

2011-2012 PTO EXECUTIVE BOARD  
COLFAX A.L.A.

**MINUTES**  
**AUGUST 2, 2011 PTO-EB MEETING**

This meeting of the 2011-2012 Colfax A.L.A. PTO Executive Board was held at 7:30 pm at Abbie Campsie's house. Jenny Ganger led the meeting and distributed a written agenda. Present were:

President Jenny Ganger  
Co-VP Communications Sarah Sirlin  
VP Events Abbie Campsie  
Co-VP Fundraising Sukanya Srinivasan  
Co-VP Fundraising Tamara Dubowitz  
VP Volunteer Coordinators Mark Beck  
Assistant Treasurer Ellie Monaco  
Secretary Margie Minkler  
Teacher Representative Tony Woods  
Principle Adam Sikorski

State Budget Cuts and Colfax. (Adam) Adam reviewed the effects of the state budget changes on Colfax in order to explore how the PTO can help.

Only two educational staff have been cut, paraprofessionals whose primary roles have been teachers' aides for the kindergarten, helping with lunch/recess and some administrative functions. Over-all, the school is in good shape with money per child, at \$6,000 per child for all necessary supplies. Money received through Medicaid for the completion of time sheets (by teachers for Medicaid's study?) has helped.

So, for general supplies and the basics, Colfax is in good shape. Where the school struggles is having money for extra programs, i.e., getting title I money that other schools get. (Allocation is based on high need, meaning > 35% of students are eligible for school lunches; our school has 32-33% eligibility.)

How can the PTO help? We could raise money, but have to wait and see how this would be useful. PTO cannot hire staff and cannot buy supplies so that the supplies money may go toward salaries. Federal regulations require that money given for supplies is used for supplies. We could try to recruit more parent volunteers, especially for kindergarten rooms and lunch. However, not every teacher finds this helpful. As a reading specialist, Mark will help with ideas for volunteers. We may add a flyer recruiting kindergarten parent volunteers to be distributed to families during their children's first small group interviews. We can also email teachers and ask which of them want volunteers, so that a useful connection may be better facilitated.

New Bus Procedure. Adam briefly reviewed the new procedure for buses.

1. Communications. (Sarah)

a. Newsletter. Sarah passed out an information sheet describing the year's plan:

- There will be five issues of the Communicator this year.
- Every issue will be printed and distributed at the end of the month
- Deadlines will be as firm as possible so that all contributions are timely. [Sarah will email a reminder to everyone about the approaching deadline, and then deadlines will be final.]
- **Content deadlines for each issue:**
  - September 16** (to be distributed on October 3)  
This issue will include requests for volunteers.
  - November 16** (to be distributed on December 1)
  - January 17** (to be distributed on February 1)
  - March 15** (to be distributed on April 2)
  - May 16** (to be distributed on June 1)
- Each issue should include a letter from the PTO by Jenny and a letter from Adam. Sarah and Camille would also like every issue to include an article/report from each committee covering an event that has already passed and announcing an upcoming activity/event/goal.

b. PTO Teacher Handbook. (Jenny, Adam) This handbook was created to address last year's difficulties with teacher requests for and letting teachers know of the available PTO funds, especially for field trips. A copy was passed around for everyone's review.

c. Directory. The PTO will provide the office with school directory forms to be sent home to each family with the room assignments mailing.

d. Website/FaceBook. Is it useful to have the 6 day calendar created again? It is probably useful if someone will volunteer to do it. Lee Winston did it last year and will be asked to do it again if she is around. If not, we will try to recruit another person.

e. Yahoo Group. Should we change it to Facebook? This will be left up to Camille.

2. Events. (Abbie, Jenny)

a. Centennial. (Jenny) The Centennial celebration is not a PTO event; it is being run by Lisa Chotiner. The event will be held October 15 from 3-6:00 p.m., with dessert. Lisa sent out the invitation/flyer, which contained only general information. Jenny has committed the PTO to handle the fundraising part of the event. So far, this includes the sale of art tiles, which will be designed by the purchasers, then put on permanent display at Colfax after the event. Jenny will be in charge of the tiles. It is unclear if there will be other fundraising activities,

but if so, PTO will be in charge of them. PTO fundraising people may be need at the event.

b. Fiesta. Fiesta is still on in its traditional form, as a community building event, separate from Centennial. It will be held Thursday September 8.

