

**Central PTO Board Minutes
Friday, November 13, 2015
Skokie School Community Room**

In attendance: Heather Smith (President), Lynn Wellehan (VP Communications), Sara Ridder (Secretary), Trisha Kocanda (Superintendent) Beth Kauffman (President, Crow Island PTO), Kymm Junker (Greeley PTO), Jen Hayes (President, Hubbard Woods PTO), Karen Palasz (Co-chair Skokie-Washburne PTO), Heather Pigott (Co-chair Skokie-Washburne PTO)

Excused: Amy Polachek (Treasurer), Kim Ronan (Greeley) Dana Crumley (School Board), Jenn Weiler (FAN), Gina Mathews (FAN)

The meeting was called to order at 9:20 a.m.

Welcome – Heather Smith

Secretary’s Report – Sara Ridder

The October minutes were approved.

Superintendent’s Report – Trisha Kocanda

Trisha announced that Daniel Ryan, currently principal at Hubbard Woods, has been appointed as the Assistant Superintendent. This is primarily a human resources role and he will focus on professional development as well as the District’s recruiting and retention plans. Daniel has a strong skill set in these areas and will be a tremendous asset in this role. He will finish the year at Hubbard Woods. While there will be some transition throughout this school year, the District will be respectful that his start date is July 1.

This leaves the principal role at Hubbard Woods open. The state has relaxed its rules, making it easier to conduct a national search. The job will be posted immediately following Daniel’s confirmation by the School Board at their next meeting.

The October Institute Day was very successful. Morning sessions focused on technology, with over 50 different sessions teachers could choose from. 95% of the teachers in attendance gave the day high ratings for meeting their needs. Students from Skokie and Washburne were also on hand presenting on the subject, “Don’t worry, be appy.” In the afternoon, teachers attended committee meetings. This helped to relieve pressure on teachers who are typically pulled out of class to attend these meetings and gave the committees time to discuss topics in depth.

Trisha is hosting a Shared Vision session for community and parents the week of November 16. The final vision is expected to be ready by January.

PARCC test results are expected to be out mid-November. All districts need to review the results before they are made official. Once this is done, we will be sending the results to families.

The Kindergarten Committee is presenting to the Board on Thursday, November 19, 2015. This committee recently sent a survey to the community, which garnered over 500 responses and a wide range of opinions. The ballpark estimate of incremental costs for a full-day program is \$600K to \$700K per year. The Committee is looking at a wide variety of options and issues on this subject, such as space, funding and schedules. It is expected that a decision will be made in February. While there is some urgency regarding this issue, the District will not move forward without a quality solution.

The District has been reviewing the state of our “vintage” playground equipment. There have been some minor injuries and the insurance company has also been looking into it. We do a monthly audit of the equipment and many of the older structures are grandfathered in. Some of these are now being removed altogether or repositioned to ensure appropriate fall zones. The District is currently looking into the cost of replacing the removed structures with safe, modern equipment. This will probably be done in the spring and summer and will be decided with the schools.

This October, a Crow Island student was seriously injured when he lost footing and his hand went through a plate glass window. This has prompted an audit of windows across all our schools. The majority of our windows are tempered and safe. However, those that are not will be replaced.

Alison Hawley is out on leave at the moment. The Administrative team is stepping in to make sure we don't lose momentum on Alison's initiatives.

School Board Report

The Board approved a contract extension for Trisha Kocanda to serve as School Superintendent through 2020.

FAN Report – Heather Pigott and Heather Smith for Jenn Weiler/Gina Mathews

There are two more FAN events in the calendar year. The first is Isabel Wilkerson, a Pulitzer Prize winning author who writes about the Great Migration. She is speaking on “Our Racial Moment of Truth” on November 16th.

Then, Steve Silberman will be speaking at New Trier on December 1st about viewing learning differences and challenges in a positive light. The title of his talk is, “Different, Not Less: NeuroTribes and the Future of Neurodiversity.”

President's Report – Heather Smith

Heather S. mentioned feedback she's received about contacting principals. She has been told they are difficult to reach and asked if there is a way to help address this.

Treasurer's Report – Heather Smith for Amy Polachek

We now have a tally of dues that have been received, a total of \$14,957. This is very close to our \$15,000 budget. There is also a \$3,000 budget rollover from last year.

