



General Meeting Minutes for the 2008 -- 2009 Academic School Year
October 14, 2008 ~ Wilkins School Library ~ 7:30 p.m.

PTA *Board Members* in attendance:

Co-President: Krista Hanks
Secretary: Jil Romano
Treasurer: Michele Donoghue

PTA *Board Members* absent: Christine Poisson

PTA Total *Members* in attendance: 26

The meeting was called to order at: 7:35 p.m.

President's Report

- Pledge of Allegiance.
- Round-table introduction of everyone in attendance.
- Introduced special guest speaker Mary Jennings, Superintendent of SAU #39
- Deb Anthony, Amherst PTA member was acknowledge and appreciated for organizing a Staff Appreciation day for AMS in November. She is the "former" chair for this committee and just might offer the PTA another volunteer year if we get her some help. The Executive Board members are focused and committed to getting this committee chair position filled.

Guest Speaker

Dr. Mary Jennings, Superintendent of SAU #39

Dr. Jennings began her presentation by highlighting that the three school districts that comprise the School Administrative Unit #39 are: Amherst, Mont Vernon, and Souhegan cooperative school districts. These three districts represent the K-12 learning experience for students and their families in the Towns of Amherst and Mont Vernon.

The mission is "To Engage, Support, and Challenge All Students." Currently the focus is on measuring individual achievement in all subject areas through an emphasis on literacy across the curriculum; and become more unified across all three districts that engage similar content so as students approach each new school they have a seamless flow as one school district. In fact, this is a priority!

Dr. Jennings visits approximately four classrooms each week. This allows her to see what gets implemented and to see how what they are planning gets implemented.

SAU #39 is in its second year of strategic planning to assure that all students will make measured progress in all subject areas for art, reading, social studies, mathematics, science, etc. How do they demonstrate that students are making progress and measuring progress in a positive way? Data testing. Yes, teachers are assessing students through DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association), and NECAP (New England Common Assessment Program) testing. Using this data helps teachers to understand and tailor their classroom instruction according to their students learning levels. For example, based on a child's different area of reading the teacher can group students accordingly with differentiated instruction.

Teachers can also report back to parents during parent conferences to review current status and discuss targeting where their child needs to be. Eventually, our children will be able to look at their own results to determine their strengths.

Implementing a new science curriculum and making new changes in mathematics are some additional school goals. And, the literacy coaches are continuously coordinating the literacy program and special education programs.

We hope you stay tuned to Dr. Jennings and the SAU #39 Strategic Five Year Plan. There is a lot to accomplish and you can continue to help all of our children by encouraging reading and writing at home with your own. Improving a child's progress at home increases their learning improvement in school.

Renovations will continue over the next two summers (2009 & 2010). The current renovations will greatly improve energy efficiency -- particularly over the winter. More renovation details will be discussed at the next PTA General Meeting.

Dr. Jennings' visit was the first in a year long series of special guests at PTA General Meetings. The PTA General Meeting scheduled for November 18th will feature guest speaker, Nancy Head from our School Board who will discuss the renovations to our school buildings, including an overview of what has been completed and a timetable for the remaining improvements. All community members are invited to attend.

Secretary's Report

The committee chairs received copies of the September 2008--2009 minutes via Email a week prior to the October general meeting. Copies were also available at the October general meeting. The September minutes were reviewed. Jil Romano requested a motion to receive the minutes and moved to accept the minutes. Cathy Leighton seconded the motion. The September 2008-2009 minutes were accepted.

Staff Appreciation at AMS

Staff Appreciation is a program sponsored by the National PTA which plans events for the teachers and staff throughout the year. In the past, there have been events like: a Fall breakfast, a mid-Winter lunch, and Teacher Appreciation week in May. Please consider lending your time and talent as an Amherst PTA Committee Chair. This an opportunity to become involved in a great organization dedicated to the success of children and the support of our teachers and staff.

Magazine Drive

Current chair people are looking for "shadows" to eventually chair this committee for the 2009-2010 academic school year. This committee event has historically been the biggest PTA fundraiser, which makes most of the PTA sponsored programs and events possible. Students collect orders from family, friends, and relatives. The committee is responsible for the accounting, processing, and filing of magazine orders for students and teachers. By mid-September, preparations are being made for the drive but most of the work is done the first two weeks of October. The Magazine Drive itself lasts two weeks.

If you are interested in either of these opportunities or have any questions, please contact Jil Romano at 673-7980 or jilmarc@comcat.net for a complete job description.

Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Treasurer's report for September were available at the October General Meeting. Michele Donoghue requested a motion to accept the financial budget. Cheryl Forster and Aileen Farris moved to accept the motion.

Michele also reported that some monies were received this month for the Magazine Drive fundraiser and some monies were spent for Curriculum Enrichment programs at Wilkins.

PTA has paid for all, but two grants awarded last spring. Both are currently underway.

