

**Peirce School**  
*Strive to shine: as a student, as a friend*

**PTO Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, March 4, 2015**

- 1. Co-Presidents' Greeting – Cris Martin and Angela Snyder**
  - a. Introduction of PTO Board, Teacher Representative, Committee Chairs, and other attendees.**
  - b. Recap of last month and thank you to volunteers**
    - i. Bingo Night
    - ii. 100th Day of School Food Drive – 391 items collected
  
- 2. Principal's Remarks – Karen Hartley**
  - a. Discussion of Peirce Pride Week.** To be held in coordination with Field Day and graduation at the end of June. An alternative would be to coordinate it with Red Sox Day and the fourth grade Baseball Store in April. The Baseball Store raises money for Pitching in for Kids, in honor of former teacher Alanna DeMella. This year the store will offer Peirce hoodies to match the t-shirts and sweatpants from previous years. Molly Gillis asked whether smaller quantities of those t-shirts and sweatpants might be available as well. Emily Almas suggested that a fundraiser through CafePress would be another way to make Peirce gear available.
  - b. Some old stuff Karen found in the office.**
    - i. Happy face stickers – to be used as visitors' passes, so Mr. Frank and others know who has checked in at the front office as required, and who has not.
    - ii. An old Peirce Pride bumper sticker – in orange and yellow! We could use our new Peirce car decals as prizes for kids recognized at the Pride assemblies. Angela suggests they could also be prizes for donors to the kindergarten playground Kickstarter campaign.
  
- 3. Special Guest – AEF (Arlington Education Foundation) Board Member and Bishop parent, Amy Speare**
  - a. AEF has been around for over 20 years.** Most of the money we raise comes from parents, with a few corporate donors. Each year \$100,000 in grant money is distributed fairly evenly among all the schools. Of that \$100,000, only \$10,000 to \$12,000 comes from the banks, Bowes, Arlington Orthodontics, etc. The rest comes from parents and community members. We have a volunteer run board. Angela is the Peirce representative to AEF.
  - b. Several types of grants are awarded:**

- Innovations in Education Grants are \$500 to \$3000 and support special teaching and learning projects. Parents may apply, but projects must be paired with a teacher and curriculum in the schools. The fourth grade Teosinte curriculum started out with a small AEF grant to a teacher at Brackett; it then went district-wide. Similarly, the third grade archeological dig started out with an Innovations grant at one school and then went district-wide.
- Continuing Scholar Awards for teachers. AEF believes in investing in teachers. This award, given out twice yearly, allows a teacher to do something personally and professionally fulfilling, e.g., a Taiko drumming class for second grade teachers, to help them supplement their Japan curriculum; trips to Europe and South America for high school history and language teachers.
- Development and Expansion Grants support broader changes in curriculum and educational strategies. One example is the Concentration Tools grant awarded last spring, which put a “Cool Tool Box” in each elementary classroom. The tool boxes have simple self-regulation tools and resources that all students have access too, whether they have an IEP or not.
- The larger School Improvement Grants target systemic, long-term changes to improve APS education and community. For example, addressing the problem of teacher turnover at Ottoson, one of largest middle schools in the state, AEF funded the Ottoson Middle School Planning Grant to ensure that kids are better served, none fall through the cracks, and teachers, administration, and parents stay connected.
- AEF also sponsors small programs such as STARS (School Teachers Are Really Special!), which, twice yearly, gives parents a way to recognize and thank teachers, and raises \$15,000 for AEF.

**c. AEF’s Technology Initiative**

In addition to their regular grants, AEF is also focusing on technology, specifically at the secondary level, with its Technology Initiative. The district has funded technology at the elementary level, supplying iPads and professional development. But the middle school and high school need more and beefier computers for digital arts, chemistry modeling, etc. AEF started their Technology Initiative two years ago to give APS a jumpstart on technology and bring them up to date. It is now in its third and final year. In the first year, they helped bring computer programming classes back to the high school. AEF provided the equipment, and the district funded a teacher.

