

Amherst PTA General Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 11, 2007
First Meeting of the 2007-2008 Academic Year
Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 9, 2007

PTA BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

PTA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: 40

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7.35pm.

PTA President Krista Hanks welcomed everyone to the first PTA General Meeting of the 2007 – 2008 school year. Krista said that it was her goal this year to help each PTA member fit into places to support the PTA. She said that the PTA would be continuing its special speakers at each meeting. Some new changes will be monthly highlights on grant items or curriculum enrichment programs from the previous year, so that everyone can see why we are raising money for the PTA. Principals will also be bringing a different teacher to each meeting of the PTA.

Secretary's Report

The committee chairs received copies of the May 2007 minutes via e-mail a week prior to the meeting. Copies were also available at the meeting. The May minutes were reviewed. Dotsie Bohan moved to accept the minutes. Ellen Roos-Unger seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted.

Treasurer's Report

Anna Rego presented the 2007 – 2008 budget. The primary change was to the Curriculum Enrichment budget: \$500 has been allotted for the AMS specials CE and \$1000 has been allotted for the Clark and Wilkins specials CE. The 2007 – 2008 PTA budget was read. Kristin Desborough moved to accept the budget. Ellen Roos-Unger seconded the motion. The 2007 – 2008 PTA budget was approved.

The June financial statement was read. \$500 came in from the magazine drive, and spring grants were paid out. Porter Dodge moved to accept the June statement. Karen Oates seconded the motion. The June financial statement was approved.

The July financial statement was read. Spring grants were continuing to be paid out. Porter Dodge moved to accept the July statement. Dotsie Bohan seconded the motion. The July financial statement was approved.

The August financial statement was read. Dotsie Bohan moved to accept the August statement. Porter Dodge seconded the motion. The August financial statement was approved.

Anna reminded teachers that they have until October 1 to submit receipts for payment of the spring grants.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Mary Athey Jennings, Superintendent of SAU 39

Dr. Jennings began by thanking parents and staff members for their continued support of the Amherst Schools. She has been able to truly see education in action by making regular visits to classrooms to understand how policies and ideas are implemented.

Last year, Dr. Jennings helped to create goals for the district as a Five Year Strategic Plan. The core of this plan is to see what can be done for all the schools in the district. The goal is to say that each student will demonstrate improvement in all subject areas as measured annually thru multiple assessments. The focus is on each individual student's progress.

All the schools will be focusing on reading across the curriculum, concentrating on reading analysis and comprehension. Improved reading and writing in each subject area will help to improve the individual subjects themselves. Literacy teams have been set up in each school to help them reach their set goals. In addition to new developed assessments, grades K – 2 will evaluation reading through the Dibbles assessment, while grades 3 – 8 will use the NWEA tests. Parents are asked to encourage their children to read in all subject areas and to encourage reading at home and at school. The October 5th Teacher Inservice will focus on reading across the curriculum, uniting grades K – 12 to focus on one priority.

Dr. Jennings also discussed how AMS is working to schedule itself as a middle school. Studies show that grades 5 – 8 learn best with teams and an integrated curriculum. AMS has reworked its schedule to strengthen the middle school concept .

Dr. Jennings encouraged any and all questions from parents and community members. She can be reached through the SAU offices and website.

Principal's Report

Clark School / Wilkins School

- Gerry St. Amand reported that the enrollment at Clark and Wilkins Schools was at 770. Although this is the lowest enrollment since Gerry started with the Amherst schools, space issues still present a serious problem. 200 students are in portables, and that has a huge affect on safety and operations.
- In support of the district's literacy focus, the Clark/Wilkins literacy goal rough draft will be presented at the faculty meeting tomorrow. The goal is still in the revision stage. Teachers will be focusing on readings and strategies and finding those that work. One new position at Clark and Wilkins Schools is the Literacy Coach, Laura Maroney. She will be supporting all teachers to help them better teach literacy.
- There is a new pick-up pattern at Wilkins School. Two lanes in are helping to alleviate traffic on Boston Post Road.
- The school's new lunch program will not allow children to charge lunches when there is no money in the account. An information letter will be coming home. The NutriKids computer program can be set up to send out an alert when the account balance is low. Parents can e-mail the school secretaries for the student's ID numbers.
- The Behavior intervention team at has been focusing on hallway behavior.
- A committee studied the Halloween parties and parade plan. It was decided that there would be no Halloween parade this year at Wilkins School; a parade festivity will occur

in the spring. The students will not be making costumes and will be allowed to wear their own.

- The NWEA tests are finishing up.
- Gerry addressed the fire on the first day of school. All the students and staff did very well. Students were walked to Clark School for the buses. The computer room will be shut down until the rest of the week while it is repainted and rewired. This is the first year that Wilkins has had a dedicated computer room. The damage will be covered by insurance.