Principal's Report

Porter Dodge -- Amherst Middle School (AMS)

Absent. No report.

Gerry St. Amand -- Clark & Wilkins Schools

Third and fourth grade students continue to take the NECAP mathematics and reading tests through the remainder of October. Attendance and participation in this state assessment is mandatory and must be given during school hours.

School pictures will be taken on Friday, October 17, 2008 in rain or shine. Our photographer—Coffee Pond Productions—specializes in outdoor photographs.

Professional development on Tuesday, October 7—our most recent late start day—focused on NWEA analysis and interpretation.

Professional development on Friday, October 10—our full in-service day focused on DIBELS training with Franna Eaton and Melissa Pollak. Sally Grimes, a nationally recognized expert in literacy, provided the morning kick off session for two groups: One for staff K- 6th and 7th - 12th.

Our faculty meeting on October 15, 2008 will provide staff members with training in the “Strategies That Work” tool kits, which have been purchased for all grade levels.

Wilkins School students will celebrate Halloween with classroom parties on Friday, October 31. The two first grade classrooms will also conduct a brief mini-parade. Grades two, three, and four will not conduct parades.

Kindergarten and first grade classes at Clark School will conduct classroom parties and parades. Schedules vary by grade level.

The Amherst School District Wellness Policy strongly encourages healthy snacks, including treats that are sent in for birthdays or special events.

The “Literacy Leadership Team” will be considering ways we can make strong home-school connections with families in regards to literacy and will be communicating with the PTA for suggestions.

Under the direction of Jennifer Eccleston, our mathematics specialist at Wilkins, School Store will now host only one grade level per week to make the experience more valuable for “store managers” and “customers”.

4,000 gallon oil tank has been installed at Wilkins.

Pea stone delivered to both playground this week.

Storage area is complete!

School Board

Peg Bennett -- SAU#39 PTA Representative

Phase 1 and 2 of the renovations at Clark, Wilkins, and AMS are done for now. The next phase of renovations that were approved by the voters last March will begin in June 2009.

The Fiscal Year 2010 budget process has begun. The budget assumptions were presented by the administration to the School Board at the October 2nd meeting. At the November School Board meeting we will look at the line item costs associated with the assumptions.

Negotiations of a three (3) year contract for the Support Staff is underway. The contract will begin July 1, 2009.

The Amherst and Mont Vernon School Boards are negotiating a 10-year tuition agreement for 7th and 8th grade students from Mont Vernon who attend AMS. The tuition agreement will be presented as a warrant article to the taxpayers in March 2009.

Committee Reports

Magazine Drive

Dotsie Bohan reported these final numbers for magazine sales this year:

AMS	\$27,996
Wilkins	\$27,494
Total	\$55,490

Unfortunately, these numbers are down approximately \$2,021.20 net profit from last year. (The PTA earns 40% of magazine sales = \$22,196. This money goes toward teacher's grants voted on in the spring 2009).

As a point of reference, last year's totals were as follows:

AMS	\$30,847
Wilkins	\$29,696
Total	\$60,543

Family Science Day

Energy Matters is the theme. Dedicated committee members. Event date is on November 8th with two scheduled sessions:

10 :00 am - 12 pm
1:00 pm - 3 pm

Membership

All wrapped up. Just under 660 members. Directory is at the printer. Should have the directories by Halloween! Membership cards will be available as requested.

Reflections Committee

Gave the Info presentation tonight. Everything is on the PTA website. Everything is underway.

Health Fair

Chairs are working with the school nurses deciding whether or not to hold the fair on a Saturday or, instead having a lesson plan for the classroom.

Family Math Night

Carnival of Math ideas.

Holiday Story Time

The event is being held December 5th @ 6:30 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room at Clark. Chairs have sent out flyers to the staff at Clark and Wilkins to see who might be interested in reading holiday stories this year. They also have a meeting planned for October 29th from 9 -11 am at Cathy Leighton's house (31 Brook Road, Amherst).

Playbill

Need more volunteers!

Original Art

Contacted five different vendors and getting product samples to determine who will be used.

Bellringer

Monthly newsletter issued the schools. The deadline for publishing is on the *15th* of each month to be published for the following month. The Bellringer is not published in January.

Curriculum Enrichment at Clark

Beaver Brook has been scheduled for November to present at Clark School. (This is an example of the PTA providing funds for “teacher-programs” held at the school for students).

New Business

Introduced *potential* VP candidate Gillian Smith. An official membership vote was taken at this General Meeting and the vote was accepted unanimously.

Adjournment

Krista Hanks made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Irene Alton seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by:

Jil Romano

Secretary

Next Meeting: November 18, 2008 @ 7:30 p.m. Wilkins Library

Contact Information

PTA Board ~ ptaboard@amherstpta.org

Bellringer Newsletter ~ ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu