

YANTACAW PTO MEETING MINUTES, January 12, 2010

Laura Fontanals, President

Laura Fontanals called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Motion to accept the minutes by Theresa Halligan and seconded by Nadine Makowitz.

New Correspondence: Tara D'Alessio- There are a few things on the bulletin board. We received thank you cards from the office staff and Mrs. Flannery for the Christmas gifts. Another thank you card was received from the Heifer International Foundation to the Yantacaw PTO Green Committee for their generous donation in the amount of \$200. This donation will help those who are struggling in various places around the world. We also received a thank you card from Kayla Ferreira for the birthday book.

Treasurer's Report: Julie Serritella

- The total balance in the checkbook is \$42,993.39 of which \$7,478.90 is earmarked for the 6th grade class, those funds are monies earned/collected from their fundraisers, which leaves \$35,514.49 in the general checking account. Laura will be reviewing additional items regarding the PTO finances and will formulate her own report.

Teacher's Report: Rosa Santoriello – The Holiday Boutique went well, the kids enjoyed themselves shopping and picking out gifts, they always have a good time. Thank you to all the moms and people who participated. The Pizza Party was very nice, kids had a good time having pizza as part of their kickoff to the winter vacation.

Principal's Report: Mr. Sorensen:

- **Holiday Boutique**- Another successful event. I really thought it was fantastic.
- **Pizza Party**- Thank you to everyone who was involved. This is one of the best days of the year. Happy New Year to everyone.
- **Upcoming Events- Mid-Term math tests** (for the 2nd through 6th grades) will be held the week of January 19th-Tuesday through Friday-the scores are supposed to be counted on the second marking period. **Report Cards** are coming out on January 29th. 4th graders will be offered **Family Math and Family Science.**(*Note:The above programs provide students and parents with support in those subjects.*) Family Math-the notifications have already gone out and will be held on Wednesdays beginning on 1/20th. Family Science, I have not got confirmation when the notifications will go out, but tentative dates are March 3, 10,17, 24. The **Forensics Tournament** was held not too long ago, the children have to do an interpretive reading, Isabella Palmieri finished in 2nd place for the Nutley Team. There were 80 students from Essex county competing, congratulations to Isabella. **Martin Luther King Day** is 1/19th and we will have the day off. The **Winter Dance** is coming up this Friday, thank you to the parents for the preparations it should be a success. An **Assembly on Cyber-bullying** will be held on 1/28th for the 6th graders (it may include the 5th graders, we are unsure at this point). This assembly is provided in the middle school and high school and includes cyber-bullying on the computer and on the cell phones with text messaging.
- **Parent Stop, Drop and Go**- Just a reminder to the parents to please refrain from parking in the teacher's parking lot. Also, when we had inclement weather, prior to the break, parents were seen speeding and letting kids out on the driver's side. This presents a very dangerous situation. *Parent Comment: Her car was hit by another car during this time.*
- **Tardiness**- Please do your best to get your kids to school on time. It is a disruption to the teachers and the students who are ready to learn. We also need their attendance and lunch orders in by a certain time, so it is also a disruption in the office. More importantly, however, it's a disruption to the poor kid who is late himself or herself and to their learning process. It develops a pattern and a perception that being late is acceptable. It is a disservice to them and when they move onto the middle school, attendance can really have a factor on the length of your day. They will be asked to spend 9th period in detention. In the high school, if you are late enough, you can lose credit for the 1st period class-if you are late 19 times you can be withdrawn from the class.
- **School Security and Visitor Protocol**-For the safety of the children and the security of the building, under no circumstances are parents allowed to enter into the building without checking in with the office first. Also, the primary door to be used is the center stair door(s) where the buzzer is located. They do not want the parents using the other doors as points of entry. Please remind your children to enter through the correct doors. We do allow children in the auditorium for inclement weather.
- **Snowballs**-Please have a discussion with your child-throwing snowballs on the school premises is prohibited-we don't want anyone to get injured.
- **Lockdowns**- I haven't heard from the central office when we will be having them. We were supposed to have them on a monthly basis, much like fire drills, I assume we will have one this month, if not shortly into February. It may be a good idea to have a conversation with your child, especially those who get nervous, again, it's just like a fire drill, and we want it to be a part of their routine.
- **6th Grade Choir Auditions**- there will be choir auditions for the sixth graders. A representative from the middle school will stop in this week to prepare the kids, and then on Friday, he will come into the school, in the morning, and bring the kids in small groups to see if they are interested in joining and to see if they are up to the caliber of being in the program.
- **NJ State Testing**- NJ Pass is for the 1st and 2nd grades and will be held the last week in April (4/26-4/30). The NJ Ask for the 5th and 6th grades will be held May 3rd- May 6th and for the 3rd and 4th grades it will be held May 10th-May 14th.