Molly asks if there is any focus on women in technology. Amy says AEF is trying to make technology more accessible to everybody. For example, since the second year of the Technology Initiative, every sixth grader now gets a full year of computer programming; they use Scratch and learn to build websites. Another example is the Ottoson Technology and Engineering program, where the kids build bottle rockets, whirligigs, and dragsters. Every sixth, seventh, and eighth grader takes this half-year

course. The sixth graders are using iPads to design and simulate performance of a nose cone of a rocket. And with the 3D printer AEF funded, they can then print and test their design.

The third year of the Technology Initiative is focusing on the arts, to put the 'A' in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math education). Amy says that today, you can't be artist without some technology background, and you can't do technology without the arts. AEF is raising money for a digital arts lab at the high school. Also in this final year, AEF is outfitting additional Ottoson computer labs. Again, the district has committed to funding the personnel and curriculum if AEF gets the equipment.

In the past two years, AEF raised \$84,000 for the Technology Initiative, in addition to the \$100,000 they raise every year for their other grants. This year the goal is to raise \$130,000 more for the Technology Initiative.

**d. Some upcoming events:**

- Super Pie Day – March 14 (3/14/15) from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Common Ground. Free pie, cash bar. Learn about AEF's Technology Initiative, and see what's going on with technology at APS.
- Arlington Trivia Bee – March 22 from 3:00 to 5:00 PM at Town Hall. Teams of adults compete, including our team, the Peirce Stingers. A fun, free event for all ages, with activities and prizes for kids and audience members as well.
- Tech Showcase – April 15 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the High School Media Center. APS and AEF partner to share with the community what's going on with K-12 technology. There will also be student demonstrations – twice as big this year as last. Laura Chesson will put a call out. Colleen Lloyd mentioned it as well; it would be great if Peirce could be there.

Question: What happened to the stalled initiative to add a language program at the elementary level? Amy says a Development and Expansion Grant might be appropriate for that. Catherine Ritz, director of the World Language program at the high school, would be someone to contact, and she is a wiz at grants. However, AEF doesn't push any particular curriculum on the district; rather, the district sets their goals and AEF facilitates. It would have to come from the district curriculum developer Laura Chesson.

For more about AEF: <http://www.arlingtoneducationfoundationma.org/>

For more about AEF's Technology Initiative: <http://www.aeftechnologyinitiative.org/>

**4. Committee Updates**

**a. Teacher Representative – Alicia Coletti**

- i. Alicia received the e-mail about Spirit/Pride Week and had another idea to suggest. Right now her students are doing something similar with Read across America. On the day that they read *Cat in the Hat*, the kids wear a favorite hat; for *Fox in Socks*, they wear crazy socks; on *Wacky Wednesday* they dress mismatched; for *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, they dress as they would for a future career; and for *The Lorax* they wear moustaches. The guiding idea behind spirit week this year is Field Day; maybe it could be Read across America next year.
- ii. The teachers' Silent Auction. This was Lori's idea, and the teachers went for it. Activities offered in the past include seeing a movie, going to Build a Bear, Art Beat, etc. Bidding was originally done at a table at the Holiday Craft Fair, but then went online. Cris has set up a preliminary page at [32auctions.com](http://32auctions.com). What is a normal starting bid? How high do bids go? It depends on the number of kids and teachers involved. \$70 is high. Good to start with a \$10 bid and have \$5 increments. Parents have to bid for their kids, but the kids definitely know what they want.

Molly wondered if the PTO could supplement teachers' investments in the auction. Alicia emphasized that the teachers are OK paying for their auction items. It's the one big fundraiser they all participate in, and it's convenient for them as they can plan the day, time, activity, line up babysitters for their own children, etc. Besides it doesn't have to be a big investment. Kids are happy with a pizza lunch; they really just want to spend time with their teachers.

