

***Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Meeting, Colfax Spanish Academy
School Year 2005-2006
Thursday, May 4, 2006***

Where: Music Room, Colfax Spanish Academy, 2332 Beechwood Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15217

Meeting Commenced: 7:00pm

Meeting Adjourned: approx. 9pm

EB in attendance: Cate Axtman, Brian Jacobson, Cathy Kress, Barbara Litt, Carolyn Ludwig, David May-Stein, Donna McCartney and Cindy Pace

1. This was the eighth PTO meeting for the 2005-2006 school year. Attendance was approximately 50 people.
2. The next PTO meeting will be held on Thursday, June 1, 2006 at Colfax.
3. PTO President, Cate Axtman, commenced the meeting:
 - a. We began the meeting with an introduction of our new PTO President, Shannon Ewing, who was elected at the previous PTO meeting on April 6. Shannon's term begins on July 1, 2006.
 - b. Elections for the remaining PTO Executive Board positions were conducted for the 2006-2007 school year and all candidates were unanimously elected:

Communications	Brian Jacobson
Fundraising	Meryl Neiman
Special Events	Cathy Kress
Volunteer Coordinator	remains open
Treasurer	Jeff Mukogosi
Secretary	Carolyn Ludwig

Reappointed to the Executive Board again for next year were Donna McCartney as Faculty Representative and David May-Stein as Faculty Administrator.
4. We then continued with Committee reports:
 - a. For Communications, Brian Jacobson announced that the newsletter will soon be available on the PTO web site, www.colfaxPTO.org. Also regarding the web site, Cate announced that she apparently has not been receiving the email directed to her account from the web link, so please send her email directly for the present moment.
 - b. Regarding Fundraising, Cindy Pace announced that a "summer activity book/CDrom fundraiser" will be coming home tomorrow. This is a small fundraiser and through the Sally Foster program. Also, the 2nd Annual Flea Market will be held on Sunday, May 21 from 9am till 3pm. Volunteers are needed. And, the plant orders will be in on May 12 for the 2nd Annual Flower Sale. Volunteers are needed and orders will be available for pick-up on the Douglas Avenue side of the playground from 12noon to 6pm. The plant sale committee, Evelyn Castillo, Rachel Colker, Leslie Wright, and Melody Hauber, will deliver your order "as a

- last resort”, if you are unable to pick-up your order that day. This fundraiser doubled from last year, bringing in approximately \$2,000.
- c. Our Special Events update began with a few words regarding our Storytelling Night, held on April 25 from 6:30pm till 7:30pm. Tim Hartman was entertaining and the evening was enjoyed by all. Cathy Kress then proceeded to give a Carnival update. The next Carnival meeting is Thursday, May 11 at 7pm. All is progressing along on schedule for our June 14th event. We will use the playground space, as construction will not have begun yet for the Addition. Carnival T-shirts will be available before Memorial Day weekend. Advance ticket sales can be picked up at the event (tickets are for games only).
 - d. Barbara Litt gave the Treasurer’s report. The Budget Proposal for the 2006-2007 school year, distributed at the previous PTO meeting on April 6, has been available for review for approximately one month (on our web site as well), and we unanimously voted to officially pass the PTO Budget for the next fiscal year.

5. Other PTO news included:

- a. Meryl Neiman gave an Addition update. The final administrative hurdle will be a final vote on Tuesday, but we are expecting a groundbreaking ceremony for July 1. Colfax will need to follow an aggressive schedule in order to meet a completion goal for Fall of 2007. Also mentioned was that summer school is off the table (due to construction taking place within the building) and The Department of Education is hiring summer construction employees at an hourly rate of \$9/hour if anyone is interested.
- b. Meryl Neiman also gave the Playground Committee update. Mentioned at the last PTO meeting and reiterated this evening was the call for volunteers for the playground committee, specifically for particular segments of the process, including grant writing, direct corporate fundraising, public relations, graphic design, and event planning. Interests will be matched with particular projects and these particular groups are beginning to work in smaller committees. One event is already planned at Bosa Nova for January, 2007 and other event possibilities are a family run or a tile wall.
- c. Judy Hartman discussed the “rewards system” in the classroom, specifically the use of candy as a reward. Judy then informed us on some of the segments of the school district’s “Wellness Policy”. After much discussion, it became clearer that we needed to find out how parents felt about this topic. Were parents not concerned if their children were offered candy or other sugars as part of a rewards system? Did parents disagree with these candy rewards, or were they indifferent to the use of candy in the classroom as part of a rewards system? Judy also provided some thoughtful words concerning what we expose our children to and the messages we are giving as parents, which was inspirational and thought provoking. Specific points brought up in the meeting were the facts that soda is not longer available in PPS, the candy disbursement, in general, seemed to be inconsistent in the fact that some classrooms seemed to be exposed to a lot of sugar “as a rewards incentive” and other classrooms were not. We also talked about the possibility of writing and passing a

“resolution” that the PTO would initiate and support as a group, and then we could present this resolution to the school community and take steps to help support this resolution. Do we need a resolution as a PTO? Could this be a recommendation? Is the District’s Wellness Policy sufficient? We decided that it may be a good idea to hold a separate meeting and form a sub-committee to present the findings in the Fall.

