

March 12, 2010
Mamaroneck High School

PT Council Minutes

Meeting was called to order by President Cindy Habig at 9:20am.

- I. 2/8/10 Minutes Approved.
- II. PT Council Announcements (Cindy)
 - a. WEPR PTA Newsletter article featured Murray's Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) program.
 - b. A list of MTA Representatives for each building was sent out via email this morning by Cindy.
 - c. Central Visit – rescheduled date to be determined (maybe April 19th)
 - d. Membership payments due to NYS PTA by 3/31; return unused membership cards to WEPR membership Chair (don't throw them out).
 - e. SEPTA Announcements (Cecilia): Special Edition for March 2010 has been released. The shopping benefit at Lord and Taylor for SEPTA is April 15th. Tickets are \$5. Lord and Taylor can get crowded but if you shop during that week, they will put the merchandise aside and hold it for the 15th when you can use your discount.
- III. Murray – Jennifer Monaco
Highlighting 3 Initiatives at Murray: Spirit of Collaboration
 - a. Parents as Reading Partners (PARP): Parents, teachers and faculty build a partnership between home and school to foster the joy of families reading together.
 - i. Four week program – over 400 students participated. 15 minutes of reading per day gives the reader one link. The goal was to reach 5000 links. The goal was reached.
 - ii. Program included a kickoff assembly, guest readers and pajama day and it culminated in the Principals Challenge at the end. Links were hung around the school which created a lot of excitement as everyone saw them build each day.

- iii. Outcome: increased reading and conversation at home, strengthened home-school connection, generated school spirit and was a great collaboration between parents, teachers, administrators and students.
 - b. Building Bridges: increase the knowledge and understanding of people with different abilities.
 - i. Committee was made up of parents and administrators using input via grade level meetings. It mirrored the Central School program with some small changes. The cost was between \$2000-\$3000.
 - ii. K-5 program (1 week) with a different, age appropriate focus for each grade. There were in class lessons and in class activities as well as assemblies. One highlight was the Mamaroneck High School students (with learning disabilities) who came to speak to the 5th graders.
 - iii. Outcome: Very positive feedback, created additional conversations and lessons in class. Some teachers even taught additional lessons. Planning for next year has already started and they would like to expand it to lessons in physical education, library and music.
 - c. Building Goal for Murray this year – Americana. “What is an American?”
 - i. Based on an MSF Grant which centered on learning American Folk traditions through art, music, library and performing arts, Murray faculty decided to continue the theme through social studies and build a curriculum around this idea. The grant funded the performances but there was no additional expense in the classrooms aside for some reading supplements.
 - ii. The Social Studies Committee created a curriculum through various forms including class work, reading buddies, grade level projects and assemblies. They also collaborated with the PTA to extend the theme to PTA projects like Art Appreciation (where the students are studying Norman Rockwell and Georgia O’Keefe). Bi-monthly updates are given to the parents so they know what their children are working on.

- iii. Outcome: Culture shift among teachers (more sharing among teachers to find out what each class was doing), teachers were also more aware of what was being taught in Specials (art, music, etc.) since they coordinated with their class work more, there was a common focus and common professional dialogues and the children were really excited about what they were learning.

IV. District Business (Linnet Tse)

- a. Superintendent Conference Day is Thursday, March 18th. Jonathan Saffier will be speaking about assessments (APPR) in the Hommocks Auditorium at 8:30.
- b. Superintendent Search: the search is on-track and an announcement will be made soon. An Advisory Panel (including Cindy, Melany, Ann Borsellino, Seth Weitzman, Annie Ward and a couple of elementary school parents) are very excited about the caliber of the candidates. After the announcement, there will be an entry plan that will include the new superintendent meeting with small groups to become more familiar with the schools, etc.
- c. Budget: Paul Fried and his staff continued their work on the budget after their last meeting in February. Meryl has now looked at the revenue side in more detail. Right now the budget to budget increase is about 2.1% and the tax rate is in the mid 3% range (decrease due to revenue).
- d. Teachers may come to the table after the budget has been presented on March 16th. There is a way to give back (to restore positions and programs) without having to open the contract. There may be a scenario where teachers suggest concessions but in the long run, these may not be good for the district so the district will have to say no. This has to be communicated correctly to the public so people can understand the long term implications.
- e. Communication is really important. By starting the process earlier it helped people digest the information better. However there are still a lot of voters in the district who don't really understand. Linnet met with a group of parents who think that we should go straight to Contingency right away. Some people think that we will be more efficient if we're "bare bones" but, Linnet explained that that will take away the whole framework that has been put in place over the years. This really has to be communicated to the voters.

V. Elementary School Trips

- a. Melany presented an overview of key considerations for parents/PTAs funding field trips. PT Council could sponsor a fund raiser to fund elementary field trips if there were sufficient interest. Dr. Fried has suggested that attention needs to be paid to assure that all schools have at least some basic field trip experiences before more elaborate trips (such as a trip to Philadelphia) are planned at some schools.
- b. Murray and Chatsworth Co-Presidents report that Principals are collecting information about field trips currently taken by each grade, with details about costs to parents and which trips are valued most by teachers.
- c. All four elementary schools currently provide scholarships to families; some schools have seen a significant increase in need. It was suggested that the schools could get more creative about bringing the enriching experiences that field trips offer students, perhaps by taking trips closer to home and/or bringing presenters to the school rather than students to a museum or other facility.
- d. The units were asked to consider what is valued and how they would determine that. Suggestions included a parent survey and a request that teachers prioritize existing trips, with a view towards developing a budget. Co-presidents will work with their principals to sort this out for each school. Cindy suggested that at some point, a meeting of elementary Co-Presidents and Principals might make sense.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30am.

Respectfully submitted,
Lori Herbsman

In Attendance:

PTC: Cindy Habig, Co-President, Melany Gray, Co-President; Lori Herbsman, Secretary; Laurie Lee

MHS: Sherri Rozansky, Co-President

Central: Jennifer Malherbe Co-President

Chatsworth: Joan Capaldi, Co-President

Mamaroneck Avenue: Lisa Boren, Jennifer Vaccaro, Co-Presidents

Murray Avenue: Ann LoBue, Tracy Owen, Co-Presidents
SEPTA: Amy Lieberman, Cecilia Absher, Co-Presidents
District: Debbie Manetta, Director of Communications
Guests: Linnet Tse, Jennifer Monaco