were passed.

Mr. Foresi gave his principal's report:

He started with acknowledgements and thanks to the PTO for the cultural arts programs. In particular, A-Z Literary and Literacy alive. He felt they both greatly enhanced the curriculum. He mention that the gentlemen who did the event was phenomenal. He thanked the PTO for assistance at school events with juice, treats, etc.; for reviving the garden show which he indicated was wonderful and the children had a great experience. He also noted how well run it was. He commented on the outstanding new PTO website which gives us the ability to communication via the web and be environmentally friendly with less paperwork.

He then gave some updates.

### **Academic**

He indicated that they are trying to learn more about the students in a different way as well as how they assess students. Common assessments are performed every 6 to 8 weeks. This assesses those skills necessary for students to have at their grade level in reading and literacy. A review of how the kids are progressing and how to make changes is performed. This is a new initiative at John Paterson and the school district.

### **Socially**

He spoke about the school family meetings, which consists of small groups or families at John Paterson – each adult meets with students (10 students) on a regular basis. The meetings are theme based. Some of the themes are self esteem, self worth, and self character.

### **Cafeteria**

The cafeteria staff needs some assistance from parents. They would like parents to educate the kids on making appropriate choices in the lunch line. They want the kids to have a more balanced “plate” so their meals are well balanced. Also, when parents are sending in money in an envelope please put both the child’s first and last name on the envelope. It will help make the lines move quicker. Dawn interjected: she didn’t realize until this week that if you want to know what your child is buying or how much they are spending you can get a print out of what the child is eating. You can also go online and check. A question was posed about why the kids could not substitute water for milk. Water is not funded by the state so the water bottle is extra. Everything through the cafeteria is from a contracted vendor. A question was posed about the progression to healthier food in the cafeteria. The change from white bread to whole wheat bread has already been made. It cost \$50K to \$100K to make that change so we have to do one change at a time because it’s what we can afford without having to increase the price of lunches. A question was posed about whether the amount of bought lunches decreased after the change in bread. Teachers indicated they saw a decrease in kids buying sandwiches but they are buying alternatives, cereal, yogurts and bagels. Mr. Foresi indicated the bills for the daily and weekly lunches are about the same.

Nancy Petronio came in – from the Board of Ed – Mr. Foresi introduced her and welcomed here. He continued his report.

### **New dismissal policy:**

He discussed the changes dismissal practices for pick ups and walkers. He knows it’s been a topic of discussion so wanted to see if there were any questions about the change. A question was posed about why pick ups were moved to the back of the school. Mr. Foresi indicated that after they analyzed the former policy for pick ups (front lobby pick up, then exiting out front door) they recognized that given the space they couldn’t appropriately figure out who the kids “belonged to”. There were upwards of 54 people designated as a pick up. After analyzing – out of the 54 – 39 were considered walkers, which is determined by Board of Ed rules. They looked at alternate locations in John Paterson that they could have pick up occur as well as whether they had the staff to manage and organized. When they looked at the alternate locations – other variables came into question about the safety and management of the school to make it effective. When it was recognized that there were 39 students deemed as walkers it made the most sense to exit out the back door, which has always been the walkers door. Effectively and safely 20 or so students can be managed as pick ups in the lobby area. Students designated walkers do not need to be signed in and out based on the Board of Ed guidelines. Having the walkers go out the walker’s door in back helps the school maintain management of the process. Parents can be there to pick up their child – that

is fine. Parents can park in the same locations as they did when they picked up their child in the lobby. A question from parent: With the new policy, if the kids are walkers they go out the door and the door shuts and the kids are on their own. Is the school saying the school does not want to take on the responsibility of “taking care” of the walkers? Mr. Foresi’s responded that the school was asked to take on a huge burden when there were so many pick ups and the school couldn’t keep track safety off all the kids. The recommendation for the change came through the accreditation firm. They noticed it was not safe the way the pick ups were handled previously. One parent questioned the condition of the walk way, how, in their opinion, it’s not adequately cleared. Mr. Foresi addressed the issue that the walk ways around the immediate area of the school are maintained by the custodial staff. The black top, the parking lots, one section of the walkway is handled by parks and grounds through the town. Sometimes the black top will not be plowed only because it’s a low priority. All the walk ways are done but done by using different equipment as they are maintained by different departments. Mr. Foresi said he will address the issue of the walk ways not being maintained as this parent indicates. Another parent commented about how she did not see a monitor outside and was concerned about the safety of some children playing in a snow mound. Comments were made that other parents see monitors each day during dismissal. Mr. Foresi would be happy to sit down with parents to talk about the procedure and what things we could do to change the dismissal procedure. Randi Thureson commented on how the new pick up policy was working and that she felt it was safer. She had to show ID and sign her child out and she was pleased with that change.

Comments were made about the age of the children and the fact that they are walkers at such a young age on busy streets, etc. Mr. Foresi indicated that your child does not have to walk but needs to go out the door and greeted by a parent who can drive them home.

