PTO Board Meeting Minutes

4/7/20 location: hosted on zoom

Meeting called to order at 7:36pm

In Attendance – Principal Herlihy, Barbara Mauger, Shion Walsh, Jen Tomaneng, Sue Johnston, Jess Lourie, Lori Zinner, Becky Schwartz, Emily Restivo, Sangeeta Jathar, Kerry Prasad, Jen Terrazino, Adam Howes, Rob & Liz Flaig, Xiaodan Xie, Emma Ardiff, Ryan Brennan

**Distance Learning**

Reviewed the new CS/NPS distance learning, with a checkin on how this has been going. The group echoed that it can be a struggle at times. Some variability in what classes are doing. Zooms. Sangeeta has kids of different ages, feels like K is most engaged – they like seeing the teacher and the structure; 4th is good; whereas 6th is more disorderly. Would it be possible to have daily for K, as it gives a sense of normalcy to see teacher and friends daily. Beth mentioned there are daily recorded messages from all the teachers; need to be mindful of equity, those with multiple kids and not enough devices etc, in terms of frequency. Going forward there will continue to be daily message recorded. Jen Terrazino – zoom lunches twice a week hosted by room parents – eat lunch and chat - this has been a hit and great success. Barbara – could have room parent coordinators send out suggestion that the room parents organize this. Becky- being careful with screen time, but this is less bad screen time. Barbara – social interaction important. Beth – expectation is 15min twice a week but teachers doing a lot more. Jen Terrazino mentioned her room parents are super helpful and have done alot.

What are expectations? Beth – still phasing it in. K-3 will have access to lexia and other online resources. If you get kids logged in, they can do independently. Teachers meeting regularly, meeting with Beth. Plan is to streamline communications. Next week, small groups, recorded lessons for reading, writing, literacy. And check ins with families. Meet weekly to see if kids need outreach. Don’t want to stress parents as recognize already juggling. Should be up to 3 hrs a day. ELL/special ed sending out plans to those families. Teachers are really focused on making sure people doing ok. Teachers and Beth happy to help if anything needed. Teachers aren’t hearing much but would like to hear more. Emily Restivo - would like to get a snapshot of how days are for families. Rob – hasn’t felt like feedback was requested from his class. Beth said that teachers will be requesting more feedback this week. Barbara – important social connection, consistency.

Beth - Title 1 resources – partnered with newtonville books and learning express for care packages. Markers, glue sticks, anything. IT resources as well. More $ if needed.

Emily Restivo – wants to hear from parents. Some items are hard to do without a lot of parent involvement. Hard for working households. Sangeeta – depends on day of the week; Mon/Tues hard for some kids after the weekend. Beth – parents know their kids and what is best; school resources available if kids stressed. Gmail plans – currently kids are relying on parent emails – the hope is there is a device and can just log your child in, and they will have everything. Google drive might be helpful for older groups. Jen Tomaneng – would appreciate more feedback – how much can be independent. Adam – daughter figured out lesson plan was in her google drive and was able to do. Emily – hope is for kids to be more independent at least for 3-5. How about big buddies helping little buddies. Julie – some 1st graders are independent and doing ok with this but it varies. Adam – have to be more permissive with video time. Becky – balance of giving kids something to do with not too much screen time. Little kids get crazy with too much screen time. Can move lessons outside. Set timer for 15min then take 5min break from screen. Shy – hard to keep kids on right screen item. If kids need reminders, Beth mentioned the teachers can check in at the beginning of the day and end, or help. Not equitable, given different families (one or both parents working), even teachers (may have spouse helping or not, may have kids or not). Beth reminded us that they will catch kids up when we return, and want to make sure kids are doing ok. Journal or drawing pictures may help.

Action items:

* Becky and Jess can send suggestions to room parents, to email their classes
* Put an item in newsletter to reach out if people need resources – even markers, glue sticks etc

**Gift cards and donations**

Beth still has some giftcards but rationing. Will respect confidentiality etc. Has $300 left. Will review if we still put in newsletter depending on needs. Barbara mentioned how generous and quickly responsive people have been.

Kerry – Newton Cares COVID-19 fund is up. PTO Council mtg tmr night – see if a broader PTO interest in gift cards etc.

School end date – not determined. Barbara asks if we can retrieve things - no one in building except teachers. If there is something special needed, is retrievable.

Lori – found some extra items when cleaning. Toys games etc. For summer etc. Beth will review with staff.

