PTO Meeting

Wednesday, October 14 at 7pm, via Zoom

Called to order at 7:02pm.

In attendance: Principal Herlihy, Ms. Jennifer Tomaneng, Sue Johnston, Lori Zinner, Barbara Mauger, Christine O’Donnell, Sharon Morgenbesser, Joris Gjata, Chesley Muniz, Xiaodan Xie, Nick Jathar, Renuka Raghavan, Gat Rauner, Shion (Shy) Walsh, Rakshaa Dadlani, Vera Procaccia.

**Pumpkin Decorating**

Details of pumpkin decorating reviewed. Will have kids bring in a decorated pumpkins. Will have tables in different locations at the different entrances, where people can drop off their pumpkins. Pumpkin dropoff 10/26 cohort A, 10/29 cohort B; DLA 10/28 after 12:30. Have on display – maybe a drop-in open house - on 10/30 between 4-6pm, 10/31 am. Have music playing, make festive/joyful. Encourage costumes, masks required. Stagger by grade level. Discussed judging. Judging on 10/30? Judges will be CS kids - allow kids to vote, to encourage community, and have community decision. Could have different categories, like most artistic, scariest, silliest etc. Gift cards for winners. Announce winners in Sunday’s update. For DLA, could have photos of pumpkins to distribute; allow DLA to vote electronically. DLA can either send photo of their pumpkin or bring in actual photo. Principal Herlihy can take photos and make slideshow for community – maybe send on 10/30. Allow families to pick up after, on 10/31 afternoon. Sue will write this up. Also reviewed, will need to stagger times. Put under tents or decorate walks. At night, bring inside, given our very hungry squirrels and rabbits, and also to prevent any other mischief that might damage the pumpkins.

Action items: Sue will write up and the Co-Ps will further review and finalize plans. Other details as above.

**Planning a Principal Coffee – Principal Herlihy**

Principal Herlihy attended DLA session which was helpful and informative. Still launching the year – checking in with everyone, still assessing students. Trying to meet kids where they are, socially and emotionally. Teachers have double the planning. Very difficult to fill positions – few applications. Parents are encouraged to reach out to teacher/Principal H, as each student/family may have unique needs. Will be doing new math program - ST math – in place of Dreambox. Chrome books going out next week. iPads have arrived at the district so this will help. Want to partner with families to make as successful as possible. This is new and challenge for all. How are we assessing students – doing this sequentially, working on 1st, next is 2nd. Working on stamina and perseverance. “Yardsticks” has grade by grade general guidance and milestones. Adjusting to zooms and approaches reviewed. New curriculum is being introduced. Working on assessing, differentiations, extensions. Reaching out to teacher is always best. Encourage independence as though in the classroom, reach out to students. Might make most sense to have Curriculum Night first, then Principal Coffee. Maybe in November.

**Back to School Night – Principal Herlihy**

Planning for late October. Prioritize time of teachers. Will have PTO reach out at a different time – likely video. Not sure yet about teacher conferences. Thurs 10/29 for the night. Likely will send out PTO video that Wed.

Action items: Co-Ps will meet with Principal H and coordinate video.

**DLA Liaison Update**

DLA Liaison Coalition has formed. Reps from different schools. There will not be one at Ward, but other schools will have reps. Would be nice to have CS volunteer – Lori has been doing this but happy to have parent who has DLA child. Shared info from recent meeting: a lot of concerns were expressed at the meeting, most of which overlap with non-DLA such as playground access, teacher access, unfilled downtime. People expressed all parents are concerned about these issues which are challenging in a pandemic. Need to make sure there is Equity between both groups. The DLA Coalition is currently a small group of Coalition parents, and not clear what is being discussed at these meetings is representative of all DLA parents. We want to connect the 2 communities (hybrid & DLA), as one community together. DLA parents in attendance at the PTO meeting expressed they do not feel excluded, and expressed this is a challenging time for everyone. The group expressed our desire to continue to hear from and include CS DLA parents and work on our “one CS” community.