c. Halloween Event? (Abbie) Abbie expressed interest in having a bigger Halloween celebration during the school day for the kids, with possible costume contests, some Halloween offerings or celebrations in the cafeteria, and a focus on involving the middle level students. Several objections were raised including: religious implications/ objections to the celebration of Halloween, complications with Halloween costumes, and the amount of sweets involved in Halloween activities. Two board members also expressed a desire to limit spending of PTO funds to educational activities. Adam objected to having costumes at all, unless strictly based on a non-Halloween education theme, such as vocabulary or vegetable parade. A school wide celebration could be held, but with a fall festival or educational theme. Abbie was not interested in developing special events around the fall festival theme.

d. Winter Teacher Appreciation Lunch. (Jenny) Jenny raised the idea of treating the winter teachers' appreciation lunch as an "event," so it would not be left under the charge of the volunteer coordinator (this year only Mark.) No decision was made.

e. Other. Will there be family fun nights? Maybe an events committee? We will ask for volunteers at the first PTO general meeting and see where interests lie.

3. Volunteers. (Mark) This year we have only Mark managing volunteers.

a. Homeroom representative plan. Mark will begin by having a homeroom rep. sign-up sheet in each class room on Back to School Night, and then he will contact each of the volunteer representatives.

b. Volunteer database plan. The database was moderately successful last year. Please use it. The parents interested in volunteering are divided by category and grade. Sometimes email addresses may not be accurate- we could hand out Mark's email address on Back to School Night so individuals can email him from their correct address directly.

4. Back to School Night, August 25. This is an opportunity for us to recruit volunteers and publicize the PTO. Jenny will give an introductory speech during Adam's presentation. We will also leave PTO information/volunteer sheets in the teacher's classrooms (and have a table outside of the gym (?)).

5. Treasury Report, Review. A copy of the current 11/12 Budget was passed out. Jenny requested and Adam agreed to make 2 minutes available for a PTO

representative to speak to teachers about the grant request forms at the teacher/staff day on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

6. Fundraising. (Tamara, Sukanya)

a. Edible school yard report. Rachel Rosenfeld will be holding an edible school yard meeting. Regarding funding: The numbers have been reworked and to have E.S.Y. at the same capacity as last year will require \$6400 (last year's cost was \$10,000.) Grow Pittsburgh is contributing some money. We have applied for a grant requesting \$5000, but don't know if we will get it. Should the PTO cover whatever costs remain with enrichment money, from our savings? Jenny and Tamara think "yes." We previously discussed giving \$1800 under the reduced services plan, but the whole PTO needs to vote on the new expenditure. Our first meeting is not until September 14, and Grow Pittsburgh needs to know by the first week in September. Our plan will be: ask Josh from Grow Pittsburgh to wait until the end of September for our commitment. The EB will provide general notice that a vote on this issue will be held at the September PTO meeting, and then conduct the vote at that first meeting. We want a long term sustained program with a plan for the PTO to pay the uncovered amount each year. Left open: should we push for expansion of the program for higher grades?

b. Party For Play plans. (Sukanya) Sukanya will present a slide show at the first PTO meeting and recruit volunteers for the P4P committee. Sukanya and Jenny are hoping to raise \$20,000 through this year's event.

Location: Sukanya is exploring alternative sites in response to mixed feedback on the golf club. (At least one person viewed golf clubs as historically exclusionary and/or racist, and so discouraging for minorities wanting to attend the event.) So far the PAA, Bigelow Center, University Club are being explored but none sound really promising. A Homewood location was mentioned as possibly less exclusive, but rejected as not solving the problems - very little of our student body is from Homewood, in contrast to Squirrel Hill or the East Hills, and Homewood may be a place many are reluctant to travel to for an event. Many board members liked the idea of the August Wilson Center, and Sukanya will explore this. The Golf Club is a really good deal, so it will stay in the running and be used unless something else proves better.

Date: All agree P4P should be held in February. The third Saturday in February (the 18<sup>th</sup>) is our traditional date, but conflicts with Presidents' Day (the 20<sup>th</sup>.) Should P4P be moved to the week before or after?

c. Other fundraising. We need volunteers to take charge of box tops and the donation letter. Tamara plans to be searching and applying for grants. We will also be selling ice cream (on new reduced schedule) and spirit wear.

7. Meeting Schedule.

a. EB meeting schedule. Next meeting will be Thursday, September 6, at 7:30 at Ellie's house (530 South Lang.) The following meeting is October 4, at Margie's house. We still need an upper level teacher representative.

b. General meeting schedule. It is finalized: general meetings will be held the second Wednesday of each month. The first one will be September 14.

Secretary Margie Minkler