**CAS** – Kerry & Emma

Emma – met with other schools today. If presenters prepared to do recording, or link, could do this – some presenters are. Stacey Moriarty – give online learning time to settle in before introducing more. Each grade has had 1-2 programs this year. People shared different perspectives. Jen Terrazino – in-person is great, so maybe wait, or do one presentation for multiple schools. Jen Tomaneng – check in with grade level – some activities or ages may translate better ie bubbles vs origami. Kerry – given time constraints, may make more sense to record, then put into lesson plan, to make accessible to most people. Also need to consider special ed, ELL. Also need to consider finances; we haven’t paid for these yet; donations may be down next year, no raffle etc. Emma – if we pre-record, maybe do live interactive in future. Jen Terrazino – sending so many video links already; needs to be engaging. Emily Restivo – authors are probably struggling financially too – maybe have them join on zoom. Liz- what will quality of presentation be, how high quality to decide if it makes sense. Barbara – we already have a lot of links and contacts, a lot of zoom invites. Kerry shared the feedback from the Board and teachers is all helpful in gathering info; would like financial input from board. Ryan – if people agree to do this, we have funds, however, it might be advisable to wait to make a thoughtful decision. Beth mentioned we should have a community celebration when we can be together again, and Ryan confirmed we will have funds set aside to fund this. Origama might be tough online! Storytelling could be great. Kerry asked for further input from teachers. Jen Terrazino- equity issues ie if one grade wants and another doesn’t; Beth suggested trying to be equitable amongst grade levels. Kerry also highlighted need to be mindful of global equity issues amongst schools. Barbara suggested input from teachers, and see if we can make equitable amongst grades. Kerry – authors done. Story teller for 3-5. Bee lady.

Action plan:

* Emma and Kerry will reach out to grade level teachers, then decide from there.
* Barbara – will check in with grade levels, make sure fair.

**Newton Serves** – Sue Johnston

Newton Serves is cancelled. People are still looking for ways to help out the community. School needs to be cleaned up. Maybe a signup genius, and scheduling very specific items to tackle – time frame, work as family on one area. People will have to bring own equipment, own flowers. Maybe get mulch from the city. Strictly volunteer based. Barbara and all – great idea. Can cleanup. Repaint the sidewalk welcome message. Etc. Ryan – parents could be reimbursed – can email receipts. Pockets of money as not in school but balanced by decreasing fundraising. Once we can get into school, maybe do more in there. Focus on community building projects. Paint parking lot – lines and numbers. Barbara – maybe do the usual outside stuff, then see what else to do. Playground needs work too – but maybe do this after Newton Serves, and iIn the warmer months, work on sanding and staining. Jen Tomaneng – need to abide by covid restrictions for playgrounds. Jen Terrazzino – sign saying parking lot spots are for teachers and are assigned. Barbara – great idea and let’s start advertising.

**Raffle** – Lori Zinner, Liz & Rob Flaig

Raffle was to be 3/24. We have 130 prizes. Options: have raffle the week after we go back to school. If we don’t go back, maybe put each kid’s name in each prize and draw names. Could do online raffle but usually a charge, percentage of what made. Could wait until fall but annual fund then so one might suffer. Ryan budgeted: $7k profit budgeted, costs about $750. Not essential, but balance. If we go back to school 6/1, families won’t want to hear about fundraiser. Ryan recommends carefully considering, being careful about selling out to raffle company. Liz – community idea – donate if you can, but include everyone in the raffle – something to celebrate. Rob – let people opt out, or maybe choose; those who can be generous will be. Don’t delay raffle because everything will be next year/delayed. This can be something positive and to engage people. Jen Terrazino – what about people who already donated; should let people get money back or can donate. Lori got some donations already – would be best to refund everyone so no one feels awkward, but give them an option to donate to raffle fund. Maybe do in next few weeks. Jen Terrazino – call it a drawing, not a raffle; an “opportunity drawing”. Raffle team has done an amazing job!

**Misc.**

Group consensus about how wonderful our community is. How supportive and positive people are. We are very fortunate to be part of this school group.

Beth – if anyone is sick or needs help, please have them reach out.

Julie asked about collecting thank you cards for healthcare workers, firefighters, essential workers etc. Healthcare workers would love getting a thank you note or a cute picture from a kid. Beth mentioned that all classes are working on community this week. Beth – when things are better, teachers could drive thru community too, say hi etc.

Xiaodan – appreciates what teachers, PTO are doing. Weekly plan is very helpful.

Jen Terrazino – “tips for parents” might help. Barbara – people have asked for these from people, and no responses. Jen suggested maybe teachers could offer helpful suggestions. Barbara – maybe room parents could reach out to classrooms and try to share tips with each other.

Mtg adjourned 9:40pm

Next meeting: April, likely Zoom format again, TBA