

Exploris PTO Meeting
August 13, 2013
1:30 pm – 2:35 pm

Meeting called to order at 1:30 pm by PTO president Cheryl Rodgers. Those in attendance: Cheryl Rodgers, Donna Orlowski, Mae Mohamed, Kellie Davis, Susan Bostian, Laura Corder, Khristi Tomlinson, Virginia Jurkin, David Wisz, Summer Clayton, Karen Rose, Christine Hutchens, and Sandi Long.

David Wisz motioned to approve the PTO meeting minutes from May 17, 2103. Laura Corder seconded the motion; and motion was carried to approve meeting minutes.

Past Events

David Wisz reported that the last workday went well and was fairly well attended. Working in the basement was a priority to prepare the space for Mary Margaret and Bill's new class. The space looks good and the overall facility looked good for the first day of school. Summer suggested making an ongoing list of jobs with a sign-up since many smaller tasks can be done with a drop-in visit instead of having to wait for the next scheduled weekend workday. Many options for accomplishing this were mentioned, but the process to be put in place is still in the idea stages and the issue will be addressed in the near future. The next workday is scheduled for September 28th.

Meet the Teacher seemed to be a success and was very busy. The first session seemed to be better attended instead of the 2nd session (opposite of last year). The general feeling was that it was more organized than last year. The 6th grade parents in attendance agreed that there were people in place to greet them as they came in the door and the class assignments on the front door were very helpful. Summer mentioned a few families who came during the break between sessions when the teachers and volunteers were not there. It was agreed that communication about the times of the sessions was clear. It was mentioned that it was great to have students at the club tables.

Upcoming Events

Japanese exchange students: Cheryl questioned whether or not it would be good to include more of the Exploris families in the week's activities, but with Summer's input it was decided to keep things small and intimate so the exchange students would feel they are the focus.

Pass the Hat: Summer explained to the parents, primarily new parents, that while charter schools are funded with public money, Exploris has a deficit from paying for facilities and utilities, which schools in the public system do not have to do. Therefore pass the hat is necessary to make up for this deficit. There was also a discussion about whether or not to use "donors choose" during pass the hat where SAS and other companies donate items from specific vendors. It was discussed if it would be better if they would write a check instead of receiving goods, but perhaps it could be beneficial if more research was put into the items asked for. It was also discussed that it would be beneficial to be deliberate in taking advantage of the donor match during the first week of the campaign.

Curriculum Night: Schedule for September 10th; time to be determined. Summer would like to see a staggered time schedule for this event due to parking limitations.

Picture Day: Scheduled for September 10th. With Mary Margaret so busy this year with her class,

Cheryl asked if any parent volunteers would be needed for the event, but Summer did not think so and will ask in the future if she feels they will need assistance.

Annual Fall Picnic: More information will be coming in the near future. There will be a general PTO meeting at 6 pm at the picnic for the first time this year. As a result of feedback about the daytime not being the best time to hold PTO meetings, more evening meetings have been scheduled this year. A comment was made about poor teacher attendance at the fall picnic. Summer will encourage the teachers to come. A request for better communication/map about the reserved shelter(s) was made and some agreed it was hard to find last year. Summer mentioned that the teachers do not necessarily feel a part of the PTO and perhaps is why their attendance has been low in the past; they do recognize and appreciate that they are the focus of the PTO. The teacher role in the PTO was discussed and several ideas were brought about to improve it, and also the idea was discussed that it is not necessarily bad the way it functions currently. Cheryl thought it would be a good idea for the PTO president to speak to the teachers at the teacher breakfast next year, as in years past, so they would feel they are the focus of the PTO.

Early Release: First early release of the school year is August 27th; dismissal time is noon. There will be a teacher luncheon that day (Karen Benjamin chairing event). The hospitality volunteers will be donating food and helping on that day. There was a discussion about the change in the mandatory number of hours for the school year. Exploris increased the number of hours this year to 1025 versus increasing the number of days in the school year from 180 to 185. There are extra hours built into the calendar to accommodate weather delays and early release days.

New Business

Susan Bostian – Cultural Arts: Susan has attended one artist event and plans to attend a second this coming weekend at Wakefield High to speak with artists regarding programs/events for the school year. There are grants available but the criterion is stringent, so she feels only trying to obtain one is feasible. She would like to schedule one event as a large project where the bulk of the CA budget will go, and then use smaller local options for the rest of the budgeted money. She will narrow down the options and present them to the teachers. Summer suggested she talk to Jamie for direction in order to coordinate with the curriculum as much as possible. Susan also mentioned she also wanted to include Eugene in the loop and make choices that would help with all global arts if possible.

Approval of Meeting Minutes: We will be moving to an online minute approval system, Doodle.com, for upcoming meeting minutes. The PTO board approves the minutes, but it would be beneficial for all who attended the meetings to be able to see them and make comments/corrections. A sheet was passed out explaining the new procedure. It was decided to post the minutes and budget sheets for parents to see. The minutes will be approved sooner using this system instead of waiting until the next meeting to review them.

Forms for Receiving/Requesting Funds: New forms are in place for receiving or requesting funds. They are in the forms download section on the PTO website.

Dances/Frolic: The dates have not been determined for this year's school dances due to scheduling challenges at the PNC Arena (with Carolina Hurricanes). They will be announced at a later time. It is important to set up the date for the frolic as soon as possible.

Volunteer List: Will get the volunteer list generated from the parent participation information and

distributed to the committee chairs.

Budget - Christine Hutchens: A copy of last school year's budget and the current budget was passed around. The sources of income so far this year has been from spirit wear, passive fundraising, and expenses have been primarily for copies for the Meet the Teacher event.

Lunches: Math classes may have overlapping grades in them this year, and therefore lunch times had to be shifted some. It would be helpful to have this information on the blog for parents. We plan to poll the parents about lunch choices later in the fall.

Carpool: A discussion about carpool included no suggestions for improving the new sign-up/mapping procedures. Also discussed encouraging parents not to park on Hillsborough Street on the same side as the school during carpool. Khristi offered to make a colored map to clearly state requested carpool procedures.

Directory: A suggestion was made about having school directories. We will have to make sure people have the opportunity to opt out if they wish; hopefully this is on Mary Margaret's "to do" list when she has time.

A question was raised about the possibility of having other group activities for the students other than dances. Some ideas were discussed, and may be considered at a later date.

Principal's Report – Summer Clayton

Summer spoke briefly about the upcoming curriculum night and pass the hat. There are plans for an "Exploris 101" orientation at curriculum night, and it would be good to have spirit wear and laptops available for parents to sign up for the PTO blog.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, September 22 at 6 pm during the fall picnic at Pullen Park.