

Thoreau Elementary PTO Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2011 6:30 p.m.

Thoreau School LMC

Attendees: Kathy Adler, Helen Apel, Eric Bach, Lynn Bach, Ingrid Beamsley, Christine Bourne, Wendy Brand, Robin Conkey, Todd Conkey, Kathy Costello, Suzanne Dove, Christy Ehlert, Jennifer Foubert, Michelle Frehner, Rosita Gonzalez, Robin Gray, Susie Greblo, Kamal Hamdani, S Juan, Shawn Krueger, Shannon Kunstman, Alexande Mbambany, Kathy McCann, Louisa Medaris, Aphra Mednick, Betsy Parker, Andy Peters, Kevin Pomeroy, Diane Puccetti, Steve Ralser, Stephanie Robinson, Connie Roderick, Lauren Rosen Yeazel, Leah Sandholm, Pat Terry, Marcia Thieling, Susan Willis, Tom Willis

Meeting called to order at 6:37 by PTO President Rosita Gonzalez

Principal's Presentation – This is Principal Kathy Costello's second year at Thoreau.

Kathy discussed physical changes at school: new lockers, hallway floor, "Tico Nest" for kids who are having trouble in the classroom to use to regulate their bodies and return to class.

Behavior – two years ago, there were 1200 behavior referrals. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program last year. Down to 486 referrals last year. Data are collected, analyzed and responded to.

13 new staff – many are new allocations, including 4K, English Language Learners (ELL), Special Education.

Lost a third grade classroom due to low numbers. Students were absorbed into remaining classrooms. Thoreau has 419 students this year, not including 4K. There are 15 students in each 4K session. Last year's highest count was 415. There is always natural fluctuation. The planned bilingual Kindergarten did not evolve due to low enrollment. This will be revisited next year.

"Triple Dip" – when kids are not at grade level they get another "double dip" or dose of reading. During the first hour of the morning, Kelly McCann and additional staff will be in the "intervention room" and work with K & 1 students. A student's Triple Dip is working with his or her teacher, ELL/Special Ed, and the Intervention Room. Goal: students reading by end of 1st Grade

Changes to Talented and Gifted program (TAG): parents can nominate their children using a form in Kathy's office. This is for any field such as academics, performance, and art. The district is especially looking for gifted students who are minorities. A TAG district staff person will visit our school to work with TAG students.

The kitchen has been moved to the activity room. Historically, with lunch and breakfast in the gym, the gym was in use 4 hours a day. Changing this has enabled staff access to the gym and to have uninterrupted collaborative and literacy time. First-graders are now eating breakfast downstairs.

PTO Board Introductions – Rosita Gonzalez, PTO President – the Board members acknowledged last year’s Board for all their hard work. All members introduced themselves including Kelly McCann and Susan Willis, co-Vice-Presidents, Susie Greblo, Secretary, and Todd Conkey, Treasurer.

Volunteer Positions and Call for Volunteers

11/22/2011 Multicultural Festival – Christy Ehlert volunteered to chair

Schools of Hope – Tim Gatti, Schools of Hope Tutor Coordinator. Tutors make a one-hour commitment per week to work one-on-one with a student. Focus on literacy for K-3 students. Tim distributed information and tutor applications. Background checks are required for all Thoreau volunteers yearly (forms in school office). Tutors who worked with Schools of Hope will need only an update (forms from Tim).

Tico Store – Pat Terry and Helen Appel described their experience last year with the much-loved Tico store and their plans for this year. Children exchange tickets earned for above-the-line behavior for prizes from the store. Pat and Helen make sure that everyone can obtain a prize with their tickets; students with lots of tickets can get bigger items. A flyer will be coming out in backpack mail. The store to-date has been self-supported via donations, which can be brought to the office – there is a milk box there. Pat & Helen would love to have a permanent place for the store. They would also love to start a store for the teachers! Finally, 5th graders are sometimes hard to please with the store – Pat & Helen might involve them in the store as part of a Community project.

A central supply closet for teachers to stock classrooms has been established via a bank donation facilitated by Kathy Costello. Donations to the supply are always welcome. Shannon Kuntsman volunteered to pull together a teachers’ wish list, as she did last year.

The PTO Board still seeks a Fundraiser Chair. Fundraisers include small items for sale including re-usable lunch and snack bags, Smencils, and cookbooks.

The group is reminded that the Thoreau School Endowment Grant deadline is October 7.

Pancake Breakfast – Westminster Presbyterian will provide the location & kitchen on the first or second Saturday in February. This would be a great fundraiser / community event. The PTO Board seeks a chair.

Snow boots / pants drive: please continue to donate any gently-used items that you have at home. We would love to give students a brand-new set of winter gear to keep for their very own. Merrill Lynch has committed to match employee donations. Westminster Presbyterian is doing a giving tree. Teachers are collecting info about needs in their classrooms.

After school enrichment activities & transportation for students who get to school by bus. Ideally everything that happens in our school is open to all students. Children’s Theater of Madison will offer classes & scholarships for classes. Foreign Language classes are supported by PTO scholarships. Multiple parents are interested in providing homework clubs; Mr. Jason will offer Latin dance. We cannot afford to purchase a bus to transport children and haven’t been successful finding an organization to provide it. Sign-up sheets were provided at the meeting for parents to sign up to transport kids. Many parents and staff have had a positive experience doing this.

School slogan and colors, t-shirts and sweatshirts: Our school colors are blue and green. Suggestion from the group to have a contest for a t-shirt design. Tabled remaining discussion due to time constraint.

Budget Presentation, Discussion and Member Vote – Todd Conkey, PTO Treasurer.

There is a reimbursement form & process on the thoreauschool.org web site. Last year, the PTO became tax-exempt. We no longer reimburse sales tax. Todd can provide the certificate to enable you to purchase items tax-free on behalf of the PTO. This also means that monetary donations to the PTO are tax-deductible.

Reviewed last year's parent survey. Top five priorities of events: Talent Show, School Dance, Fun Run, School Fair, Poetry Night. Top five priorities of expenditures: Field Trip Scholarships, Teacher Academic Support, School Project Funding, Safety Patrol, Opera for the Young. All but the Opera were the top expenditures by the PTO.

PTO total assets are about \$9200. Typically a non-profit likes to have 6 months of expenses in reserve to have liquidity. Group would like to see ongoing discussion of the monies put in reserve. Todd could examine historic cash flow to attempt to identify what cushion we need.

Discussed planned Entertainment Book fundraiser. Books are sent home with students and if families would like to purchase they can return payment, otherwise return the books. Teachers are not expected to retrieve the books.

We will be parking cars at an October Badger football game along with other schools to raise funds.

School directory - the PTO Board would like to see every student have a printed directory. Discussed an opt-out option for families who do not want a printed copy; also discussed selling advertising in the directory as other schools do.

Robin Gray has negotiated a class picture and a 3.5 x 5 double sheet for every student who does not order a packet this year.

Discussed the carnival, which is planned every other year – the next carnival is in the 2012-2013 school year. Discussed the silent auction which has historically been a good money-maker. Rosita spoke to the concern that the auction divides our community. Discussion of this concern versus the need for funds. If the general membership of the PTO wants to pursue a silent auction then we will do it.

The upper playground fence was extended with a matching grant from MMSD facilitated by Leane Tyska. There is no active effort to continue playground improvements. The playground continues to be of interest to PTO members.

Motion from the floor to approve the proposed budget. Seconded. Motion passed.

Future meetings: Please provide agenda items two weeks prior to the next meeting. Agendas are distributed one week prior to meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Susie Greblo