

Thoreau Elementary School PTO General Meeting Minutes

Date: October 12, 2010 @ 6:30-8:15pm, Thoreau LMC

In attendance: Louisa Medaris (President), Sherri Stroebel (Vice-president), Aphra Mednick (Secretary), Clint Thayer (board member), Jenice Con Foo (board member/fundraising chair), Gina Skubanelli (co-treasurer), Lisa Goetzman (staff), Kelly McCann (staff), Greg Vallee (teacher), Kathy Costello (Principal)
Parents: Suzanne Dove, Dave Matthews, Steve Ratsen, Lisa Chen, Betsy Parker, Annie Isenbarger, Neena Thomas-Gosain, Reyna Dominguez, Lauren Rosen Yeazel, Shannon Kunstmen, David Brand, Rosita Gonzalez, Todd Conkey, Sarah Affeldt, Connie Ruderick, Kim Zinski, Suzanne Lee, Tracy Clausen, Robin Grey, Jill McNaughton, Gina Landucci, Shannon Dean, Kristin Millin-Rataj, Elizabeth Goetz, Susie Greblo, Christy Ehlert, Clint Thayer, Leah Sandholm, Shanon K., Anne Marie Banas, Lynn Bach

Agenda:

Principal Update (Principal Kathy Costello)
Positive Behavior System (Joan Hansen & Liz Sorge)
Treasurer Update (Gina Skubanelli)
Fundraising Update (Jenice Con Foo)
PTO Board - (Louisa Medaris)
Verona Rd exchange (Kim Zinski)

1) Principal Kathy Costello –

- introduced herself, she grew up in Madison and spent many years as a principal in Green Bay, the school that she worked at in Green Bay had the same number children who received free & reduced lunch as Thoreau does, the majority of minority students were Hmong and American-Indian, she described Thoreau as “a busy, busy school”, (and no, she is not Italian she is Greek & Irish)

-challenges at Thoreau – 1) behavior (ex. Hallways now quieter, she and the social worker have worked with all the classrooms about behavior expectations in the bathrooms, etc) 2) Reading – we need to bring our scores up, might not meet year end goal

2) Positive Behavior System (Joan Hanson and school social worker Liz Sorge)

– As part of an MMSD initiative for all the elementary schools, Thoreau has started the program (flyers handed out), the goal of the program to BE safe, BE respectful

and BE responsible, the program also creates a universal language and builds community so that all (teachers, kids, staff) know what is expected

- Reviewed “Guiding Beliefs” (see flyer) – behavior is taught throughout the year, as of now children at Thoreau fall into the following behavior triangle “above the line behavior”,(80%), “below the line”(15%) “bottom line”(5%)
- PBS – positive behavior support program looks at 1) collecting data, 2) behavior expectations 3) teaching behavior 4) acknowledgement (call to parent to let them know that their child missed educational time) 5) office referral process (address behavior what is “make amends” “fix it plan” kids write up something that they will do to make it better/apologize)
- Cool tools – reward incentives in program to celebrate/acknowledge kids that have good behavior, including
 - Tiko Tickets (there will be a Tiko Ticket store 3x a year, parents have donated recycled toys, movie tickets, etc to help stock the Tiko Store)
 - Golden Cone – award for kids that line up on the playground and stay in a straight line, athletes from UW-Madison will come to the school and do a project with the kids (read a book, put on a play, etc)

Reviewed one year of data for '09-'10 school year. The ‘Days of the week’ grid showed that Wednesday has the most behavioral issues, and that before and after lunch are higher rates of referrals to the office. On the ‘months’ grid, October and March have the highest referral rates and the 3rd grade had the most referrals of all the grades. 960 referrals to the office were made in '09-'10.

Parent question (Todd C) – Will parents be educated on this plan so they can use it at home as well as support what is going on in the school? **Answer (Liz):** We are just starting and hoping that in the future more information will be shared with parents.

Parent question (Clint T)– “I echoed the comments from the last parent.” How can we get this out to other parents? **Answer (Liz):** Tonight is the beginning, and at behavior conferences (parents have been very receptive). Please give me (Liz) ideas and suggestions for how to get this out to parents.

Parent (Clint) – “Could we have a 30 minute seminar for parents to educate them on program? Also, I can put it on the Thoreau school website.

Response (Liz) – A workshop for parents will happen.

Parent (Jenice) - We could take a model from Satellite and have a light dinner and seminar once a month for parents.

Response (Liz & Principal Costello) - Let’s look into doing that.

Parent question (Christy E): Are Tiko tickets still being used? **Answer (Joan)** – Yes, it is one of the things that we are using, and it works with a lot of the

kids, teachers are being more thoughtful about how/when they are giving out tickets. **Gina (teacher & co-treasurer)** – Last year we had to get the kids hooked, it's a carrot, all the kids are getting tickets. **Mr. Vallee (teacher)** – I realized that there were 7 students in my class that did not get one (those kids were above the line), and we're being really conscious about trying to get tickets to all the kids. The process is different from teacher to teacher. **Kelly McCann (staff)** – Every teacher has their own thing going on, a lot of it is about community building within the classroom.

