



General Meeting Minutes for the 2008 -- 2009 Academic School Year
September 9, 2008 ~ Wilkins School Library ~ 7:30 p.m.

PTA *Board Members* in attendance:

Co-President: Christine Poisson
Secretary: Jil Romano
Treasurer: Michele Donoghue

PTA *Board Members* absent: Krista Hanks, Co-President

PTA Total *Members* in attendance: 26

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 p.m.

President's Report

- Pledge of Allegiance.
- Introduction of everyone in attendance.
- Commended Gerry St. Amand on the preparation of a great start for the new school year.
- Reviewed the Fall and Winter PTA committees. Some specific reports from committee chairs are described in these minutes.

Secretary's Report

The committee chairs received copies of the May 2007 -- 2008 minutes via Email a week prior to the September 2008 -- 2009 general meeting. Copies were also available at the September general meeting. The May minutes were reviewed. Jil Romano requested a motion to receive the minutes. Jil Romano moved to accept the minutes. Gail Jordan seconded the motion. The May minutes were accepted.

PTA Committee Chair Needed for the 2008–2009 School Year

The PTA currently has a committee chair position open for **Staff Appreciation** at AMS (Amherst Middle School). Staff Appreciation is a program sponsored by the National PTA which plans events for the teachers and staff during the year. In the past there has been a Fall breakfast, a mid-Winter lunch, and Teacher Appreciation week in May. Please consider lending your time and talent as an Amherst PTA Committee Chair. This an opportunity to become involved in a great organization dedicated to the success of children and the support of our teachers and staff.

The **Magazine Drive** chair people are looking for “shadows” to chair this committee for the 2009-2010 school year. This committee event has historically been the biggest PTA fundraiser, which makes most of the PTA sponsored programs and events possible. Students collect orders from family, friends, and relatives. The committee is responsible for the accounting, processing, and filing of magazine orders for students and teachers. By mid-September, preparations are being made for the drive but most of the work is done the first two weeks of October. The Magazine Drive itself lasts two weeks.

If you are interested in either of these opportunities or have any questions, please contact Jil Romano at 673-7980 or jilmarc@comcat.net for a complete job description.

Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Treasurer's report were available at the September general meeting. Michele Donoghue, PTA Treasurer started with requesting to close the 2007 - 2008 academic year financial statements. Michele requested a motion to receive the budget and Gretchen Pyles second the motion. Michele Donoghue reviewed the two financial statements for the "non-academic" months of July and August. The July 30, 2008 budget reported "income" received. Michele Donoghue requested a motion to accept the budget and Irene Raissis Alton second the motion. August 31, 2008 also reported and captured income. Ellen Roos-Unger requested a motion to accept the budget. Aileen Farris second the motion.

Treasurer also noted some new budget changes. For example, the Magazine Drive revenue will be based on the way it is being billed instead of the PTA receiving all of the money up front; the PTA will just report the profit. Original Art profit may go down from last year due to lack of school support. PTA Play expenses will increase because of the additional related costs for the production of Peter Pan.

Principal's Report

Gerry St. Amand -- Clark & Wilkins Schools

Renovations update: Last June 20th all faculty returned to Clark and Wilkins to pack up everything in their classrooms and couldn't return back to school until the Saturday before school started. With exception to a few classrooms needing a lot of work it was never approached to Mr. St. Amand to delay the start of school. Some highlights of the renovations were that: asbestos has been removed, sprinkler system installed, all windows were replaced, drop lighting existing in the Wilkins library will be installed in all room space and eventually in Clark, and storage space has been expanded. Additionally, the cafeteria now has two serving lines which has expedited lunch service. A 4,000 gallon oil tank is replacing a fairly small existing tank. Library automation has been approved. All of the books have been entered into the system and this process will be finished by June.

First day of school opening at Clark and Wilkins went well. Mr. St. Amand recognized all the parents for not having a meet and greet before school started and realized that it was difficult for families. He indicated that we will still be under construction next year and doesn't know if that will impact next year's meet and greet, which is typically held over the summer.

Late Start. What did they do today? Twelve different groups of teachers that were mixed and balanced read articles looking at the human side of information. Recognizing that initial data in and of itself means nothing . . . it is only when we put it together with human interpretation results are measured.

There is a lot of thinking about assessing data:

- What people already have for opinions about reading.
- Protocols need a leadership team to process groups which requires going through reading in a specific way that everyone follows effectively.
- Willing to be disturbed.
- Thinking outside our box and biases.
- The one we should listen to the most is the one we want to listen to the least.

Mr. St. Amand explained that his faculty can't do all professional development after school. He will continue to have staff meetings with one per month focusing on staff development. With late start, topics can get addressed and he is very excited about it! Late start was implemented instead of early release because MVVS was already on that schedule.

The turn-out for before school care that is provided for late start was less than anticipated based on responses from parents who received a survey last spring inquiring as to whether or not they would use this complimentary/free service during the academic school year as we pilot this program.

Terms: DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a standardized assessment for all kindergartners and first graders, including 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders. NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association) is an individualized computerized testing assessment for reading and mathematics taken by students in grades 2nd through 8th. This testing is regarded highly by teachers because score results are available quickly, which helps teachers group students according to their learning levels. Kindergarten is also grouping children based on learning levels.

NECAP (the New England Common Assessment Program) testing in the areas of reading and mathematics will be underway in October. The purpose of this testing is to determine whether our schools are meeting adequate yearly progress. Every other year, 4th graders take the national assessment of progress. No feedback on individual performance is ever released.

The volunteer program is important to Clark and Wilkins and your help is needed. Please consider lending your time to the schools.