AMS

- Porter Dodge was pleased to see the great turnout at tonight's meeting.
- Enrollment at AMS is at 818 students.
- The literacy initiative is focusing on differentiated instructions. Mary Westwater is the literacy coach at AMS.
- AMS has a new daily schedule based on flex scheduling. They are completely changing the way that they look at the day. Teachers design their days based on what the kids need. Each grade works independently.
- AMS is also finishing up the NWEA tests.
- The PTA magazine drive begins on Thursday.
- There was good turn out at the parent coffees and also last night's open house.
- Today is picture day and the 8th grade class went to the whale watch.
- AMS is focusing on strong communication between home and school. Weekly e-mails are sent home to the parents and the school website is a great source of information.

School Board

Chairman Dwight Brew reported that the School Board meets monthly on the first Thursday of the month at 6.00pm. Last month the operating budget and the teacher's budgets were passed. Parents should check the website for the contact information for the school board members in regards to questions and concerns.

School board member Nancy Head reported on the surveys that were sent out in May regarding the renovations and failed warrant article. There were 508 responses. Respondents waned to see renovations and /or a new building, but the tax increase was the biggest concern. At the last school board meeting, the board decided to follow the master plan recommendation and place the warrant article on the ballot in the spring. The school board needs parents to help get the word out. Peg Bennett will be heading up the publicity campaign.

Member Services

Karen Oates is the chair of the newly designed member services committee. This committee is in charge of PTA membership, the directory, and benefits of membership from the local and national PTA. The new membership/directory forms are working well; extra forms are in the school offices or can be found on the PTA website at Amherstpta.org. The goal is to have everything in by this Friday. Local businesses are providing advertising and the hope this that the directory will be self-supporting. Artwork from last year's Reflections contest will be highlighted in the directory.

New Business

Holiday Storytime

Kristin Gaughan reported on a new PTA program. A holiday storytime 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.

CE for specials

As Anna reported in the treasurer's report and 2007 – 2008 budget, monies were added to the Curriculum Enrichment budgets at Clark/Wilkins and AMS to help bring more curriculum enrichment into the schools, specifically through the specials programs.

PTA By-Laws

The National PTA required that a local PTA's bylaws are updated every 3 years. Our by-laws have been revised and the general membership has to be notified thirty days in advance of their voting. The By-Laws will be voted on at the October meeting. The By-Laws are posted on the PTA website.

Committee Reports

Magazine Drive

Dotsie Bohan reported that the magazine drive kicks off on Thursday at AMS. This is the PTA's biggest fundraiser of the year. Wilkins begins on October 24. Parents are encouraged to place on-line orders at QSP.com; these orders can be done throughout the year. Volunteers are still needed; please contact Dotsie.

Membership

The Amherst PTA is the largest in the state of New Hampshire. Currently, 500 member families have joined and the membership drive is still going on. Information can be found on the Amherst PTA's website.

Family Information Night

Christine Redd reported that Family Information Night will be held on Monday September 17 at the Wilkins School gym from 6.30 – 8.00pm. This program provides families will information about various organizations and activities in the area.

Family Science Day

Family Science Day is held the first weekend in November. The program brings parents and children together to experience science experiments. This year's theme is "Kitchen Science."

Reflections

Shelly Kayser reported on this national PTA arts program. The program is for grades K-12 and encourages talents in the areas of art, photography, music, and literature. Forms will be available beginning in mid-October. This year's theme is "I Can Make a Difference By."

Family Math Night

This program occurs the end of January and brings parents and children together to experience fun math activities.

PTA Play

This year's PTA Play is *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. We are looking forward to working with a new director and producer.

Attic Resources

Laurie Coppola reported that Attic Resources is a service in the *Bellringer* where teachers have the opportunity to ask for donations for items to use in their classrooms.

Bellringer

The *Bellringer* is the Amherst PTA's monthly publication and it comes out electronically. The deadline for the October issue is Monday, September 17. Submissions should be made to Ellen Roos-Unger at: ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu. Maureen Corrigan will be doing the layout for the *Bellringer* this year. A contest to design a new logo for the *Bellringer* is underway. Entries can be submitted through a student's homeroom teacher.

Curriculum Enrichment

Michelle Caraccio reported on some of the planned curriculum enrichment programs for Wilkins School. Second graders will be enjoying programs on the Birds of Prey, Pioneer Living, and Rocks and Minerals. Third graders will experience Weather Workshops and the Bay Colony Educators. Fourth graders will be taking a trip to the Lowell Mills and also enjoy Textplorations' program on simple machines.

PTA/PTSA Liaison

Ellen Barry will be the liaison between the Amherst PTA and the Souhegan PTSA and will be reporting at both general meetings.

Adjournment

- The next PTA meeting will be in Tuesday, October 9. The PTA will be welcoming guest speaker Jackie Hockett, Children's Librarian at the Amherst Town Library.
- Ellen Roos-Unger made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Anna Rego seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9.35pm.

Submitted by

Kristin Gaughan
Secretary