

PTO Meeting – Full School

Tuesday, May 9, 2023 7:00 – 8:30PM

Bancroft Media Center & Virtual Google Meet

In Person Attendees: Stephanie Barry, RJ Johnson, Katie Carbone, Caity Castagna, Amy Hamilton, Katja Maravelias, Beth Leavitt

Virtual Attendees: Lise Singer, Carrie Wihbey

Agenda & Notes

Principal's Report

- ⇒ Beth asked to review what is remaining for the staff discretionary funds for the 2022-2023 school year so the staff can prepare year end potential purchases. Caity will email her a copy of the budget as it stands. The Communications team is going to add a standing item to the staff newsletter that reminds them of these reserved funds on a regular basis.
- ⇒ The Gaga Pit is showing some wear and tear with some minor warping in areas, what is the process for maintenance? Amy Hamilton reached out to former board member Amy Whitehead who oversaw that purchase; she confirmed that Andover Facilities (Janet Nicosia) is responsible for all maintenance and repairs going forward. Beth will ask Jordan to submit a work order.
 - Katja suggested the town have a regular review of all elementary school gaga pits as Sanborn and soon to be High Plain/Wood Hill may have similar issues.
- ⇒ The wooden platform area in the playground is a popular place for the older kids to sit and hang out during recess. Could we look into purchasing picnic tables for that space? The board is going to research after determining year end budget remaining.
- ⇒ Looking to put out a survey in August to get a feel for what kind of things parents are interested in volunteering for during the school day as well as participate in an all day Heritage celebration (extending the night event). This includes volunteering in the Maker Studio, as that will be returning to its normal space with the Math Coaches relocating to a soon to be unused 4th grade classroom (as the incoming class only requires four rooms).

- ⇒ Next year we want to look into hosting more Principal Game Nights as Books for Bingo was a big hit.

Completed Events Recap

- *Variety Show*

- ⇒ Stephanie and RJ reported on the event. While being smaller in size this year and held at Bancroft instead of the Collins Center, many preferred it this way.
- ⇒ 20 acts were able to perform in just under an hour with a great variety (musicians, singing, comedians, gymnastics, sister duos, etc). Performers sat in the front rows and supported their peers.
- ⇒ Going forward, even if the size of the show doubled, we believe Bancroft may be the preferred venue. Kids were more comfortable on their “home turf”.
- ⇒ Katja pointed out that the Collins Center may be under construction soon as part of the Andover High School project and wouldn’t be an option anyway.
- ⇒ Stephanie will have video of the full production up on the website soon; the screen displayed kids’ full names for each act and those need to be masked prior to posting online.

- *Staff Appreciation Week*

- ⇒ Lise spoke on behalf of the Bancroft staff and thanked everyone for their contributions during Staff Appreciation Week. They were very happy with the goodies and the lunch that fed them for several days 😊.

Upcoming Events

- *Spring Fling*

- ⇒ Coming up this Friday, the dance has over 350 attendees. Due to capacity, we will have to open the wall to the gymnasium. We’ll move dancing into that area and have tables and some open area in the gym. Decorations will spread into the gym as best as possible.
- ⇒ Beth asked that setup volunteers hold off on arriving until 1:30 to allow the custodians time to clean up after lunch. An email will be sent to volunteers with the time change after the meeting.
- ⇒ Beth was able to confirm with Mr. Rex that he will not be able to DJ the event as he has a previous commitment.

We will work on a playlist that runs automatically and Beth can lead the kids in a dance or two (YMCA, Cupid Shuffle?).

⇒ Carrie asked on behalf of the Parent to Parent committee how kids who need assistance can attend the Spring Fling. Stephanie said to just have them come, no need to sign up (if Carrie can provide numbers on Wednesday great, but it shouldn't be an issue even without adding to the totals). Bobcat to Bobcat (Anna Ryan and Nancy Modlish) can help with that initiative as well.

- *Book Fair*

⇒ Amy Hamilton provided an update from Christina on the Book Fair, coming up the week of May 15th.

⇒ Volunteers desperately needed, there are only three at this time. Caity pointed out that many parents are most likely waiting for the classroom schedule to be provided so they can volunteer for their child's classroom time. 13 teachers have signed up so far, Christina is waiting until that list is more complete. In the meantime the PTO will promote volunteer signups.

- *Wine Night*

⇒ Happening on May 17th, signups appear to be steady and it should be a fun parent social event.

- *Fun Run & Ice Cream Social*

⇒ We've confirmed with the town that the school is reserved the day of June 2nd. Full sundaes are being coordinated through APS Food Services, color coded beads by grade will be handed out to participants as they run laps to create a keepsake from the event.

⇒ Beth confirmed that Mr. Rex will be unable to DJ the event due to a scheduling conflict. Stephanie will let Kate know and we can investigate alternatives. Katja mentioned there was an APS student in the past that had volunteered at some events and it would be worth looking into whether or not he was still active.