Porter Dodge -- Amherst Middle School

Absent. No report.

School Board

Peg Bennett -- SAU#39 PTA Representative

Praised the PTA for raising \$38,000 for teacher grants.

The School Board is working on setting its goal(s) for the current school year. The process began in August and will continue at a mid-September meeting. Peg will share the Board's goal(s) with the PTA at the October meeting. The budget process will begin in October. It is a lengthy process that involves the administration, the School Board, and members of the Ways and Means committee. The budget will be built based on the educational needs of the district and will be presented to the tax payers at a public hearing in January.

First "late start" of the school year was today. Everyone had a great start rolling out a schedule for the teachers analyzing and implementing programs based on the data they collected. Teachers are learning to understand and analyze data better, which helps address needs of the students better.

Renovations: Considerable amount of work was completed over the summer. "We are ready to go for advanced technology down-the-road. Very exciting!" Next summer is the third phase (e.g., renovating offices). AMS renovated the gym and storage areas, including putting in an enormous freezer. Also constructed an area in the back of the existing administrative offices to add three more offices.

Bean Fields for land developed for more sports fields was opened in August 2008.

Committee Reports

Magazine Drive

Historically it is the largest PTA fund raiser involving students from AMS and Wilkins (2nd - 4th grade). Fund raising is ongoing throughout the year, but kick-off starts in September through October. Currently looking for chair "shadows" for the 2009 -- 2010 school year.

Family Science Day

New chair person, Jane Sodders appreciated the PTA chair folder packet to get her started with the event. She currently has good topic ideas and is planning two sessions on a Saturday for two hours each providing all kinds of experiments for parents and kids. Her committee is focusing on hands-on demonstrations for the event.

Family Info Night

Progressing well for Monday, September 15th. Looks like if everyone shows we will have 17 tables of people participating. Even a clown and face painting. Everything is on task.

Membership

Karen Oates manages the student directory and Cheryl Forster manages the OMDR database of all members. Their distribution goal for the directory is mid-October, but it will definitely be distributed no later than the end of October. In order to meet this deadline, they have to cut off membership applications Friday, September 12th as indicated on the membership form.

So far their database shows 465 returning members, 153 new members and 100 or so that were members that Cheryl and Karen have not received yet. They are hopeful those 100 or so will dribble in this week.

OMDR database will be uploaded in the next couple of weeks when full membership is completed in an effort to avoid confusion of multiple uploads.

Reflections Committee

This year's theme is "Wow!" For those of you unfamiliar with Reflections, it is an Arts program designed to give students a forum to showcase their talents in six areas: photography, literature, visual arts, dance choreography, musical composition, and film production. All students grades K-12 can participate.

Co-chairs Wendy Conway and Shelly Kayser have met to discuss and revise rules for this year's program to make it simpler for parents and students to enter. They are preparing a display board and samples of student artwork for PTA Info Night on September 15th and will have entry forms and rules available. All forms will also be posted on the Amherst PTA website by the beginning of next week. Forms will not be in the school offices this year. The reason is an effort to become more "green." They would like to encourage parents and students to retrieve their forms online. Next year, Reflections will be conducting the bulk of their registration/submissions online, so they would like to start getting in the habit of utilizing the website.

They will have an info session prior to the October PTA meeting on October 14th at 7pm where parents can get entry and rules forms and we can answer any questions. Volunteers are needed to help on the committee with judging night in December and also for set up and clean up at the ceremony on January 8th. Contact Wendy 672-5679 (mconway0427@comcast.net) or Shelly 673-6457 (skayser@hughes.net) if you would like to volunteer.

All entries this year are due to your school office one month earlier from last year -- December 3, 2008. The National PTA office has altered their due dates which in turn effects the state and local levels.

Book Fair

In November, Ellen Roos-Unger works with Kathleen McIntyre, Wilkins School Librarian for the Fall book fair. In May, there is a writing festival (which includes works from all students from Clark and Wilkins) and a great selection of books for sale. Need volunteers please!

Holiday Story Time

It is a wonderful time for families to gather in the multi-purpose room at Clark School in early December to enjoy listening to holiday stories of all cultures. These stories are read by school principals, teachers, town librarians, and other community members. Delicious goodies and hot chocolate is offered too.

Chili Cook-Off

Being held on Sunday, February 8th. Cherina Cohen mentioned that she and her committee will start planning details of the event later in the year. It will be a lot of fun and she'll be seeking sponsors from the community to cook up their chili.

Playbill

The play this year is Peter Pan! The chair people will be asking a bunch of companies to buy ads for the playbill to help support the fund raising efforts for the play. More details will be provided each month as they move closer to the event, which is held in April 2009.

Original Art

Spring fund raiser program that offers children to display their talent in visual arts. Parents can purchase their children's art for themselves, family, and friends. This year, students at Wilkins will not be able to work on their art pieces at school, but Clark students will. However, Wilkins students can still participate and are encouraged to do so from home. Siblings of Clark and Wilkins students can be submitted and purchased too!

PTA Play Producer

No report. Help with the overall production will be provided.

Bellringer

Monthly newsletters that goes out to the schools. The deadline for publishing is on the 15th of each month.

Staff Appreciation -- Clark and Wilkins

The first staff appreciation is scheduled for September 17th. Cherina is really excited and plans to add a lot fun ideas to the program.

New Business

Nothing to report.

Adjournment

Christine Poisson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Aileen Farris seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Submitted by:

Jil Romano

Secretary

Next Meeting: October 13, 2008 @ 7:30 p.m. Wilkins Library

Contact Information

PTA Board ~ ptaboard@amherstpta.org

Bellringer Newsletter ~ ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu