

**Pittsburgh Colfax PTO Meeting
Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, September 3, 2008**

Meeting began at 7 p.m.

Executive Board Present:

Tom Juring, Co-President
Beth Tiffany, Co-President
Maggie Cham, Volunteer Coordinator
Katherine Consentino, Treasurer
Mike Dickey, VP Fund Raising
Paul Foster, VP Communications
Darcy Gordon, Co-Secretary
Ida Simpson, VP Special Events

Diane Condie, Parent Engagement Specialist
David May-Stein, Principal
Randi Sarkin, New Teacher Liaison
Cora Wallace, Assistant Principal

1. Welcome and Introductions, Tom Juring / Beth Tiffany

- a. Lots of new faces were present at the meeting – lots of kindergarten parents were present!

2. Special Guest: Josh Burnett from The Edible Schoolyard

- a. Grow Pittsburgh is currently at Dilworth, Faison and Montessori in Friendship. The program allows students to plant a garden, watch it grow and eat from it! The program is not intended to supply the cafeteria (the yields are pretty low).
- b. Program Goals: Improve eating habits; improve school community (encourages teamwork and getting along); improve academic performance, especially in science.
- c. Josh met with Mr. May-Stein last year and he came to the PTO meeting in the spring.
- d. There appears to be very good parent and teacher interest to bring the program to Colfax.
- e. Timeframe:
 - i. This fall we won't be doing much.
 - ii. November, December, January timeframe there will be a meeting to bring together interested parties to discuss what the program will look like at Colfax (the program at each school is different). The program will test the soil for lead.
 - iii. Early spring – the garden will be started. Families will be involved to prepare the garden beds. Students will start plants in the classroom.
 - iv. Questions:

1. Will there be resources for parents at home to educate families and reinforce what is learned? Answer: The curriculum runs within the school day.
2. Who tends the garden during the summer? Answer: The program has summer interns from high schools to tend the gardens.

3. Treasurer's Report – Katherine Consentino

- a. The budget was approved last year for the current school year.
- b. Katherine came up with easy-to-read ways of reviewing our income and expenses. Examples of how the PTO spends its money: Carnegie Museum loan program; newsletter; mid-level year end field trip; field trips (budgeted \$5 per child to go on field trips during the year and each grade can determine how to spend their allocated funds); mid-level dances and ice skating; staff appreciation; teacher grants (allocates \$50 each to buy supplies/books/materials for classrooms), etc.

4. Fundraising Update – Mike Dickey

- a. There are lots of programs/activities we want to accomplish but we need to raise funds to support these initiatives.
- b. There will be two large events this year: (1) some version of a Party for Play in February or March (will determine what the event will be designated to support); (2) Carnaval will be held at the end of the year (June). Volunteers will be needed for both.
- c. Self Serve Fund Raisers are those where you don't need to do anything except register your cards. There are self serve options with Target, Giant Eagle, through your Carnegie Museums Membership and more. Please see the September newsletter (and future issues) for more information.
- d. Kid Stuff coupon books will be run again. The PTO gets ½ of the money (\$12.50) for each book. This fund raiser will start soon.
- e. Storywalk Bake Sale is Saturday, September 13. Many have signed up to bake. Mike will be in contact with people to remind them of their commitment. Sellers are needed from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Children are welcome.
- f. Question was raised about the Cherrydale fund raiser. Answer: that is a school fund raiser. It raises money primarily for field trips, transportation to field trips and good behavior reward activities. There is a good return to Colfax from Cherrydale.

5. Volunteering – Maggie Cham

- a. Homeroom reps are still needed. We have reps for at least 16 of the 29 classes. The rep serves as a liaison between teacher and families and/or the PTO. The reps help out the teacher.
- b. Data entry assistance for the Colfax directory is needed.
- c. Clearances are needed if you coming into the school to work more than 1 time.

6. Special Events – Ida Simpson

- a. Fiesta is 9/18 from 6 – 8 p.m. It is a pot luck dinner at the school.
- b. There will be family fun nights nearly every month. Examples of activities planned include: Book Bingo, swimming, Extravaganza Uno, movie nights, mosaic crafts.
- c. Ida is looking for a co-special events person.
- d. We are always open to ideas for special events. Please contact Ida with any ideas.

7. Playground Update – Shannon Ewing (playground committee chairperson)

- a. On 9/13, the Super Nova is coming out. It was installed last spring and the decision was made to remove it. The cost to remove the piece (labor and shipping) is \$2,439.75. Kompan is giving us another piece of equipment (Rock-It).
- b. The lower playground needs a wall. The PTO is looking and working with the district for a permanent retaining wall.
- c. The upper playground is done except for painting the lines for the track.
- d. The basket ball hoops need to be installed (not a PTO responsibility).