⇒ We discussed whether or not it would be viable to move this event in the future to the school day and make it a full school field day, similar to what other elementary schools in the district do. The 4th and 5th grade do have their offsite Track & Field district day, and it was unclear whether or not the 3rd grade class field day that occurred last year was a regular tradition (Beth will check in with the staff again at the next meeting). Other grades have

“end of year” parties that could resemble a field day but isn’t official. The downside to moving the Fun Run to the school day is we promote it as a family event, and working parents/siblings in other schools wouldn’t be able to participate. We’ll look into it further over the summer, maybe a hybrid option is a possibility.

- *Fifth Grade Graduation*

- ⇒ Stephanie will be providing decorations for the stage during the ceremony, some outdoor decorations in the main entrance area, and a cake for 150-200 attendees directly after the ceremony.
- ⇒ Siblings of the kids moving on will be able to attend the ceremony but not the outdoor celebration after.
- ⇒ There is a bit of a gap in between the end of the ceremony and the start of the offsite party. RJ and Katja are looking into moving up the time to 11:30am.
- ⇒ We need to confirm the start time (traditionally 9:30).
- ⇒ Looking into the ETA on yearbooks to see if it would be possible to have the teachers trade piles and have every child sign every yearbook to promote equity. In the past that hasn’t been possible as they are received very close (or sometimes ON) graduation day.

Doherty Community Fridge

- ⇒ Carrie provided an update on the status of the Doherty Community Fridge. She is currently looking for people to help, working on spreading the word to parents, and specifically giving kids community service opportunities (cleaning, restocking, spreading the word).
- ⇒ She needs a sign up for these initiatives – Stephanie said the PTO can help with that and will reach out separately.
- ⇒ Approved for building by the end of June before available funds expire, a structure similar to the one in Ballardvale will be constructed near Doherty Middle School/Youth Center/Senior Center, allowing for easy access by bus. It will be available 24/7.

Field Trips

- ⇒ Emily DiCesaro has been in charge of coordinating grade-level field trips but will be aging out this year. We added a Field Trip Coordinator position to the 2023-2024 PTO Positions SUG during the meeting.

- ⇒ Beth would like us to reconsider the structure of how this is done in the future. While it has worked out well as it stands, teachers are interested in having more of a hand in coordination of the field trips, tying them into current curriculum. There would still be the need for a parent coordinator, but the trip selection would fall more into the teacher's hands. This method was well received and we will look into that further.
- ⇒ The Kindergarten class trip to the Children's Museum is coming up in June – kids are super excited for it, however there are 6 Bridge students that the long distance trip and stimulation provided on site would not be appropriate for. Beth wants to give them an alternative field trip at Smolak Farms – 6 kids, 8 staff, \$140 in tickets and an additional cost for the van transportation. Board members in attendance approved the additional field trip and that will be factored into future planning as well.

2023-2024 School Year Prep

- *Room Parent Changes*

- ⇒ We are reducing room parent slots down to two next year for each class and are doing away with the head room parent concept. It worked well during COVID and immediately following when there were restrictions on who and how many individuals could enter the classroom, but those restrictions don't exist any longer and there is far too much confusion with 5-7 room parents in each classroom.
- ⇒ Beth proposed a new method for determining room parents. Classroom teachers will send home an info sheet that the PTO will develop ("job description") that will ask parents to sign and return it if they are interested in being a room parent. Teachers will select two room parents each, coordinating with the main office to ensure no parent is acting as room parent for more than one child at a time. They'll report back to us with the contact information; if we can get it into the directory in time for printing great, if not we'll provide an insert.
- ⇒ Board members in attendance agreed this was a good plan and could be altered from the SUG we traditionally release in the summer, instead we'll clearly communicate the changes to parents in advance. We will delay the room

parent orientation that traditionally happens before the start of the school year to mid-September.

- ⇒ Stephanie will also work on publishing room parent guidelines on the website for regular reference.
- *Positions Sign Up Status*
 - ⇒ Sign ups have been going well. All board positions are filled with the exception of Fundraising Chair (Caroline and Katie may know interested parties) and Community Awareness Chair (will follow up with Jayashree at a later time).
 - ⇒ Stephanie is working on a template to distribute to those who have filled a board position this year or in the past, or volunteered to run an event, that will allow us to build a handbook of sorts on the website for new people to reference when they take over.
- *Budget Tracking*
 - ⇒ Over the summer we're going to work on building a new budget template that will build out committed but unpaid spend, to allow more insight into what budget is remaining mid-year despite payments not having been made yet.
- *Open Forum*
 - ⇒ Amy mentioned that Learning Labs may need new coordinators next year if Judy and Karen don't continue. Hannah (who helped us with the door this year) may be interested. Amy is going to put together a blurb on what the role entails and Beth will put it in her next staff newsletter to assess
 - ⇒ Mindy O'Neil will be retiring at the end of the year, however she would like to stay on as Cultural Arts Coordinator on behalf of the PTO. Beth hasn't heard back from IT about whether or not her account can remain active for email purposes; the PTO can provide her with an email address, Stephanie can walk Mindy through forwarding historical info to that address so she doesn't lose anything when the account is disabled.