VP Communications Report – Lynn Wellehan

No report

Skokie-Washburne Report – Karen Palasz & Heather Pigott

Skokie has some new clubs this year including: Math Counts, Happy Tillers and the Skokie News. REACH has kicked off, with the same theme as last year, “Choose Kind.” The school has put together a scheduling committee to look at next year including opportunities for exploratories and deeper learning. Washburne is also looking into revamping the cafeteria. This will be a huge, wonderful change—if it is viable.

The Washburne Principal Coffee is scheduled for Wednesday, November 18th at 9 am. Washburne Principal, Dave Kanne, is investigating ways to foster more cross-advisory interaction, such as book clubs.

The PTO is looking at ways to support programs including the STEAM Lab, the Burne and the Den (Skokie) because these are fun and exciting areas for kids. The PTO will not move forward with composting this year. However, the PTO is looking into replacing water fountains with refillable water stations.

The possibility of setting up an Angel fund to help families with school-related expenses was discussed. It was noted that these needs might be best funneled through the District.

Crow Island Report – Beth Kauffmann

Composting will not start at Crow Island this year either. There are currently difficulties with the recycling program and the PTO is hoping to improve this by purchasing different colored bins to eliminate confusion, as well as ways to engage the lunch supervisors and custodial staff to help. There are additional frustrations with the lunch program because there is a lack of indoor space for cold and rainy days. Most kids have to watch movies in the auditorium during lunch recess, which is not ideal. The PTO is trying to get more parents to help with The Maker Space during this time frame to help.

Greeley Report – Kymm Junker

The annual Halloween party was a success. Families donated games and activities to keep the kids engaged. Another Bingo Night has been added for December, and the PTO will provide the prizes for this event. The PTO is working on ways to provide assistance for the STEAM Room. In addition, the garden is ready to harvest. Crops include Swiss chard, turnips and many herbs.

Plans are underway for a fun, casual parent party to be held at the Winnetka Community House in February.

Hubbard Woods Report – Jen Hayes

The PTO just finished their Ways and Means. The Cardboard Challenges was a big success. For any other schools interested in doing this in the future, you can contact Abt for boxes—they will deliver them for \$50. Both kids and parents loved it. There have been lots of parents involved in the Idea Lab as well and it has been very successful.

Today (Friday, November 13th) is the Fall Luncheon, a PTO fundraiser.

Other Central PTO Business – Heather Smith

Picture Release Form – Tricia worked with our attorney and The Winnetka Public Schools Foundation on the wording. We will combine Central PTO and each of the schools individually to make sure everything is covered. Ideally, this will be included in the registration materials (InfoSnap) for the next school year.

Heather S. recommended we discuss the collection of dues on InfoSnap when we get closer to registration time.

Each of the school PTO Presidents provided an overview of how they approach Teacher Appreciation and Holiday gifts:

Crow Island revamped their gift policy last year. Traditionally, the room parents collected funds for the teachers and aides, but this didn't fit with the current staffing model because some were collecting for specials teachers, others were not. Now, the PTO collects \$45 per child, through PayPal, which is put in a big pot. Everyone gets a check, with the amount allocated based upon positions. The Room Parents then coordinate a heart felt card & gift, for which the PTO reimburses \$40.

70% of the total is spent on teacher gifts, with some saved for the teacher at the end of the year, and perhaps extra for the aide. In addition, the PTO contributed some additional funds for the aides where they were short. There has been some pushback to this new system, but overall a success.

Hubbard Woods – Traditionally, room parents collected \$30 from each parent and the room parents determined how it was spent. Collection of funds was moved to PayPal with \$40/child collected for the gift fund. Ninety percent of the families contributed, bringing in \$9,400, with an added \$1,000 cushion. Gifts are allocated by percentage—with \$250 for classroom teachers, less for part-time, etc. The checks are packaged in gift bags and given to the teachers. Haven't yet determined how to handle the end of the year. The PTO may purchase something simple, like plants, to be given to the teachers.

Greeley – Room parents handle everything, collecting between \$30-\$40 per student. The Room Parent uses these funds for a holiday gift and an end of the year gift. The PTO decided not to be involved in this, and let each class handle it themselves.

Skokie/Washburne – Room parents determine the amount to collect, typically \$20-25 per student. At present, gifts for specials teachers are not included in the collection.

Upcoming Central PTO Business

At the next meeting we will discuss Teacher Appreciation as well as PTO Fund Wish Lists, with a look at how funds are allocated between student and staff needs.

The business portion of the meeting will be short, approximately 45 minutes. Following this, a couple of school board members will join us for a discussion.

Meeting concluded at 11:03

Next Meeting December 4th at 9:15am.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Ridder
Secretary 2015-2016