Action items: Will continue with DLA Liaison Coalition representation and outreach to all DLA parents, and continue to focus on unity of DLA/hybrid with “one CS” community.

**ELL Updates**

Virtual TG feast – planning event in mid-Nov where ELL teacher will teach kids about TG. Recognize all cultures, celebration of food.

**Directory**

Permissions complete. Class lists to go out this week. Class lists are a privacy issue, not pandemic issue.

Printed vs electronic: survey went in Update, have heard from about 25 people so far. Will need to send reminder blast. Not clear how many people saw the survey. Should order extra copies. Need to remind people to update in membership toolkit. Sue can reconcile membership toolkit with class lists.

People will decide if they want printed directory or not, which includes the intro pages and the class lists. Question should we distribute the PTO-intro pages in a printed vs electronic form to everyone? Some of the info is duplicative, or available on-line. Some of the info is fluid, and might change over the year. If we don’t print, should all be available on the PTO webpage. It was decided we would not send out the intro pages to everyone.

Maybe 10 extra copies for Dolly. Paper copy for winner of cover art contest .   
Also need to make sure we are translating everything.

Action items: Julie is running the survey in the update again. And will send blast. Julie will send final directory pages to Karl, for the website.

**All-Newton PTO meeting.**

Informal meeting organized by Williams School – brainstorming how the PTOs are handling different events. Williams is doing an outdoor Halloween party, with time slots, and photo booths and other events. Some schools doing pumpkin decorating outside. This group is sharing ideas and seeing what is feasible. CAS will likely be remote, want to provide tangible CAS for kids. This was also reviewed at PTO-C meeting. Many parents hope to avoid screen time. Some CAS activities would translate well into zoom, but don’t want to add another Zoom. Maybe origami could be on Zoom, but would be part of curriculum; this and some of the other 4th grade items translate well. Maybe survey parents. Maybe survey grade teachers – may differ by grade level. Could we do these, and use our outdoor space – for hybrid, maybe film for DLA – but need to make sure the experience is equitable for DLA. Can we pick and choose CAS topics – ie pick the ones that translate well? No CAS thru January so this will be an ongoing discussion.

**Brainstorming about community events/engagement**

Pumpkin decorating as above.

Gat shared community puzzle idea. Could make part of Inclusive Schools week. Could make community video.

Virtual karaoke

As we approach holidays, thinking about best fundraisers – in past have collected gifts, diapers

**Annual Fund**

Welcome to Joris Gjata, our new Fundraising Chair! Annual Fund brochure is printed. Will try to pass out to parents. Can pass out brochures with devices as these are going out over next 2 weeks.

Reviewed teacher stipends – a lot of variability amongst schools. Need to make sure DLA teachers covered as well. Maybe try to focus more on mini-grants then stipends. Particularly as we don’t know our fundraising totals.

**Miscellaneous Topics:**

**Picture Day**Have 80 parents signed up for DLA day. May rain – if so, reschedule to Sunday. Will decide maybe Thursday.

**Room Parents**

Signups still in process. Room parents should reach out to teacher about plans. Try to do by class not cohort – maybe lunch Zoom. This year have 5th grade Room Parents. They are working on 5th grade experience - committee of 5 thus far.

**Election day**

There will be 20-30 kids in class that day. 5th grade bake sale? Could hold if outside. Beth will inquire centrally. If we ran, would probably need to be adults. Would need plexiglass shield, purell, individual wrapped etc. Could do mix of store-made items, ideally individually wrapped, as many may be more comfortable with this. Could get some bulk items from Costco. Keep it simple and easy. Payment – venmo; Square app? Have one person dedicated to cash not touch food. Principal H emailed – if we can proceed, will work on in more detail.

5th grade committee reviewed. Will invite DLA parents.

Student loss at Newton South. Was CS graduate. Might be nice to have plaque or other memory, scholarship fund. Reach out to family before end of year. PTO is happy to fund this. Maybe a donation once we know preferred interest.

Nice to have new members and faces and we welcomed attendees at current meeting, and hope for more going forward

Next meeting: 2 weeks

Meeting adjourned 953pm