Board of Education: Ms. Debbie Russo- I attended the **Holiday Concert**-it was amazing-thank you for inviting me. I took a district mandated course, it's not state mandated, but it is a **computer applications course** offered in the high school. I am proposing to take that course and start it at the lower grade levels, as it is my opinion that the kids need keyboarding skills soon than the high school level. I've been working on that proposal since May. **Construction** at Lincoln School is going smoothly. At Spring Garden, there are no major issues, the principal has even incorporated the construction process into their lessons at school, so it is not a disruption and the kids are actually learning about the construction that is ongoing. Washington School has not hot water in their bathrooms, which is a bit alarming. **None of the grammar schools have hot water.** I've been told that the water is tempered. I will personally visit each grammar school to test the water, as this is not acceptable to me, especially with H1N1. Apparently we need a mixing valve, and if it's state mandated, it will cost 7K per school to retrofit and fix the bathrooms. Regarding the website, we are very close to making a decision. We have administrative and internal questions- if we go in-house who would be responsible for the distribution of information-the principal, the teachers, who would be in charge-is another question. Also, the cost is another issue. It could cost 20-40K to implement and 2-4K a month in maintenance fees-which seems excessive. We would like to do it in-house, but not someone from the high school. *Parent Question: Weren't their volunteers for the district?* Some of the Board felt it was better to go outside-again who is going to be in charge and is difficult to get a time commitment from volunteers. *Parent Comment: The ball was definitely dropped by the district we can certainly provide guidance.* We are very close to resolving this and a decision should be made at the 1/25th BOE meeting. *Parent Comment: My expertise is to demonstrate how to define the process and to provide the best way to structure the information over time.* Ideally, we would like to have an area for the principal to use, the PTO to use and the teachers to use. **At the Budget Meeting**, Mr. Rodgers has looked at every expense and is considering eliminating our membership with the NJBSA as the dues are very expensive and there doesn't seem to be much benefit received from the association. Also, I think it may cost 300K for a full day Kindergarten. *Parent Question: Are we looking into buying another trailer?* Yes there is a connection to get trailers from another district that has quite a few which they need to get rid of. It may be an option but it wouldn't be permanent. *Parent Question: Is Mr. Zarra leaving?* As of right now, he might be exploring options. I feel we should hire the most qualified person whether they come from within the district or not. *Parent Question: What is the parent process in finding the Business Administrator?* We were hoping to expand our base. We got more people involved. We still received letters and think we are still accepting until the end of January. We received a lot of applications but only 3 viable options.

Old Business

Holiday Boutique – It was a big success. We may look at, for next year, is to offer a night session from 6:30-8:30 having the higher priced items displayed and allowing more of our community vendors to come in. We make approximately \$500 and will still have a lot of left over items. Again, this is not done as a fundraiser, but is offered as a service for the children.

Holiday Pizza Party – Thank you to Debbie O'Mara. The pizza was nice and hot. Thank you to all the class parents who donated snacks, paper products and their time.

Coat Drive-we collected 8 bags of coats. I found a website (warmcoats.com) where you put in your zip code and it gives you locations of places who need coats. We donated the coats to a school in East Orange and to a Baptist Church across the street from the school. We want to thank everyone who participated and we will continue to collect coats until the end of February. *The Vietnam Vets give donations to the vets first then their families. The Christ Church in Belleville is closed but their outreach ministries is still there and once a month they let people from the community pick out donated items.*

New Business

Committee Updates:

Awards Committee: Nothing new to report.

