

PTO Meeting Minutes : November 13, 2017

Present: Heather Allison, Sarah Murphy, Kathryn Wegner, Kerry Furtney, Erin Jude, Megan Rinn, Ann Henderson, Becky Pedersen, Brandy Norman-Wiebenga, Tiffany Dreher, Charlotte Hanley-Jacobson, Hrithik Guardhan, Ben Lang, Neha Lang, Adeel Ahmad, Robert Clarksen, Shanna Clarksen, Sarah Anderson, Marjorie Bequette

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Vote to Approve October Meeting Minutes and Today's Meeting Agenda.

October 16 meeting minutes are available at:

<https://www.spps.org/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/4154/PTO%20Meeting%20Minutes%2010-16-17.pdf>

Motion to approve October Meeting Minutes: Neha Lang; Second: Kathryn Wegner

Motion to approve today's agenda was approved.

3. Title 1 Information - Regan Fox, Title 1 Teacher

Ms. Fox was unable to attend the meeting.

4. Recruitment and Retention (Marketing at Groveland) - Kathryn Wegner

Interest in this sparked by a question from a parent "is groveland going downhill?" Kathryn was inspired to do a research project on school choice (she is a professor of Education). Looking at national and local trends about school choice and why parents choose schools.

A. Funding changes

Across U.S., public schools have been suffering from diminished funding. Legislators have not made investments for school funding to keep up with inflation. Per pupil funding down 20% in last 15 years. Looking at inflation-adjusted dollars, spending \$1000 less per pupil than in 2003. We know this affects public schools and makes it harder to get parents to come to public schools. Not sure about what we can do about this when talking to prospective parents about declining funding other than communicating that this is an issue all public schools are facing.

B. Demographic changes

Schools are more diverse across the country. In the last 5 years, 2011-2016, white student population at Groveland declined 62% to 47%, Black population increased 18% to 31%.

Groveland has become a Title 1 school--indicates population of students in poverty has increased

Study on school choice done in D.C. about how white parents decide on schools indicates that (some) white parents see schools having more black students as meaning school is in decline.

Data from SPPS about students who are leaving district, or students who live here but aren't going to SPPS. SPPS Data--district is losing more students of color than white students. About ¼ of youth who live in St. Paul go to charter schools. Why is this? Idea that charter schools may be more responsive or reflective of culture?

Need to highlight the value of attending a racially and economically integrated school. Rare find. Serves everyone to speak out about its value for all of us. There's a lot of research that backs this up. Children who attend an integrated school have better life outcomes. More creative, fewer stereotypes, have more empathy, seek out integrated environments as adults. Intimate connections with people who are different from them at a young age, helps them see diversity as positive.

C. Specific planning for promoting Groveland--what are we doing?

1. School Promotional Pamphlet and Poster

Revising pamphlet for Groveland. Someone from district came and took professional photos. Need input from parents regarding text. Parent comment: Husband is a professional marketer, maybe he could help with brochure

2. Tours and Follow-Up Calls

Groveland parents have been giving tours, they have Groveland alum in middle and high school, also 1st grader. Thought it would be great to do follow-up calls to people who come on tours. If you are interested will have google doc where we can make notes about phone calls. Ask if have any questions to help make decision.

3. How do we keep families at Groveland?

Discussion that Groveland loses a number of families to Capitol Hill (SPPS gifted/talented magnet school which requires passing a test as well as lottery system to enter).

Planning a parent social for Kgn/1st grade parents in January. Purpose is fun and connection, but strategic mission is retaining these families. This is when gifted testing results for Capitol Hill come out.

Do we need to think about more gifted programming to retain those families?

Idea of getting families who have a variety of concerns to talk to parents who decide to stay rather than leaving. Parent survey--what are hopes and dreams that help with PTO planning? What makes families want to come and want to stay?

Classroom Villages--intention is connecting families to school, building community, this is an important piece in retaining families.

