

## **Thurston Middle School PTO General Meeting March 9, 2016**

Executive PTO Board Members in Attendance:

Allison Borchers, Principal

Suzanne Becker, Co-President

Alan Jacobson, Co-President

Apologies, unable to attend, Susan Linehan Secretary and Frank Vitiello, Treasurer

### **Welcome – Introduction of all attendees**

Suzanne Becker opened the meeting welcoming the attendees and all introduced themselves.

Suzanne Becker announced she would be taking the minutes of the meeting.

### **Approval of Previous PTO General Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from 9/29/15 TMS PTO General Meeting were unanimously approved.

### **Treasurer's Report**

In the absence of Frank Vitiello, Alan Jacobson presented the Treasurer's Report to the meeting. A copy of the PTO budget was distributed to all attendees. Alan discussed the highlights of the budget and made the point that our fundraising efforts have exceeded our expectations (dues and Apparel exceeded our budgeted amounts by a combined total of over \$6000). The Executive Board will discuss with TMS administration ways in which PTO funds may be used to help the school.

### **Principal's Report**

Allison Borchers welcomed parents to the meeting. Allison discussed the new Computer Science and Engineering course and PARCC/MCAS 2016.

Currently, the Computer Science and Engineering course is a ½ trimester (30 days) course for 6th, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. It uses a hands on, project based approach to learning and Allison gave an example of the "Crash Test Project" where students designed cars which transported a hard-boiled egg and crashed them. Students were tasked to work together where team members were given different responsibilities: design, safety, cost, etc., creating a real world experience. TMS Administration has submitted a proposal to make this a full trimester (60 day) course for ALL grades. This would require an additional teaching position and the realignment of other courses as follows: Health would be bumped out of its current rotation and would be moved to 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading. Health topics would be expanded in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and some topics would move to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Physical Education. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade Reading position would become a coaching position and this teacher would work with teachers to improve students' literacy skills and provide intervention support as well. The new trimester rotation would be Art/Drama/Computer Science and Engineering. All of this would need budget approval. Allison stressed that though this would be great to have, the current curriculum is working very well.

Allison also discussed PARCC/MCAS 2016. She explained how we got to PARCC: Districts had the choice of using PARCC or MCAS in 2015; WPS chose PARCC for grades 3-8; PARCC tests Math and Language Arts only and 8<sup>th</sup> graders also took the MCAS science test; WPS used the computer based format. She then discussed what we learned from PARCC testing: though it was a time bound test, the amount of time actually spent preparing for, administering, and troubleshooting the test was enormous! TMS Administration felt that the test interface was just not ready, nor was it intuitive. Results from the test actually took longer to get and information

provided was less than with MCAS results. She reported that the Mass Board of Education voted to move to MCAS 2.0 (most likely in 2018). They are currently developing new assessments and expect the format of the questions to be similar to PARCC questions. The state will select the vendor and the vendor will customize the test to MA curriculum. Districts who chose PARCC are required to continue with PARCC until MCAS 2.0 is released. There will be changes this year: Testing will take place from late April – May (instead of 2 testing periods of March and May like last year); TMS students will take a PAPER based test - students were polled and 2/3 said they would prefer to take a paper test and the remaining 1/3 was evenly split between preferring a computer based test and having NO preference. Evaluation of test results across the state show that performance was stronger among those districts that used the PAPER version of the test. Though very few parents asked that their children be allowed to opt out of PARCC, Allison stressed that a high participation rate is beneficial to our school district.

Allison also wanted to congratulate 8<sup>th</sup> Grade French teacher, Lily O'Brien, in her efforts on "Spread the Word to End the Word". TMS students took a pledge and signed a large poster in the cafeteria annex to stop using the word "retarded." This was extremely well received by the student body and Allison was very proud of the inclusive attitudes of the students!

### **Committee Reports**

**Hospitality** – Suzanne and Alan reported on behalf of co-chairs Peggy Zeuthen & Patty Spink. Our next Hospitality event will be Teacher Appreciation Week which starts May 2. Tuesday, May 3, is Teacher Appreciation Day and Peggy & Patty will be sending out more info as the dates near.

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Semi Formal** – Suzanne reported on behalf of chair Carol Berry. They have held 2 planning meetings so far and the next is scheduled for Thursday, March 31, at Carol's home, 413 Far Reach Road. VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!!! Please contact Carol at [cam8355@gmail.com](mailto:cam8355@gmail.com) to get involved.

**Fundraising** – Allison, Alan & Suzanne reported on our various fundraisers:

- *Comedy Night* – approximately \$4,000 was raised for the DC trip! A HUGE thank you to Kate Nee for organizing this hilarious event and to the Deamontopoulos family for donating the space! And, of course, thank you to all the parents who bought tickets 📺
- *Celtics* – 148 tickets were sold which raised \$1,480! Thank you to Kathleen Girard for organizing this event!
- *T-Shirts* – Additional 8<sup>th</sup> grade T-shirts will be sold – more info to go out to 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents soon. Students will be expected to wear these T-shirts on the DC Trip. Thank you to Patty Spink and Joanne Ouellette for organizing this!
- *Not Your Average Joe's Not Your Average Cause fundraiser* – TMS has been chosen for the month of April. Customers presenting the TMS flyer at NYAJ on every Tuesday in April will earn 15% for the TMS PTO. Watch out for the flyer later this month. Thank you to Suzanne Becker for organizing this fundraiser.
- *Apparel* – A HUGE thank you to the Apparel Committee: Joanne Ouelette, Angela Farrell, Bindu Thomas, Kathy Polvay, Ann D'Angio! This year's Apparel Fundraiser earned more than any in the past: we had hoped to raise \$2,000 but instead raised over \$5,500! And, of course, thank you to all the parents who purchased apparel – we all appreciate your support 📺

### **Officers for Next Year**

Alan and Suzanne reiterated the need for a secretary and co-president for the coming school year. Suzanne Becker will be ending her tenure as co-president and the new co-president will work with Alan and the rest of the board. Sue Linehan will be ending her tenure as secretary at the end of this school year. Please contact any board member if you are interested.

**Other Business**

There was no other business discussed.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM

**PTO Contact information**

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