Sixth Grade 2010: Janice Fede/MaryAnn Pomponio- We have quite a few boxes of chocolate bars \$1/bar and there are a variety in the box. We are still missing some pictures for the year book-baby pictures and pictures of the kids at dances- as this will be the theme. **There will be a fundraiser at Jim Dandy's March 1st-3rd** where 20% of the sales will be donated to the sixth grade. When you order you must tell them that it's for Yantacaw 6th grade. **It will be offered at their 3 locations (Nutley, North Arlington, and Rutherford).**

Green Committee: Tara Spinelli and Michele Heinz – On the horizon, we are looking to extend the Quality Boutique as our Green Table raised \$200 which was donated to Heifer International.

Academic Committee: Christina Murphy –We will be hosting a workshop on Thursday 1/28th at 7:30 in the auditorium on what it takes to get into college and how to pay for it. Topics will include 529's and what is the best strategy to save for your child's education.

Lunch Committee: Theresa Loch/Maria Geltrude- Nothing new to add. We have 9 clubs and we worked it out where they occur every day during the week, so hopefully that will help to alleviate the overcrowding in the gym.

Ways and Means Committee: Diane Modica/Yvette Wallace- We had an Executive Board meeting where we discussed different fundraisers for next year, which include but is not limited to Learn to Earn-similar to Study Island where kids get a sponsor and the earn a certain amount of money for each correct answer; Wonderland Studios-we would buy \$25 certificates which would include a free 8"x10"; Shoprite Gift Cards-we would earn 5% from each card sold-they do not cost extra, but we would still earn the 5%; Restaurants-Jim Dandy's, Chicago Uno and Barnes-n-Noble-we would earn a percentage of sales on specified dates; Clothing Drop- other organizations in town have used this fundraiser, just need to pick a location and we get a check for a certain amount per pound donated. We think the clothes are resold as opposed to donated. Walk-A-Thon-again the kids would get sponsors, it would be on the school property and the logistics would need to be discussed. Super Raffle- Theresa Halligan will have tickets and will bring to the school for the next couple of months; Box Tops- we made 1K last year; Stop and Shop- has a similar fundraiser like Target where you can register Yantacaw and the PTO would get a percentage of the sale.

School Supply Kits- The teachers will be confirming their lists for next year, we will be starting early this year, probably in March. If we get the form in early, we will earn 8% back for the items we purchased.

Executive Board Meeting- We went over the possible fundraisers for next year. We have approximately 15K to spend. We had a request for a projector and sound system (\$2,500) for the auditorium and for Smart Boards (\$3,500 each). The projector is 5K and was pricey, not so much for the projector itself but for where it would need to be installed. Options included mounting the projector in the back, mounting from the ceiling or getting a rear projection screen. We received a rear projection TV which will hold us over for now. The sixth grade will be donating some funds towards the sound system. At this point, we will be getting 4 Smart Boards and will fund the balance for the sound system. *Parent Question: What about Mimio's which are cheaper? They are proprietary and the software cannot be switched from the Smart Boards to the Mimio's. Will there be specific training for teachers? There are numerous training avenues available-they can teach each other (Lunch and Learn), we can get assistance from the district to help build lessons and they can shadow other teachers at different grammar schools. Which classrooms will be selected for the Smart Boards? We will put them in classrooms where they will get utilized. We would like to put one in the Resource Room. Will you consider putting them in the younger grades? Yes we will consider that as an option.*

Spirit Wear- The sale will be ongoing. There is approximately a 3 week turn around from when you place the order to when you receive the items. You can download the form and print and return to the school with the check-no online orders yet. We are considering adding more Nutley/Raider colors. There is a really nice sized backpack available.

PT Council- Needs volunteers for the general assembly. It is a meeting of executive boards of all the PTO's in town, however, they are encouraging more people to attend, whether you are on a board or not we are asking others to attend.

Curiosity Shop-February 9th is the evening registration and February 10th is registration after school. We are in need of more assistants.

Beefsteak- Will be held March 27th at the Park and Rec. There will be a DJ, Cool prizes will be raffled off, BYOB and BYO-Appetizers. Only 300 tickets will be sold.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.