

**Amherst PTA General Meeting Minutes**  
Tuesday, November 13, 2007  
*Third Meeting of the 2007-2008 Academic Year*  
*Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 8, 2008*

**PTA BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

President: Krista Hanks  
Vice- President: Christine Poisson  
Secretary: Kristin Gaughan  
Advisor: Beth Hurd  
Absent: Anna Rego  
Eileen Peters

**PTA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: 20**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:35pm.

**Guest Speaker: Nicole Heimarck, Director of Curriculum SAU 39, Laura Maroney, Literacy Coach at Clark and Wilkins, and Patty Wons, 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, AMS**

The PTA welcomed members of the district's Literacy Team to its November general meeting. Nicole Heimarck, SAU #39 Director of Curriculum, Laura Maroney, Clark and Wilkins Literacy Coach, and Patty Wons, 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at AMS spoke to the audience about the history of the literacy initiative and how it is being implemented in the schools.

Nicole Heimarck explained that last year, the district spent time developing the goal of improving student performance in all subject areas through reading and writing. This goal would not only strengthen student's writing and reading abilities, but also teach them how to use these skills in all academic areas, which would improve student performance in those areas. At the district level, a coordinator of reading and writing across the curriculum was hired to help align the school's focus across all the schools in the district and help to smooth transitions between the schools. Unfortunately, this coordinator resigned a month ago and the district has decided to hold off the posting of this position until the spring. In the meantime, the district is bringing in content areas specialists who have expertise at teaching reading and writing in the different content areas of each specific grade level. The district is also looking at different ways of evaluating students and clearly defining performance expectations. The district uses a number of standard tests that show growth models, but they are also working to develop local assessments.

Laura Maroney explained that the role of a literacy coach was to go into the classrooms and work with the teachers, both individually and in groups. To help meet the diverse needs in the classroom, the teachers are getting embedded training in the classroom setting. All staff members, including support staff, are reading and discussing the book *Strategies That Work*, which helps to unify the focus of the district. Teachers are being given release days to study various topics, including structuring 90 minute work blocks, developing vocabulary through reading aloud, and teaching guided reading. January is Literacy month; training and workshops for both staff members and parents are planned. The goal of the literacy coach is to empower the teachers.

Patty Wons spoke about the staff is working together to discuss the ideas presented in the *Strategies That Work* book. The staff is excited that the professional development is sustained grades K through 12. This helps to develop a common language for the whole district to use.

### **Fall Grants**

Kristin Desborough presented two fall grants that help to support the literacy initiative. The Clark and Wilkins grant focuses on educating parents about reading and writing across the curriculum by creating a parent library and bringing a guest speaker. The AMS grant will pay to pilot the Write Source Eval-U-Write Program. This program helps to support teachers of subject areas that aren't language arts. The pilot program is for one team per grade level.

The Clark/Wilkins Fall Grant was read. Kristin Desborough moved to accept the Clark/Wilkins Fall Grant. Porter Dodge seconded the motion. The Clark/Wilkins Fall Grant was approved. The AMS Fall Grant was read. Kristin Desborough moved to accept the AMS Fall Grant. Porter Dodge seconded the motion. The AMS Fall Grant was approved.

### **Principal's Report**

#### **Clark School / Wilkins School – Gerry St. Amand**

- Friday, November 16, 2007 marks an early release day for students at Clark, Wilkins, and AMS. Students will be dismissed from Clark/Wilkins around 11.50am.
- Although lunch will not be served on the early release day, we will be piloting a "Snack and Go" brown bag "brunch" consisting of bagel, cream cheese, juice, milk, and applesauce cup.
- Parent-teacher conferences are in full swing with Thursday afternoon and evening on November 15, and Friday afternoon, November 16, targeted as official conference times.
- All students in grades one through four will bring home report cards on Friday, November 16.
- Students in grades two, three, and four will also bring home with their report cards the results of the September NWEA results in the areas of mathematics and reading.
- After receiving feedback from staff members and families, we have chosen to continue with "Coffee Pond, Productions", our current fall school picture photographer, for the next school year.
- "Perfect Attendance" awards will not be issued at Clark or Wilkins School this year. We are considering alternative forms of recognition for students.
- Our "Shining Stars" program is in the process of being revamped, with the intent of expanding the program at Clark School and improving the ways we recognize students.
- Both schools, with direction from the Behavior Intervention Team – BIT – have focused on safe and appropriate hallway behavior through November.
- A reminder that all buses now have cameras running for all runs to and from school.
- Special recognition must be given to a cadre of dedicated staff members, volunteers, and Souhegan High School students who helped to paint a variety of stencils and designs on the Clark School playground.
- Wilkins School was able to place some stencils on the play areas and will follow up with more in the spring.
- The proposed budget for the 2008 – 2009 academic year includes proposals for full and half-day Kindergarten, as well as a proposal to phase in Spanish instruction at the elementary level beginning with Grade 1.
- Library automation at Clark/Wilkins is also included in the budget proposal.

- A proposal to transition our preschool program from out-of-district to Clark School will be delayed for another year.
- The annual fall Book Fair has begun and will continue through next week.