8. After School Care - Anne Kursweg

- a. Introduced an idea of having on-site after school care for Colfax.
- b. Anne and Abbie Campsie are coordinating the effort to explore some options for after school care. A lot of families have struggled with the cost and scheduling/closings for the JCC.
- c. A group met with Mr. May-Stein at the end of the last school year. Mr. May-Stein's first area of interest is exploring options for when the JCC is closed.
- d. A sheet went around for those interested in providing comments or questions on the issue and who might be interested in a potential program at Colfax. Will be establishing a "task force."
- e. Some schools have for-profit agencies running their programs. Mr. May-Stein commented that there must be volume for an outside organization to come in.
- f. Mr. May-Stein indicated that families cannot rely on after school clubs for child care because clubs can be canceled at any time. Note: there will be more after school clubs introduced this year for students in grades 2 – 8. A family survey was sent home that discussed after school clubs.

9. Parent Engagement Specialist – Diane Condie

- a. Help yourself to No Child Left Behind materials.
- b. The school will participate in the Redd Up Coalition project every Friday from October 10 – November 21. This is 3rd year of participation.
- c. Conference day on 10/13 from 11:30 – 6:30 p.m. (3-4 closed). More information to come. Suggested topics:
 - i. For students in grades 3 – 8, ask about PSSA scores from last year;
 - ii. Grades 1-2, ask about Terra Nova reading scores; questions about homework, what to do at home to be more successful with academics.

- d. First PSCC (Parent School Community Counsel) meeting is 9/16 at 7 p.m. in cafeteria – topic is Data.
- e. Ms. Condie is trying to pair up students with adult to read to the child; to help students work on comprehension and to build a relationship with an adult. Call Diane Condie if you are interested.

10. Principal's Update – Mr. May-Stein

- a. Welcome new PTO officers – thank you for taking on the task.
- b. Thank you to Donna McCartney – 1st year NOT being teacher liaison – passes torch to Randi Sarkin. Thank you for all you do for the PTO.
- c. Thank you to all the new people who have come to the meeting. Stay involved.
- d. PSCC is different from PTO. PTO does fundraisers, supports student activities – primarily non-academic activities to improve the school environment. PSCC does not fundraising. PSCC meetings are about academic issues that drive the program at Colfax. Parents run the agenda. PSCC recommendations are taken back to the school. The suggestions advise the school; PSCC is not a decision making organization. The first meeting will be run by Mr. May-Stein. He will summarize data – how we did last year. Parents will convene and set the agenda for remainder of the year (i.e. academic, behavior management, enrichment, etc.).
- e. There are now 4 kindergarten classes at Colfax.
- f. Expanding the library to accommodate a K-8 environment. Dismantling the computer lab and sending computers to the classrooms which will allow teachers to do more flexible grouping using technologies.
- g. Mr. May-Stein is not projecting any more changes, as of today. Not planning to close a 2nd grade classroom or open another 1st grade classroom. May reallocate pairs to give more opportunity for flexible grouping. 1st grade classes are 24, 27 and 26 – Mr. May-Stein is monitoring numbers daily. We will not get any more staff or para-professionals. He needs to work with the staff he has now. Volunteers can help in the classroom.
- h. Colfax has 660 – 680 students enrolled, with a few more coming in this week. About 660 bodies in the building each day.
- i. After school club program will run Monday – Thursday, 2nd through 8th grade. Separate from athletic program.
- j. Mr. May-Stein is working on getting “Elmos” (interactive overhead projectors) in every classroom.

Questions:

- Donating toys and other items – is there a wish list? Talk to a teacher and see what is needed. Ms. Sarkin might take on this project – talk to teachers to figure out needs. Do not just send in “stuff.” Ask first. If look used, don't send it to school. One thing that may be very useful – BOOKS – non-fiction. New or gently-used books – NO MARKS / WRITING.

- Librarian Ms. McKee spoke about a \$500,000 grant that has come through that will fund keeping the libraries of many schools open when school is closed so families can go to the library. This will start later in the year. There will be a “grown-up only” reference area of the library.
- Volunteers are needed for 1st lunch!
- Thanks to Mrs. Wallace for working with DMS to make things happen at the school.

Remember: This is YOUR PTO – if you have ideas, please bring them up.

Meeting concluded around 9 p.m.