

PTA General Meeting
March 10, 2015, 7:00 pm
HES Library

Welcome—President Mary Warneka was attending a PGCPs meeting with Dr. Maxwell. Christine Blackerby (Secretary) led the meeting.

1. Our Community that Cares

- Supply donations—HES has received many generous donations (e.g., paper, crayons). If you want to donate, you can give them to Mr. Swann in the front office, Ms. Peele (1st grade teacher), or your child's classroom teacher.
- Purchases—The PTA-purchased kiln has been installed, but we're waiting on the running of the electric.
- Support for Portillo Family—After losing their home in a fire, the PTA participated in an effort to help the Portillo family recover. The family received more than \$500 and truck-loads of donations pushed through the PTA. A great showing of support from the community.

2. Facilities

- Discussion began as a thank you to the volunteers who helped manage the disruption from the burst water pipes. A discussion about the school facilities ensued. It was noted that HES's utilization is nearly 150%. The question was asked who should be contacted to advocate for necessary funding. The answer: Dr. Maxwell, school board members, state delegation, Governor Hogan. Should not be a form letter going out. Individual input to officials is preferred and thought to be more productive.
- There was a question about a state architect's December visit. No report has been received.
- It was suggested that there be a coordinated PTA approach to this facilities issue. The new Felegy Elementary School is assumed by some to address the needs of HES. This needs to be dispelled. Overcrowding and facilities obsolescence are the main issues facing HES. It was proposed that there be a special meeting, which would include PGCPs and Board reps. **Facilities meeting at North Western High School on March 19, 6:30 p.m.**

3. Support for Parents

- School Kidz—There is a proposal for an online supply kit that families can purchase in advance of the school start. The cost would be between \$20 and \$30. It would be an option. It would be delivered 2 weeks before school starts. It would be a convenience. No special benefit to the school. Though, parents can add on bulk items that would benefit the school. **Action: Grade-level chairs need to review the list and confirm.**

4. PARCC testing

- Testing has started. This has displaced Art for a month. Testing is for grades 3 to 5. There is no opt out option. There are accommodations for students with special needs. Principal Burton has significant concern about the time students are expected to spend on testing and feels that we require additional mobile testing lab or a bigger physical space for testing. There are many other assessments that take away from instructional time.

- Participant asked a question about color-blindness test taking. Ms. Burton replied that the test proctor can choose a background for child's individual testing identity so that we can make sure color blind students will not be at a disadvantage. The software also has ability to read text out loud for the math test. Ms. Burton noted that the tests are difficult and rigorous.
- Participant asked what the tests do. Ms. Burton said they demonstrate how well children can access information and problem solve (e.g., read two articles and compare/contrast, watch video clip, read article and write about what are the main ideas). Ultimately, the point of the test is to see how well Maryland student are prepared compared with children from other states. The test is meant to reflect the more challenging curriculum we've been using. It's a very new experience and the testing industry is making big profits.
- A parent expressed concern about the amount of time spent testing vs. amount of time spent learning. Parent question—what can PTA do to get some of the time back for active learning vs. spending time on assessments? Answer: this is a big topic which deserves a special meeting. It was noted that in some states high school students are refusing to take tests. Only one HES parent requested opt-out, but Maryland does not allow opting out. In states with an opt-out option, schools pressure students to take the tests. Each school system has its own tests in addition to PARCC. A reduction in testing is not expected. Powers that be add additional testing requirements, so much so that longer school days or years seem necessary. It's imperative that we advocate for a reduction in the time spent on these kind of assessments to allow for an increase in opportunities for authentic learning experience. The Kindergarten readiness assessment may be the first one to go on a state department of education level.

5. School Budget for 2015-2016 School Year

- HES's total allotment increased by \$88,000 due to increase of per pupil spending and spending for special needs students. HES is approved for Title 1 targeted assistance for next year, which provides reading and math interventions to students who are struggling most and not receiving other support/services (Special Ed and ESOL). HES continues to have a very high percentage of kids living in economically disadvantaged homes (i.e., poverty). Title 1 funding provides funds for teachers, supplies, and six week after-school help for targeted students. HES is projected to have 536 students next year for K-5. The projections from last year for this year were incredibly accurate.
- Keeping all of our current teachers in place, we can "buy" one more teacher and have about \$40,000 left over for discretionary funds. There was a discussion about what to do with remaining funds. Buying another teacher was agreed by all to be the right thing to do. HES has only \$82 remaining in its budget for supplies, which explains the need for a "supply drive." PGCPs funds 0.6 of our Art teacher; we fund the remaining 0.4. Music—vocal and instrumental—Mr. Ambrose has been extremely successful at engaging students (65 this year vs. 13 last). There is also an after school steel pan class; teachers are really going above and beyond according to Ms. Burton. If you look at all of the options our kids have, we're really stretching our money and spending it efficiently right now.

6. Discussion

- Primary areas for advocacy—new building, IB, reduction of assessment time.
- HES will not have an assistant principal next year (like this year). Though a helpful position, Ms. Burton does not feel it's crucial.
- Ms. Burton noted the importance of PTA support when items, such as extra uniforms, are needed. She also noted that value of the community support of the school (e.g., grandparent, parent).
- Question: if an additional 5th grade class is added, where would it go? Answer—Ms. Burton will work with her boss and PGCPs facilities staff to figure out where we could put another class. One possibility, though not desirable, would be to eliminate pre-K at HES.
- Question: Will be pushed out or not because of all the snow days? Answer: We don't know yet.
- Ms. Burton suggested that for the last week of school we plan something fun so it is not meaningless—we'll need help with that. Career Day or Day in the Arts or Science day, etc. It might be messy but kids will be more engaged.

7. Upcoming Events—

- *March 20 Family Movie Night*—6 to 8:30—there'll be pizza, hot dogs for sale. We will not be advertising outside of the school (HOPE or HNMoms listservs). Admission is free but we'll request a donation of school supplies, which will be listed on posters and flyers. Volunteers needed to help with concessions.
- *April 18 Hyattsville Parade*—We have some ideas to increase attendance. Question—if they could spend the day in art class making something they could bring in the parade—hats, banners or anything. Volunteers also needed.
- *May 4–8 Staff Appreciation Week*—Volunteers needed. We'll do online sign-up again - the teachers really appreciate this event.
- *May 9 Soccer Night at DC United against Kansas City*—Tickets will be \$15 instead of \$30. Several schools will be participating. Our choir will be performing the National Anthem with one of our students as the soloist.
- *May 16 Native Plant Sale*—PTA's biggest fund raiser of the year. It involves a Friday afternoon to set up (starting at 4 p.m.) and Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. (shorter this year). Volunteer are needed for both days. Online sign-up pending.
- *May 30 Bike Rodeo*—Lisa Davidson: This will be a bike safety training event. We'll set up a course on the playground with twists and turns. Kids will need to bring their own bikes. Fun, active - possible concession stand for additional fund raising. Volunteers will be needed to help set up the course.
- Ken asked if we have a spring cleanup planned - answer we have it on the calendar but have not planned it out yet. (Note: this is scheduled for April 18 but may need to be rescheduled due to a conflict with the City's parade.)