- d. Marcie Ritter, Colfax’s Title 1 representative, announced that she would like to either step down as the Title 1 representative or she would be interested in sharing the responsibilities for the coming school year. Marcie also announced the planned addition of a Title 1 page to our PTO web site – hopefully in the Fall, and the project possibility of producing a Parent Handbook.
 - e. Barbara Litt, Colfax’s PATHS parent liaison, gave a PATHS update. The PATHS program has some remaining funding, so the PATHS program will be extended for an additional semester. Barbara announced that she will continue on as Colfax’s parent liaison. Also, Barbara announced that an upcoming “Coffee Hour” will be held to offer an open panel discussion regarding the recent changes at Colfax, most entirely due to the implementation of the ALA status at the school. This workshop will be planned for early June.
6. The meeting continued with an update from David May-Stein regarding our ALA (Accelerated Learning Academy) status, followed by questions, answers and comments:
- a. School begins on Monday, August 21 and for Kindergarteners, it will begin on August 25 or 28 for the upcoming school year.
 - b. David discussed his trip to New Jersey to observe and meet with faculty/etc. from some of the ALA schools there under the America’s Choice program. He described the entire experience as interesting and stated that he is committed to this model and the rituals and routines it provides.
 - c. David stressed the importance of the curriculum implementation and creating very conducive learning environments.
 - d. David touched on the hiring process that the teachers need to undergo, not only at the ALAs, but all the reconstituted schools.
 - e. David talked about the leadership team and inclusion of the reading and math coaches (for Reading First, we’ll have an extra K-3 coach). The leadership team will be able to assist the teacher’s implementation of the ALA model in the various workshops that will be held.
 - f. We briefly discussed the role of the newly created position of the Parent Engagement Specialist. This person will be part of the leadership team and it’s role includes dissemination of knowledge and awareness involving the ALA program and America’s Choice, to increase parental involvement (an outreach to parents), create and organize programs and events to get knowledge across, to work with the children and make decisions as a leader in the school
 - g. The new Reading Coach is Honey Foreman (grades 4-8) and the new Math Coach is Marilyn Glick (grades K-8). The Reading 1st Coach

- (grades K-3) is an initiative from the Department of Education. This coach will be Tish Rygalski.
- h. With the reconstitution of the District, Title 1 reps may be eliminated, but this decision remains to be seen (Title 1 funding may not exist). The Title 1 representative must be a parent.
 - i. The America's Choice program tailors professional development to our teachers.
 - j. Colfax will tailor our ALA program to meet our needs.
 - k. Colfax is already on its way; we already possess a high level of proficient and advanced students. The ALA program will help ensure that the delivery of our resources is consistent and clear. Coaches will help teachers with the rituals and routines.
 - l. With the ALA program, there is a "standard list" for the Principal to follow.
 - m. In the ALA program, there will be a 2 ½ hour literacy block every day for grades K-3 and a 1 hour math block every day for grades K-8.
 - n. Looping grades will exist commencing next year; grades 1-2 will loop, grades 3-4 will loop, grades 5-6 will loop, and grades 7-8 will loop.
 - o. Students in grades 3 thru 8, for the most part, will begin the process of departmentalization by subject (moving from room to room).
 - p. There may be money available within the library budget for parental resources to exist. One reference noted was The Art of Teaching Reading and The Art of Teaching Writing, by Lucy Cauckins.
 - q. The reading curriculum changed for the upcoming school year (for the entire District) to the Treasures Reading Curriculum by McMillan/McGraw Hill.
 - r. For the teaching staff at Colfax, the professional development with America's Choice will take place from August 7-11 and the professional development with the new curriculum will take place the following week.
 - s. With the ALA program, the Principal is required to be in the classroom a certain percentage of the day.
 - t. More dedicated time will be given to common planning time (by grade level and content); at least once a week.
 - u. The "Principal's Book of the Month" program will begin and all students will read and write about this book selection.
 - v. Also announced/mentioned was the "Transitional Tuesday" event, currently scheduled for June 6, but the date may change. This event is being initiated by the BOE and will be a District-wide event with a "getting acquainted" purpose for all reconstituted schools.
 - w. We noted the importance of involving our new Colfax families that will come to us thru the Right-Sizing Plan. A good way to start is to make sure all the schools are invited to Carnival.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carolyn Ludwig
Secretary