

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 14, 2011 PTO MEETING

This meeting of the Colfax A.L.A. PTO was held in the school cafeteria at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was led by PTO President Jenny Ganger with a power point presentation.

1. Welcome and Introductions Jenny introduced the Executive Board members (both those present and absent):

President Jenny Ganger
VPs Communications Sarah Sirlin and Camille Harris
VPs Fundraising Tamara Dubowitz and Sukanya Srinivasan
VP Volunteer Coordinator Mark Beck
VP Events Abbie Campsie
Treasurer Shannon Ewing
Assistant Treasurer Ellie Monaco
Secretary Margie Minkler
Elementary Faculty Representative Tony Woods
Middle Level Faculty Representative Kipp Dawson
Parent Engagement Specialist Diane Condie
Principal Adam Sikorski

Ellie conducted a 5 minute “get to know you” exercise with everyone in attendance.

2. What Does the PTO Do?

- Our mission is to: 1) support learning and enrichment, 2) build community, and 3) organize around policy issues. Jenny cited the building of the school playground as an example of what is possible through the PTO.
- Getting Involved: Colfax is known to have an active PTO with lots of involved parents. That will continue to be true only if each person gets involved! The number one thing you can do to start getting involved is to be on the email announcement list. It is the only email dissemination of PTO and Colfax events. Join by emailing Camille at camille.harris39@yahoo.com, visiting www.colfaxpto.org or by printing your email clearly on the sign-in sheet for this meeting then we will send you an invitation. More ways to get involved will be discussed throughout the meeting.
- Our 2011-12 program commitments total \$45,000. Jenny highlighted the following:
 - Principal’s Discretionary fund \$10,000
 - Field trips \$7,000
 - Enrichment grants, Food Is Elementary, Frick Environmental \$9,000 (\$5,500 of this enrichment grant money is for other programs not yet proposed.)

- Technology \$3,500
- Teacher grants \$2,700 (\$50 per teacher)
- School clubs and activities \$1,500
- Middle level activities \$1,500 (like middle level ice skating and dances)
- Recess equipment \$1,500
- Playground insurance and maintenance

3. Motion on Funding the Edible Schoolyard (Rachel Rosenfeld) Rachel spoke about the Edible Schoolyard, which has been a part of Colfax, but will only continue in the same form this year if funded at a cost of \$6400.

The Edible Schoolyard is a program run by the non-profit organization Grow Pittsburgh. It was created with a collaboration of PPS personnel, teachers, parents, community members, and Grow Pittsburgh. It is now in its fifth year in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. It is based on the seed-to-table learning model initiated by Alice Waters in Berkeley, CA. The Edible Schoolyard integrates garden activities into the regular classroom curriculum to improve young students' eating habits, invest students in their school communities, and enhance students' academic performance. In the spring, students start seeds in the classroom, prepared beds, and plant seeds in the garden. Colfax families volunteer to take care of the garden over the summer, increasing families' sense of community. Returning to school in the fall, students harvest produce and sampled vegetables directly from the garden. We have "Farmer Courtney" completing the link between seed and table by preparing fresh vegetable dishes with the K-2 students. The hope is that after adding the broccoli she weeded to a salad at school, a student will go home and ask for a salad with broccoli. After tasting the potatoes he harvested and gave to the chef in the garden, a student will go home and try his hand in the kitchen. In essence, the program hopes to "transform the eating habits of families by building curiosity toward and familiarity with fresh fruits and vegetables in the youngest members of those families."

Rachel moved for the PTO to fund the Edible Schoolyard for this coming year at the cost of \$6,400.

This cost goes mostly for instruction- once a week for grades K-2. In Rachel's personal experience, the Edible Schoolyard enriches the children's sense of community, and brings them excitement as they drive by the school. It encourages a variety of home gardening, healthy eating and care for the environment. Kindergarten teacher Tony Woods added that as a teacher, he really values the program and fully supports the funding request. The kindergarten won an award over the summer from Urban Coalition as a result of getting involved with the Edible Schoolyard. The Edible Schoolyard is part of the science curriculum and very enriching for the children to participate in. His students would have snacks fresh out of the garden. Tony presented a display board with pictures showing the primary students' garden activities. Another parent with a child in Mr. Woods' classroom last year affirmed how enriching and enjoyable the Edible Schoolyard program was for her child. Adam Sikorski expressed his view of the Edible Schoolyard is a unique and valuable feature of Colfax. Teachers and kids are learning how to grow food and learning the science behind it. They are

learning healthy eating and strengthening their sense of community. The garden also grows in capacity. Diane Condie added that the older kids are also interested in the garden and love having it as part of the school.