### **AMS – Porter Dodge**

- The 6<sup>th</sup> grade environmental schools finished at the end of October.
- Because of concerns of staph infections, Mr. Dodge suggested putting in anti-bacteria dispensers in the hallways.
- Report cards will include the NWEA test results.
- AMS is going to be evaluated by the NELMS (New England League of Middle Schools). They will be evaluating AMS to see how it fits into the national middle school guidelines. An on-site visit will occur in February.

### **School Board**

Nancy Head informed the PTA that the first budget draft was presented. The School Board is also looking forward to working with the PTA at the open public forum on November 28.

### **New Business**

Krista Hanks reported that the PTA is co-hosting a public forum to discuss the proposed renovation needs at Clark, Wilkins, and AMS. This forum will occur prior to the due date of the final wording of the warrant article. The forum will be held on Wednesday, November 28, 2007 in the Clark Multi-Purpose Room.

The PTA is also helping to bring a program called Rachel's Challenge to the district. This motivational speaker on anti-violence is the brother of one of the students killed in the Columbine tragedy. The PTA is working in conjunction with the high school. There will be separate presentations for middle school students, high school students, and parents. The program will be on January 14, 2008.

### **Membership Benefits**

National PTA and Barnesandnoble.com have developed a discounted online bookstore for PTA members featuring over one million titles of books, textbooks, audiobooks, music, DVDs, and videos. Members will save 5% off all purchases ordered from this site in addition to any normal site discounts of up to 40%. Orders of \$25.00 or more qualify for Fast and Free delivery within 3 business days or less (see site for details).

PTA members can enter the storefront homepage at [www.pta.org/bn](http://www.pta.org/bn) or [www.pta.org/barnesandnoble](http://www.pta.org/barnesandnoble). By entering the storefront through the URLs, members will be required to submit a user name (PTAMember) and password (benefit). Both the username and password are case sensitive. New titles and special discounts will be featured periodically. Please only share this user name and password with PTA members.

### **Committees**

#### **Directory**

Karen Oates reported that the proofing is complete and the directory will be sent to the printer at the end of the month. The directory will be mailed home in December and will include a PTA membership card and a coupon to the Common Man restaurant.

#### **Holiday Storytime**

Plans are in full swing for the PTA holiday storytime that will be held in Wilkins Gym on Friday December 7 from 6.30 – 8.00pm. Holiday stories will be read by community members and faculty while families can enjoy cocoa and cookies. Anyone interested in helping out on the committee should contact Kristin at [kristinvic@aol.com](mailto:kristinvic@aol.com).

### **Family Science Day**

Family Science Day was on Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> and was very successful . . . and messy. About 150 students came to learn about Kitchen Science. A great number of companies donated door prizes.

### **Bellringer**

The *Bellringer* is the Amherst PTA's monthly publication and it comes out electronically. The deadline for the December/January issue is November 15<sup>th</sup>. Submissions should be made to Ellen Roos-Unger at: [ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu](mailto:ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu).

### **Curriculum Enrichment**

Barbara Bowman reported on the upcoming curriculum enrichment programs at Clark School. Beaver Brook will be presenting a program on Native Americans to the 1<sup>st</sup> graders at both Clark and Wilkins. Steve Blunt, a musician and storyteller, will be performing in January for the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade. In February, the Tanglewood Marionettes will present a fairy tale story in a storybook setting to the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> graders. In March, the Fossil Lady will present to the Kindergarten, and in April the Museum of Science has a Science Magic Class presentation for the 1<sup>st</sup> graders. In May, Mr. and Mrs. Fish will be back to entertain the Kindergarten, and the Wildlife Encounters will present to the Kindergarten during the 1<sup>st</sup> graders Field Day.

### **Reflections**

Wendy Conway reported that all the judges have been secured for this year's Reflections Contest. The deadline for all entries is January 4, 2008, but complete entries may be turned in at any time. Entry boxes and forms are in the school offices and forms can also be found on the website. The awards ceremony will be on Thursday, January 24, 2008 at Souhegan. Viewing begins at 6.00pm and the ceremony will start at 6.30pm. The committee is looking forward to more involvement from the high school.

### **Vice-President's Report**

Christine Poisson reported that publicity for the PTA is ongoing and if any committee chair needs help publicizing their event please contact her at: [capoisson@comcast.net](mailto:capoisson@comcast.net) or 769-3855.

### **Secretary's Report**

The committee chairs received copies of the October minutes via e-mail a week prior to the meeting. Copies were also available at the meeting. The October minutes were reviewed. Porter Dodge moved to accept the minutes. Beth Hurd seconded the motion. The October minutes were accepted.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Copies of the Treasurer's report were passed out for review. In October, the magazine drive has brought in just shy of \$30,000. Both state and national PTA membership dues were paid. Almost all the spring grants have been wrapped up.

Krista Hanks explained the new staff start-up fund. The PTA spent \$2250 this year. The fund gives monies to new teachers in the district or teachers making a change of two or more grade levels to help them start up their classrooms.

The October financial statement was read. Porter Dodge moved to accept the October statement. Beth Hurd seconded the motion. The October financial statement was approved.

### **Adjournment**

- The next PTA meeting will be in Tuesday, January 8, 2008 at 7.30pm in the Wilkins Library.
- Beth Hurd made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Irene Raissis Alton seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9.15pm.

Submitted by

Kristin Gaughan  
Secretary