Transportation has been an issue however. Parents need to be made aware that they are responsible for driving their kids to and from the activity. The teachers cannot transport kids off school property.

Tentatively, April 1 would be the date bidding goes live. We will get the information out a week or two ahead of time. Bidding shouldn't be longer than a week or so. The closing date will be in mid-April. Then the teachers have about six weeks, until June 1, to do their activity with the winning bidders.

**b. Fundraising – Molly Gillis**

No news. Molly asked whether we wanted to send out another push for the Annual Drive to target those who haven't given yet. Otherwise we could just hold steady at \$6500. Other fundraisers such as the teachers' silent auction, Flocking Flamingoes, and the kindergarten playground campaign are coming up, so we'd have to be careful with the timing of another request.

**c. Volunteer Coordinator – Emily Almas**

There aren't a lot of opportunities for volunteering lately aside from the Art Fair and International Festival. Cris is chairing and organizing the International Festival, scheduled for April 10th, as Dorothy Schuette can't be as involved anymore. We need a small core of people to meet and make decisions, and a larger group of volunteers to staff the festival. Chris plans on having some international performers from Harvard, followed by the dessert pot luck.

**d. Enrichment – Sherri Bulmer**

The Museum of Science program went well today. Programs postponed due to snow days have finally been made up. The fifth grade Museum of Science program is coming up next, and then several smaller events. Angela heard from some parents who would like to be on the committee next year.

**e. Kindergarten Playground – Angela Snyder**

Angela talked to Charlie Radoslovich, urban farmer and father to first and fourth graders. He has lots knowledge and fresh ideas, and is interested in helping with project. His sister is a landscape architect who designs playgrounds. She will redesign our K playground for free and get us a detailed budget in time to resubmit a grant proposal to AEF in April. The \$3000 that the PTO earlier voted to put towards design can now go towards construction. Question: When will we have a meeting to update the community and get them involved? Angela notes that it might be hard to generate interest with snow still on the ground, but maybe in another month or so. She wants to get a Kickstarter campaign going at the same time to generate excitement. Question: When will the project finish? Angela says that an initial phase should be completed by fall, and then if more money comes in, part two of the project could be completed for the following year. Other suggestions: Incorporate donated bricks into the design and plaques on the equipment. Have the first K class to enjoy the playground put their handprints in cement. Target incoming families at the K orientation coming up May 1st. A fundraising brainstorm meeting is a must.

**5. Budget Update – Lori Pescatore, Treasurer**

Lori was absent. The third grade Archeological Dig is no longer being funded. The AEF grant ran out two years ago. Our third grade teachers want to keep it, to supplement the colonial history curriculum. The cost is \$500 for both classes. An archaeologist comes in before school to set up a dig, roping off an area near the front circle and planting stuff for the kids to uncover: weathered glass, colonial nails, arrowheads, etc. The kids get a lesson, then do the digging and panning, and get to see how an archaeological dig works. Next year we can put the dig under Enrichment and adjust the budget as necessary. Those present voted unanimously to fund this year's dig.

**6. New Business/Proposals**

**a. Search for Communications Officer.**

On Lori's recommendation we are looking for someone to communicate PTO business: write up events for the Bugle, create a PTO newsletter, etc. Susan Goetcheus takes care of both the Peirce Directory and the website. We can see if she's interested before bringing on someone else. Molly says she'd be happy to help too.

**b. Library request.**

Mrs. T asked Angela about a membership in a Librarians' Guild. Membership would get her highly discounted books. Those present voted unanimously to add a maximum of \$100 to the budget for this membership.

### **Upcoming Dates**

March 4	Walk to School Wednesday
March 4	2nd Grade – Museum of Science: Bridge Program
March 13	Art Show
March 16	5th Grade – Museum of Science: States of Matter
March 31 - April 2	3rd & 4th Grades – MCAS Testing