Josh Burnett, the Director of Educational Programming for Grow Pittsburgh, said this program is at four Pittsburgh Public Schools and other schools are pushing to add it. The Edible Schoolyard program is open to more than K-2; the curriculum of the program is for K-5 and it can be adapted for the upper grades. We started in K-2 because it is easier for these teachers to be flexible and to mix the program into their curriculum. The garden instructor, Courtney, was trained by Grow Pittsburgh. Besides instructing the children directly about the garden, she provides ideas to the teachers on how to include the garden in their curriculum. She bridges the gap between the garden and the teachers' knowledge. The program's long term goal is to have teachers know all of the information themselves, eliminating the need for a special garden instructor. The teachers themselves then teach about the garden and incorporate it into their lessons.

A parent asked if we could expand the program to the upper grades now and vote on this expansion. Josh noted that the program may be expanded to include other activities like a chef's night and a family cooking night, but the organization will not expand it to the upper grades unless they have assurance of teacher support. Middle level teacher Kipp Dawson said the middle level teachers are thinking of ways to include the garden in their curriculum and the middle level kids are very interested. Another parent asked if we could now expand the program in the other ways Josh described. Jenny said let's vote on the motion now presented- funding the program with the K-2 instruction for \$6,400 - then explore other options later.

A vote was taken on the motion and all present voted yes. **Action: by unanimous vote, the PTO agreed to provide \$6400 to fund the Edible Schoolyard program for this school year.**

4. Reports

- Events: (Abbie) Thanks to everyone who helped with Fiesta. Our next event is the Talent Show, which will be sometime in early December. Sara Stock Mayo is running this event. We will have an ice skating night on a week night sometime in January or February. Our Teacher Appreciation lunch is in December. Abbie will send out an email to request help and people to make food. We may have a movie night or something else thrown in the mix. Then Carnival will be held at the end of the year.
- Centennial Celebration: (Lisa Chotiner) This year we are celebrating the 100th year of the Colfax building. We will have a Centennial Celebration with an open house format on October 15 from 3-6:00 p.m. It is not a reunion, so all are welcome. We need volunteers to help that day. There will be a scavenger hunt, a dessert table and tours. Ms. Moule is having the chorus prepare something to sing. The PTO is sponsoring an Art Tile Fundraiser. (Jenny: The PTO is selling Art Tiles, which are to be personally designed by the purchaser. We plan to tile the walls on each side of the stairs at the entrance of the building with these.) A memory book will also be created and advertising space in the book will be sold.

- Connecting with Teachers: (Tony Woods, Kipp Dawson) Tony and Kipp expressed their appreciation for the PTO and thanked everyone for all they do. Kipp let everyone know how enthusiastic the middle level students are this year. Student council wants to be very active; the eager new sixth graders are helping to create an enthusiastic and growing community.
- Middle Level Parent Teacher Advisory Committee: (Cindy Pace is the chair of this committee but Jenny will present because she could not be attend tonight.) The first dance will be held in late October. The kids want to be totally hands on with it. Middle level students are now selling entertainment books and will be selling other things later to fund their end of the year trip. Kipp will be facilitating whatever activities the students want with the help of student council. Kipp described student council's first big project as the "pennies for peanuts" drive for the Food Bank, which raises money for this great cause and lets everyone know money is more helpful for the Food Bank because of the discount cost they receive on food.
- Volunteering: (Mark Beck)
 - Homeroom representatives are still needed in several homerooms. Mark listed the rooms and received two parent volunteers to take on duties in one of those rooms.
 - Recess volunteers are needed for all of the different lunch /recess periods beginning at 10:45. Mark also asked if there was anyone willing to oversee this. Volunteers may come on a flexible schedule and do not need to sign up in advance. Parents may send an email if they expect to come on certain days, but we will try no schedule for a few weeks then see if we need one. Adam is short-handed because two support staff have been let go, so an extra need exist. Mark and some other parents who have done lunch duty described it as a fun job. (If you come in for this, you must stop in the office and get a badge.)
 - Classroom volunteering is also very important and within everyone's ability. One way to do it is through "word building." This is a tried and true method for helping struggling readers in K and 1st (and sometimes 2nd) grade. Mark will offer training at the end of October. If you are interested in volunteering in the classroom, contact your teacher or email us.
 - Mark keeps a volunteer database, and passed out sign-up sheet for those who have not already signed up to be on the volunteer list.
 - Diane Condie reviewed the procedure for obtaining clearances.
 - Let us know if you would like to volunteer in any of these ways by going to our website www.colfaxpto.org or emailing Mark Beck at mullenbeck@verizon.net. To obtain clearances, see Diane Condie.
- Communications: (Sarah Sirlin)
 - Email updates: Our Co-communications VP Camille Harris emails updates via the Colfax PTO Yahoo group. She lets us all know about upcoming events, reminders, dates, etc. If you don't already receive her emails and would like to, please send her an email and she will invite you to join the PTO Yahoo group: camille.harris39@yahoo.com. Or you may give Jenny