Meeting to train classroom villages coordinators, meeting tomorrow night, learn about the program, get ideas Potluck idea--2nd and 4th grade in the cafeteria next Monday, 6:30-7:30

D. Idea-sharing Session

Parents discussed in small groups and wrote down--what are strengths of Groveland? What are things that make families leave?

Kathryn asked anyone who wants to get involved with this effort of promoting school, please contact her at kathrynwegner@gmail.com

Parent suggestion--Center for Reinventing Public Education might be a good resource to investigate. <https://www.crpe.org/>

E. Groveland Gear - Ben Lang

Another piece in promoting Groveland is Groveland Gear. Just completed fall sale, featured all-new logo and new styles, good participation in sale this year. Working on brochure and updating that, want to update website with new banner, if people have things they want to update with new logo, contact Ben and he can provide jpeg for others to use.

Looking at things we can give away during tours, tattoos for kids, stickers, 1" buttons. Also looking for cheap things to have on hand and always available at events. Raise \$ along the way. Yard signs we bulk ordered and will be available at events going forward as well. Looking into bumper stickers or window clings as well. Can contact Ben at groveland.pto.gear@gmail.com if have more ideas/questions.

5. Treasurer's Report

A. Direct Drive Fundraiser Update:

Have raised \$7170 so far in Direct Drive. Goal was \$8000, so close to goal. There is still time to donate--will take donations throughout the year!

B. Teacher grants: PTO gave \$100 to all full-time teachers.

6. Fundraising Chair Report

A. Carnival Update

Mark your calendars! Groveland Carnival is Friday, May 4th, 5:30.

First carnival committee meeting of the year was last week. It was great, had a good turnout. Planning is in the works. Need volunteer help for booths and activities. It is still open, can join meetings at any point and in any time amount you have available. Have plan for weather, hope to be outside but we have reserved school and gym. Created a list of ideas for activities. As we get closer, there will be volunteer spots for specific tasks. Neha--suggested having a space on web under PTO specifically for carnival. Heather said this was a great idea. Any questions, to get involved, or if you would like notes from meeting, contact Heather at groveland.pto.fundraising@gmail.com

B. Groveland Gatherings Update

We only have 3 gatherings submitted. Will be sending out another call via email. If we want gatherings to work we need volunteers who would like to host them. 2 asks out here. Gatherings are fun, easy to do, want people to host. We would also like someone who enjoys talking to people and getting people to sign up--we need a person who can do this. Question: is there a deadline? Answer: The online site is live now, people can sign up anytime. We tried a physical sign-up moment at Book Fair/Movie Night, not many people signed up but lots of people stopped by to ask questions. Question: Could we have an example to go from? Yes! Can also look on sign up website and see Gatherings others have submitted as well.

Could we have specific gatherings listed and people could just sign up to host them? Yes, Heather is going to check in with people who hosted previous gatherings and see if they want to host again or share idea with new person.

Can access Gatherings on website!

Do we have a Facebook page? Yes! Link is on Groveland PTO website. We have parent volunteer who posts on Groveland FB site. Discussion about FB Group vs. page. Maybe creating a group would be a better way to build community because it shows up.

C. GiveMN announcement

Give MN is the site where you can donate to direct drive online. On Give to the Max day--Thursday--have lots of corporate sponsorship. Matching. Can donate from link on website.

7. Principal's Report- Ms. Pedersen

A. Superintendent's visit

Superintendent Gothard visited Groveland last Tuesday. He was trying to visit all the schools in the district. Visited every classroom.

B. School news

Regan Fox, Title 1 Teacher, wanted to be here but was unable to. She wanted to thank PTO for \$5 certificates for Book Fair given to families and food tickets for movie night. Thanking PTO for partnership with Title 1. It encourages parents to come to a meeting when their kids are excited to come.

