

Central PTO Meeting Minutes February 3, 2016

In attendance: Heather Smith (President), Lynn Wellehan (VP Communications), Amy Polachek (Treasurer), Sara Ridder (Secretary), Trisha Kocanda (Superintendent), Beth Kauffmann (President, Crow Island PTO), Kim Ronan (President, Greeley PTO), Jen Hayes (President, Hubbard Woods PTO), Karin Palasz (Co-chair Skokie-Washburne PTO), Heather Pigott (Co-chair Skokie-Washburne PTO), Gina Mathews (FAN)

The meeting was called to order at 9:18 a.m.

Heather welcomed the group.

Secretary's Report – Sara Ridder

Heather Smith moved to approve the minutes, Karin P. seconded. Minutes were approved.

Superintendent's Report – Trisha Kocanda

There is a new vendor for Adventures in Learning registration. They are working on providing Winnetka residents with the ability to register a week before non-residents. However, it is too late in the process to make other changes to the structure of the program.

The District's Shared Vision is complete:

The Winnetka Public Schools community empowers every student to flourish in an innovative, experiential environment. We support and challenge all learners to actively engage in their continual growth and achievement to make a meaningful difference in the world.

The big change was the addition of the phrase “making a meaningful difference in the world” They will be reaching out to the community with this new vision and will be making decisions that incorporate it.

The District is working with the Alliance on Early Childhood on a preschool & kindergarten summit being held next week. To date, 170 participants had signed up for this event being held at the Botanic Gardens. It is open to Township Kindergarten and preschool teachers; some policy makers will also be in attendance. At least 3-5 teachers from each of our elementary schools will be attending. Keynote speaker is Diane Levin on *Endangered Play, Endangered Development: What Research Says About the Importance of Play in the 21st Century*.

Parent Education is currently a big push. The schools have been hosting math-specific sessions and some technology-based session being held as well.

Jennifer Leininger from Lurie Children's Hospital will be presenting on gender identity and research on how gender is identified. There will be a session for parents as well as a session for staff.

Trisha is considering starting a book study group to engage young families and help to ease the anxiety they often feel. Committee members suggested coordinating this across the District schools. It was suggested that the group could start with The Importance of Being Little.

New Trier is coming to the District twice this month. Next Wednesday, February 10th is a presentation about the math curriculum. On the 18th, Linda Yonke will be presenting on New Trier preparedness.

The District's ERB performance had mixed results. While the reading scores came back to prior levels, the math scores took a dip. The District is looking into this and is working to make sure our students are efficient with their math facts, and also have critical mathematical thinking capabilities.

The STEAM expansion plan was presented to the Board in January. The Board will vote on this in March. It costs about \$90K year to get it off the ground, and it will be another \$10-12K each year to keep it going.

The District recognizes just how tight space at Crow Island is at present. Currently, they are working on putting together a plan that will give Crow Island flexibility and relief. The final approach must follow Village processes, and will also be based upon enrollment trends across the schools. The idea is to put temporary classrooms at Crow Island for short-term relief while studying the possibilities in more detail. The final plan will also depend upon decisions on full-day Kindergarten.

Treasurers Report – Amy Polachek

In March we will be donating money to the organizations that we support. As we are on budget, the donations should be consistent with what we had decided before.

Communications - Lynn Wellehan

Thank you for sending out information about Linda Yonke events.

FAN – Gina Matthews

There are several great events coming up in February, including:

Panel on, *The End of Education, the Future of Learning*. This will be held at ETHS on Wednesday, February 17th.

David Yaeger on, *The Paradox of Adolescent Behavior Change* at NSCD on February 23rd at 7 pm.

Senator Cory Booker on, *United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good* at ETHS on Feb 26 at 7:30.

Scott Barry Kaufman, Ph.D. on *Intelligence Redefined* on February 29 at New Trier Northfield Campus, 7 pm.

Madeleine Levine will be speaking on the subject of anxiety, building upon what she's learned since her book, *The Price of Privilege* on March 3.

Skokie/Washburne – Heather Pigott & Karin Palasz

STEAM has been a big push. Tim Selgrat has done a great job setting up the space to look like the El with different colors for different sections. The big issue is getting more kids into that space. They are investigating changes in the school day to get more kids access. Dave is also working on staffing it at lunch and having an after school club to increase usage opportunities.

Kelly continues to reach out to the community to get more parents into the school. Recently she did a presentation on *The Five Love Languages* that was very interesting and well attended.

Earth Week is coming up, the District Green Team working on this.

Next week is a Valentine's Lunch where PTO hospitality brings in lunch for teachers.

The Gardening Club is looking into composting. PTO environmental projects include a new refillable water bottle station in each school.

They are looking into planning a parent session on talking to your kids about drinking and substance abuse.

Crow Island – Beth Kauffmann

The space planning issues, as mentioned above, have been the big focus.

In addition to this, the PTO is working on making all parents feel included in decisions, and continuing to think about the best ways to utilize volunteers.

Greeley – Kim Ronan

Greeley is starting to get the STEAM space up and going in the Resource Center. They are rolling into it gradually, thinking through space.

There is an upcoming artist in residence program that includes drama, improv and story telling. Because the Foundation is funding the STEAM space, the PTO is using these now freed-up funds to bring the artist in residence to other grades.

Currently evaluating composting program as well.

Parent party is at the end of February at the Winnetka Community House.

Hubbard Woods – Jen Hayes

The parent party is tonight (Friday, February 3) at the Happ Inn. 170 parents are attending.

The 2nd grade recently built wagons to move books around.

Dash and dot programming program is underway.

As part of the Decades Project a dance instructor is teaching every class a dance from their decade. Dances will be performed at the Spring Sing.

Other Central PTO Business – Heather Smith

Acknowledgement & Receipt of Donations

Each school received a report of who gave. Those who gave are able to print out their receipt via InfoSnap. The overall policy is to send a thank you and receipt for standalone donations in the amount of \$250 or more. The treasurers at each of the individual schools should send these acknowledgements.

Other schools noted their policies:

Greeley does send thank you letters for their \$100 donations, as this also works as a good check for monies coming from different sources. Crow Island does it for donations over \$100, but not always consistently.

School Directories

The District and committee reached out to other schools to see how directories are handled. Various approaches were found.

- Kenilworth tried to do it as a District, with mixed results.
- Wilmette uses Power School Systems. The info is collected through InfoSnap and the PTO prints out the information but does not massage the data.
- Glencoe PTO shares information backwards

Trisha noted it would be fine to pull out the handbook language from the Directory to make it easier to compile the directories.

Possibly add a box on InfoSnap to enable parents to buy it on the app version, and make the directory cost consistent across schools to make payment processing easier?

Do we need printed directories? PTO presidents to go back to their schools to ask their boards. We will discuss and make a decision next month.

Nominating Committee

Kim Ronan and Lynn Wellehan have volunteered to serve on the committee. Think of good people at your schools and submit names to Cynthia Cata. Cynthia will be here in March with the slate We will vote on the slate in April.

The meeting was adjourned on 10:52.

The next meeting is March 4th.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Ridder
Secretary, 2015-2016