or Camille your email address tonight (or sign in to the meeting and write your email clearly.)

- Website: Lorrie Cranor and Danielle Nichol maintain our website at www.colfaxpto.org. Check the site for all sorts of information about PTO and Colfax happenings.
- Student Directory: Leslie Grodin has been compiling this year's Student Directory. If you would like for your children to be included in the directory and have already filled out the Directory form, please look for a proof in the next week or so. It will be coming home via backpack mail. If you haven't yet filled out the brief form, and would like for your children to be included, please take a form tonight, or email Leslie: leslie.grodin@verizon.net
- Newsletter: The Colfax Communicator is the newsletter produced by the Colfax PTO. This year we will have five issues which deliver at the beginning of October, December, February, April, and June. We welcome all students, staff, teachers, and parents to submit articles or information for consideration in the newsletter. To submit an article to the Communicator, please email Sarah Sirlin: sarah@sarahsirlin.com. Camille added that this Friday is the deadline for submitting newsletter articles. Please email us any entries, those from kids as well.
- Budget: (Shannon Ewing) Shannon reviewed the budget on the back of the Agenda. We have just ended the Spiritwear sale with a profit of \$914. (The amount shown on the budget is not minus expenses.) We may sell Spiritwear again in the spring. The family fun night expense total will end up being -\$34.49. We will be selling the left over churros. We have also spent \$1800 on teacher grants.
- Fundraising: (Jenny Ganger) (Neither Tamara or Sukanya could be at the meeting.) We have a lot of things we would like to do, which means we need to raise a lot of money!
 - Our strategy this year is to streamline. Our theory is: less is more. We plan to have fewer fundraisers with more strategic efforts and fewer Colfax (non-PTO) drives. (We hope to replace the need for Colfax fundraising drives with the Principal's discretionary fund.) We also hope to make PTO fundraisers more "health- promoting," for example, cutting back ice cream sales to every other week. The middle level will still conduct their own fundraisers.
 - Our planned activities include:
 - Donation Letter to all Colfax families (please keep an eye out for this)
 - Colfax gear/Spirit wear
 - Grant writing
 - At least one fundraiser that is an obvious 'healthy' fundraiser (e.g., 1 mile fun run, hula hoop contest)
 - Colfax Talent Show
 - Ice cream: two weeks per month
 - Box Tops (Melanie Weisbord is running this)

- Cartridge recycling (Shannon is trying to get a new cartridge box for the hallway near the office)
- Isidore Foods
- Newsletter Ads
- Plant Sale
- Register your Giant Eagle card and a percentage of purchase money will go to your school. Instructions will be in the next newsletter.
- (Middle Level trip fundraising is separate)
- Art Tiles (Tiles may be purchased for \$25 each and we can sell up to 900)
- PARTY FOR PLAY !!!!!
- Are you interested in helping? Or participating? Do you have a skill or talent, a fundraising and/or development expertise? If your answer is yes to any of these questions, contact Tamara at tdubowitz@gmail.com
- Party for Play: Party for Play was described. We need an event Co-chair to share the charge of this event with Sukanya. Party for Play will be held this year at the new location of the University Club in Oakland on Feb. 18. The first planning meeting will be Sept. 26, 10 a.m., at 5423 Northumberland. There is a sign-up sheet somewhere in this room, but no RSVP is necessary. The next planning meeting will be held after school.

5. Motion on PTO Financial Reviews - skipped because of timing.

6. Future Meeting Dates and Times Meetings will be held the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00. Our next meeting will be October 12 at the special time of 3:45. A Jewish holiday starts at sundown that evening and with the earlier time, Adam plans on having more teachers present. Child care will be provided.

[At the close of the PTO portion of the meeting, Amanda Laichak from Junior Achievement spoke about the Junior Achievement program. Her contact information is alaichak@japawesternpa.org 412.208.4747 ext. 13]

Secretary Marjorie Minkler