C. Marketing

Parents on tours ask about diversity and want their kids going to a school with a diverse population. That's a really good thing about Groveland. Becky's been here 10 years and when she came school was 75% white. Free and Reduced Lunch population is 48%. This is low end for district in Title 1 schools. Most schools in district receiving Title 1 are 80-90%.

What creates excitement for prospective families? Parents here who are excited about school. Parents came together to build library, playground, doing events like Carnival and community-building through Classroom Villages.

Population of school is relatively stable. Some years 5-10 kids going to Capitol Hill. Charter schools have changed landscape. We do get families coming back from charters. We make it what it is, great school community.

Marjorie--we are planning to invite Superintendent to visit PTO meeting.

8. Past and Upcoming Events

A. Book Fair and Movie Night (11/2-3)

Both events were a big success with a great turnout. Thank you to all volunteers who contributed your time and helped make these events a success!

B. Food Drive with Student Leadership November 13-22nd

Christine Soulm heads Student Leadership at Groveland. One week food drive. Christine and Heather will be delivering food.

Question: can you talk about student leadership team?

Ms. Pedersen: 5th Graders only. Must apply by writing an essay about what leadership means. They eat lunch together, put together spirit days for students, do service projects. A large % of 5th graders choose to be in it. There are behavioral expectations required to participate. Leadership team also contributes to Apex Fun Run Fundraiser, write letters to sponsors.

C. Addendum Books Fundraiser, December 5th 4-7:00

478 S Cleveland Ave, St Paul, MN 55105

Independent book store kids and adults books. During those hours 20% of proceeds will go to Groveland. Great opportunity to buy holiday gifts and support the school. Question: Do you need a flyer? Don't think so, just mention Groveland.

9. School Board Update- Tiffany Dreher

A. School Board Meetings <https://www.spps.org/boe>

Board meetings are always open to the public. This is a great way to find out what's going on in the district.

3 new elected school board members. Marny Xiong, John Broderick, Jeannie Foster. Marny is new, others are returning.

B. Budget Discussion

Revenue for district 721 million, expenditures 736 million. About 15 mil. short.

Levy discussed. 4.99% increase in levy. Board will be addressing truth in taxation hearing.

Legislative outlook for district discussed. Supplemental budget year this year, not doing new budget til next year. 6 issues coming to forefront. Mandates, Pre-K, Pensions, Special Ed Funding, Flexibility in Testing...this is for all SPPS--she is going to legislature to advocate for district.

Big discussion about Special Ed funding. Out of SPPS budget 100 million is for sp Ed. due to federal underfunding of special ed. Concern about how what is happening federally will make situation worse for MN. Mary Vanderwotr (SPPS school board member): Why don't we take this to the courts and sue federal govt for what they're not funding? This funding also goes to kids from charter and private schools who receive Special Ed services in SPPS.

C. Diversity presentation

Cedric Baker brought this forward, he was a fill in board member last year, now supports board. New policy: try to create a program or policy that spells out how SPPS chooses vendors and contractors to reflect diversity of district. Community Advisory Council to start developing this policy. Board will be addressing this in future.

D. New Strategic Plan for SPPS

Superintendent is working on new Strategic Plan. Waiting for this. Keep in mind that school start times will be impacted by this plan. Budget issues aren't going away. Curriculum--need a curriculum that families want for their children, that reflects cultural diversity of district.

10. Follow-ups from prior meeting

If you are inspired by information shared at meetings, please let us know! Volunteer opportunities listed are what we've done in the past, but new ideas always welcome! If you would like to start a new group or think creatively about what new roles we need--definitely welcome to do so.

Question about PTO funded music residencies? What are classrooms doing? Some are already underway, Brother Ghana is drumming with 2nd grade now. Can we hear what choices of each grade level are?

Question: Do teachers talk across the grades? Maybe they should coordinate so students don't have the same enrichment experience from year to year.

We will work on getting list of music enrichments and share that.

11. Motion to end meeting, vote to end meeting

. Please join us for the next PTO Meeting on Thursday, January 18th, 6:00-7:30