Parent (Leah S) – In the past there were hearts put on the wall for good behavior, the kids really liked it. Gave internal/external praise without the material component. **Liz & Joan** – Please be in touch with us with any ideas or suggestions.

3) Treasury Update (Gina S) –

- Big fundraiser is coming up, (carnival) is 10%, general direct donation 16%,
- We listened to the surveys that were sent out to parents last year and we will not be doing the gift-wrap fund raiser.
- this year we have spent \$ on the author visit, Opera for the Young, Pizza for Open House
- Opera for the Young is cancelled for 2011-2012 primarily due to cost (\$750.00) and curriculum goals, Opera for the Young will happen this school year and is scheduled for 10/15
- Principal Costello will be writing off on PTO Funds Request Form that teachers complete/request funds
- Principal Costello shared that at other PTOs that she has been involved in PTO funds were voted on at general meetings
- PTO Board took a vote and decided that PTO Funds Request Form from teachers will be approved by Principal Costello, then will go to the general meetings for a vote by everyone attending the meeting, if there is a deadline before the general meeting the PTO board will take a vote

Mr. Vallee (teacher): How much money does the PTO currently have?
Answer (Gina S): Approximately \$8900. **Parent (Anne Marie B):** Is the Foreign Language program included? **Answer (Gina S):** No.

Parent question (Todd C): Does the PTO have a mission statement? **Answer (Clint):** The PTO does have such a statement and it is on the PTO website, additionally it will be posted on the PTO bulletin board outside the main office.

4) Fundraising Update (Jenice) -

- T-shirts – we have sold 130 as of date, an order will be placed this week for backordered t-shirts
- Art Fundraiser – coming up, Mr. Mayhall, teachers and kids have worked hard to create art for Square One that parents can purchase (key chains, mugs, stickers, etc),

order forms are going home on November 1st, orders need to be in by November 11th, December 6th is when products will be delivered

- Fall Carnival – November 13th, looking for family or classroom sponsored games, looking for volunteers, last years event was a lot of fun we look to increase participation, this was a community event

Parent (Rosita G): I felt that the silent auction kept people apart last year. I suggest we have a raffle so that everyone has a chance to get something. **Jenice:** The layout will be different this year and the only entrance will be Nakoma Rd. The auction will be on 1st floor, then downstairs into gym for games. There will be a guessing game (jars with different objects in it) located with the silent auction. It will give everyone an opportunity to use their ticket to make a guess and there will be 3 jars for the guessing game. I will announce a winner at each hour, so jar 1 at 12noon, jar 2 at 1pm, jar 3 at 2pm. We need to raise money to support programs and are trying to balance between needing to raise money as well as not exclude anyone. **Parent (Rosita G):** At the school I came from in Virginia, teachers/principals made themselves available to donate their time for a special time with child (having lunch, going for coffee, etc.) that kids/families bid on through a raffle. **Louisa:** If you are interested in doing this type of raffle we welcome volunteers to chair a committee, organize an event or sponsor a game. Given the limited time frame that we have before carnival, PTO members cannot take on anything additional at this time. Jenice, could Rosita take on a new raffle idea? **Jenice:** I think that given our limited time and that we still need volunteers for things that we have in place we can't do it this year. I think it's a good idea and something we could look into for next year.

Parent Question (Robin G): The PTO has paid for school pictures in the past why didn't that happen this year? **Jenice:** The PTO does not organize it, the school organizes it. The PTO did not have enough time this year to prepare and plan to have a request go out to all families to ask to sponsor photos for a family that cannot afford a photo. Historically the PTO has paid for kindergarten pictures and 5th grade yearbooks. The yearbooks are a PTO event.

Parent Question (Todd C): Can parents have access to other children's contact information? **Louisa and Sherri:** Class Lists will go out in the beginning of November. There will be an electronic and paper version available. The PTO works with the main office, but it is something that the PTO is responsible for.

Parent Question (Todd C): How can I get involved? **Louisa:** There are lots of opportunities to get involved, chair a committee or be a member on a committee, come to minutes. Become a board member. We need and welcome volunteers. **Aphra:** Notices will be going out in backpacks to recruit Parent Ambassadors; we are looking for parent volunteers. **Parent (Shannon K.):** Thank you to the PTO for all that you do. I know it's

a lot of hard work and there aren't many of you. **Parent (Christy E.):** I got involved last year as a kindergarten parent, the PTO board and other parents are willing to help you get going and give advice. I really encourage people to join a committee and just get involved even if it is outside of your comfort zone. I started by helping with classroom baskets and now head up the coffee fundraiser. **Parent (Lauren Y.):** I've never seen this many teachers at the PTO meeting in the 5 years I've been at Thoreau. And it's great to see the "T" in the PTO being present at the meetings. **Louisa:** Yes, thank you so much to Gina for her hard work and being our teacher liaison.

Next PTO General Meeting:

Tuesday, November 9th @ 6:30-8:15pm

Location – to be determined, but it will be held outside of school and the Nakoma neighborhood