

PTO Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 22, 2012

- 1) Welcome and President's/Vice President's remarks (Susan Goetcheus/Amy Cooper)
 - a. Amy was absent. Cate Oranchak was also absent, but will discuss the role of the Advisory Council at the next PTO meeting on Thursday 11/15.
 - b. Thanks to the coordinators and volunteers at recent successful PTO events: Movie Night, Family Dance, and the Book Fair. The latter earned \$1330 for the PTO, and over \$400 for the library. Thanks also to Dorothy Schuette and those who helped with the science garden/grounds cleanup. Two large butterfly bushes were relocated to allow more sun in the science garden.
 - c. Upcoming events this weekend: Pumpkin decorating Friday after school, Walkathon/Fun Run Saturday morning, and the Bottle Rockets event Saturday afternoon.
 - d. Also upcoming: Sarah Forney and Susan are planning the Election Day Bake Sale 11/6. The Holiday Craft Fair is set for Saturday 11/17. Encourage any crafters you know to reserve a table. Applications are due 11/1. E-mail and fliers will be sent out about upcoming fundraising events.

- 2) Principal's remarks (Karen Hartley)
 - a. The latest MCAS results are in. New emphasis is being put on individual student growth between test years. Peirce ranks high in terms of both achievement and individual growth. But MCAS is not the only metric we use to evaluate our children.
 - b. Our co-taught classrooms recently received four iPads each – these in addition to the ones the teachers in those classrooms received last year. Teachers are training to use the iPads in the classroom, and sharing their findings on which apps are most helpful in the different subject areas.

- c. Other current professional development activities: Updating the TERC math program for 4th and 5th graders, and more training for the Lucy Calkins writing program.
- d. Peirce and Dallin 5th graders are off to W. Alton Jones science camp this week. Almost all of our 5th graders are attending this year. It's a fantastic program, academically sound and aligned with the standards.

3) Committee updates

- a. Treasurer/Fundraising/Hospitality (Lori Pescatore)
 - A copy of the current budget was distributed. The Family Dance and the Book Fair both did great. The Annual Fund Drive is slow. Peirce Pride t-shirts are still available and will be for sale at upcoming events (\$10).
 - Upcoming Holiday Craft Fair: 6+ tables have been reserved already, though more crafters are needed. Homemade pies will be for sale (in place of the Wilson Farm pie fundraiser).
 - Movie Night was fun and full to capacity, however some parents dropped their kids off. Announcements of future movie nights will have to specify that adult accompaniment is required. An initial announcement at the event regarding appropriate behavior might be helpful. Other suggestions: Have pizza in the cafeteria first, then move to the gym for the movie; better contain the event by keeping doors closed. Another idea to consider when the weather is warmer: Outdoor movies on a sheet hung on the side of the school.
- b. Community Outreach (Jessica Callaghan)
 - We will have a Coats for Kids collection again this year, with one collection box outside the main office and another by Mr. Frank's office. The collection boxes will be out until winter break. Anton's Cleaners runs this program. They collect and clean the coats, and then have them distributed through various social service agencies. Adult coats are accepted as well, but only winter coats (no rain coats).
 - Another thank you to the Book Fair volunteers. We raised \$400 for the library. Some of that money was put towards teachers' wish lists. Mrs. T will have a wish list bin of her own at the next book fair.

- Lori will again be facilitating the Thanksgiving turkey drive with the help of the 5th graders.
- c. Enrichment (Carl Elder, Jocelyn Willett)
- Carl reported that the 1st grade just had a weather station program.
 - The Bottle Rockets event is this Saturday afternoon by the ice rink.
 - Jocelyn is scheduling Museum of Science programs for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades.
 - Habitat or Animal Adventures will be brought in for the younger grades.
 - The committee is also working to schedule an author talk.
- d. Library Enrichment (Jane Torregrossa)
- Mrs. T is busy helping the 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders with the books they are writing.
 - Students were able to finish making their bookmarks during library this week, as the laminating paper finally arrived.
- e. Safe Routes (Susan Goetcheus)
- Susan and Mary Alice Burke met with the Massachusetts Safe Routes coordinator.
 - The committee is instituting Walking Wednesdays.
 - They are putting together an all-in-one handout with both a parking map and rules for drop-off and pick-up.
 - They are considering the use of “parking tickets” written by Peirce students, e.g., “Please don’t park here – it makes my walk to school unsafe.”
 - Also considering the use of signs that say “left turn only” out of the teachers’ lot, and “right turn only” out of the front loop.
- f. Science Garden and Landscaping (Dorothy Schuette)
- Volunteers helped with the fall grounds cleanup this past Saturday.
 - We may have a composting program in the spring with Ben Barkin, who gave a talk for 5th grade last year.
- g. Teacher Representatives (Alicia Coletti, Daniela Hurley)
- Daniela Hurley replaced Marybeth Wall as teacher representative.