### **Upcoming events**

John Paterson has a partnership with Middlewoods Senior Home. The seniors come in once a month to read to the children. This helps the kids understand a diverse population by having the seniors come in to interact with them. Third grade will have the library come and visit them soon. The healthy eating program will be discussed with the 4<sup>th</sup> graders and they will be going to the science museum. Grade 1 will be going to the library this month.

He introduced Mrs. Wilsey, Mrs. Pelligato and Mr. Bennett (teachers).

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Eileen Colonese gave the treasurer's report.

Family photo profit: \$1,200; 34 families participated. Pictures came out great.  
Cookie dough is all gone!  
Eileen thanked Sharon for boxing up and sending the ink cartridges.  
Genevieve's fundraiser raised approximately: \$5,700

Fall fest was low attendance this year – but everything that we've done this year has been lower than normal. Not sure why – but we hope it won't continue and attendance will increase for future events.

Family Fun Night was an absolutely fun time. Less than 100 people showed up but they laughed the whole time. Eileen is hoping to do the Family Fun Night again and hopes to increase attendance the next time.

Checkbook balance is \$19,701 – we have \$3300 due for science programs, a little more due on cultural arts, 4<sup>th</sup> grade yearbook, \$2K for playscape, hospitality, website and crystal rock – automatic debits each month. Eileen thinks we are in good shape but if there is something we want to do that is extra we need to figure out how to raise the money for it as what we have now will just get us through the end of the year.

Mr. Foresi asked where we were exactly after all the expenses were paid – Eileen thought we would be down to about \$9,000 or \$10,000.

Spring book fair: we have scheduled different dates for the book fair this year. Normally we do the last week of March but this year we wanted to do it during parent/teacher conferences in March. The idea behind it is that people will be in the school and the parents might be more apt to come to "reward" their child for a good report. Erika Ganley is looking for volunteers to help and possibly co-chair. Dawn reminded people to visit the website to fill out the volunteer form if they want to help.

Cultural arts programs: The next event is Thursday Feb 7 – Hot Cat Jazz band – 60's ensemble – 2 shows 1pm and 2pm – all parents are welcome to come. We received a grant in the amount of \$428 from the CT Commission on Arts and Tourism. Mike Kachuba is booked to do a program on CT in Song for the third graders.

Dawn indicated this time last year we were filing out paperwork for grants (NEF) and the deadline is coming up on February 15 for review in March. Forms are online and if any of the staff has any interest in applying, they need to do so soon. Dawn indicated we haven't received any formal request for anything from staff members yet. Staff can approach any of the officers if they have a request.

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Dawn questioned where Mr. Carson, from the Field House Expansion Committee was – and decision was made to postpone the PowerPoint presentation regarding the field house project. Even though Mr. Foresi had the PowerPoint presentation he wouldn't be able to speak about the presentation, just show the slides.

Sandi has been working with Nancy Boyle, teacher in residence, but we won't be able to book her for this school year so we are trying to get dates from her for early fall. Her price would be \$3,600 for the two days, Sandi asked for a "volume discount" and Nancy agreed to reduce her fee to \$3,400. She would do two model lessons. One lesson would focus on the reading comprehension. She does a lesson and then a debriefing to go over question and comments. Second lesson would be on the written responses on the CMT's (how to answer an open ended question in writing). Sandi asked if we would have to vote on whether we wanted to book her or not. Dawn indicated that we would do this in lieu of an author which has already been voted on and accepted. Dawn wanted to know how many students would benefit from her lessons. Sandi indicated there was no limit to who or how many attended her lessons. Dawn was thinking of asking for a grant for this program as it would impact the entire school as it would represent a professional community of learning. She would be teaching the teachers. She would be validating and enhancing the work the teachers are already doing. Eileen asked if the \$3,400 was a final figure or would there be travel expenses, etc. Nancy didn't specify but based on her communications travel was probably included, but Sandi will verify. A parent asked if parents could observe the lesson. Mr. Foresi said they haven't considered that but it would be a challenge space wise and if all the parents came or a good portion of them came they wouldn't be able to accommodate that big of a crowd. Mr. Foresi opened it up for discussion and parents and teachers said it would take away from the lesson. A suggestion was made to video tape the lesson. That option will be investigated with Nancy. We will put the money aside for Nancy and if it falls through we will decide what else we would spend the money on. Eileen motioned to accept spending \$3,600 for Nancy Boyle and it was seconded.

Sharon spoke about the game night on Friday (January 11<sup>th</sup>) which is 6pm to 8pm. Sharon hasn't received much help and doesn't know how many people are coming. She could use bakers, helpers and games. A volunteer form will come home again. Mr. Bennett asked if Sharon has received anything back from teachers yet and she said no. Randi asked about the people that signed up ahead of time to bake for certain events and some parents offered to call to get more bakers.

Next meeting is February 5<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Shumann will be here to talk about the budget.

Meeting was adjourned.