- Some teachers find they aren't able to use their parent volunteers. E.g., if the parent who does photocopying comes at a time when the teacher is in the middle of a lesson, or is unable to come on the day that the teacher needs copies made. Some teachers may only need a volunteer every other week. Would it be better if the teachers found the volunteers themselves, for the specific days/times they need? Susan noted that, at Thompson, there is a central location where teachers can leave things that need to be done, for whatever volunteer comes in that day. Whether this works in any given case may depend on how simple the directions for the task are. This is something to discuss with Krissie Delaney. Would the teachers then also be in charge of finding their own room parents? Part of the room parents' duties relate to class parties, which the teachers coordinate. But they also help organize Teacher Appreciation Day and class gifts, which are overseen by the PTO.

4) Other business and announcements

a. Vote on PTO bylaws

Susan and last year's co-president, Janice Weinberg, updated the bylaws last spring. A copy of the revised bylaws, with a list of the revisions, was distributed. Some things addressed by the rewriting:

- Using the phrase "parent/guardian" in place of just "parent."
- Grammatical and formatting changes.
- Clarification of how the PTO tries to influence school policies: By providing feedback to ensure that decisions made by the principal and Advisory Council benefit students and their families.
- Specify that two people can share a position on the PTO.
- Flexibility about how president and vice-president share or divide oversight of the committees.
- The role of teachers within PTO: Teachers should be allowed to run for office – something they might want to do if they have a child in the school.

A motion to adopt these changes to the PTO bylaws was approved.

b. Vote on budget items

Library and art room have need of bulletin boards costing \$103 each plus shipping. A motion to pay for these bulletin boards using general funds was approved.

c. PTO directory (Joy Spadafora)

Parents are asked to update their information either online or by using the form, but not both. Orders are being taken for the directory this year. The deadline is today. The directory will include extra information, such as a cross listing of parent and family last names, class lists, and lists of teachers, PTO officers, and room parents.

d. Volunteerism and communication

- We've had problems getting volunteers this year, e.g., there were last minute worries that we wouldn't be able to staff the Walkathon. Suggestions?
- Space our communications so they don't overwhelm parents.
- How to get more people to PTO meetings?
 - Perhaps by holding them later, say 7 PM?
 - By having speakers, e.g., Karen could talk about MCAS.
 - Sell the benefits of attendance: What parents will learn and the input they can have, e.g., on how the money is spent, on enrichment programs, etc. Parents who aren't officers or committee chairs need to know they belong.
- More could be done at Kindergarten Night to drum up interest. We could also hold an info session at Curriculum Night, to provide an overview of upcoming events and encourage parents to sign-up to help. Goal to get every parent to volunteer, if only for an hour, sometime during the year. Open House night will include recognition of the 10 year anniversary of the new school building – another opportunity to drum up support.
- It might help to have a simple, bulleted list of items at the top of the Bulletin, e.g., things for parents “to do this week.” Perhaps bulleted items could link to the details below. Also, it might be better to send the Bulletin midweek.
- Karen noted that when the list server crashed, the e-mail list was reset to the list of 2 years ago, but it seems to be working now.
- At the November meeting, we will meet the new Arlington METCO director. Reestablishing the partner program, which links each METCO kid with a local family to stay with after school or until evening events.
- At the December or January meeting, Nadine Solomon and Crystal Powers will talk about the summer professional development program for math curriculum enrichment.

- Perhaps we could survey parents (e.g., using SurveyMonkey) about what presentations they would like at PTO meetings. Helpful PTO meeting presentations from last year include Marybeth Wall and Alexis Epps's presentation on the co-taught classroom, and the Nit-Picker lice info session.
- Come to Susan or Amy if you have suggestions for how to improve communication with parents or how to attract more volunteers.
- Karen also noted that the Arlington Public Schools now have wireless internet service – helpful for presenters, as well as for using the new iPads.

5) Questions

Upcoming dates:

Tuesday, October 23	5th grade science camp
Friday, October 26	Pumpkin decorating
Saturday, October 27	Walkathon; Bottle Rockets
Tuesday, November 6	Election Day bake sale; Mrs. T's open (signup required)
Thursday, November 15	PTO meeting
Saturday, November 17	Holiday craft fair