

Madison Public Schools
Parents' Representative Council Meeting
Friday, January 26, 2024
9:30 AM
Hammonasset Room

MEETING AGENDA

1. Welcome/Introductions
Sarah Drought

Attendance: Chairperson Sarah Drought, Superintendent Dr. Cooke, Zoe Roos, Communication Specialist / Executive Support, Jeffrey - Laura Francis and Amy Sutherland, Ryerson - Erica McMillian, Brown- Sarah DeBenedictis, Polson - Liz Tucker Plazky, Hand - Jan Scott

2. Superintendent's Report
Craig A. Cooke, Ph.D.

- **Budget Update:** Board of Education approved the budget this past Tuesday. Dr. Cooke will provide a snapshot of the budget for distribution. This budget is a "maintenance budget" meaning there was not a large increase of new things. Although a covid-period grant expired which covered social worker and interventionist position, funding was found to keep all four positions funded for the next school year. All 4 Schools have a full-time social worker and Hand has 1.6. Daniel Hand had a reduction in their budget. They removed AP prep (this was a voluntary program) which saved about \$15,000. There are 750 students enrolled at the high school and one incoming non-resident student will be paying tuition. This is an option for any student to attend Daniel Hand without being a Madison resident. Tuition is approximately \$21,000. Information and applications can be found on the MPS website under enroll a student. Other budget items:
 - \$106,000 earmarked for reading materials and moving library materials. Once the new school is built the Brown library materials will be split between Ryerson and Jeffrey, some material will be replaced.
 - \$45,000 increased to the athletic transportation budget. High school sports are pay to play to help cover the cost.
 - \$40,000 for Hand bridge furniture
 - \$90,000 for new band uniforms, which happens approximately every 10 years
 - Funds were also kept aside for the accreditation process for Daniel Hand.
 - Jan from Hand PTO suggested that there should be more advertisement directly to the parents for the AP Prep resources so that there is more participation and the board may be willing to fund again in the future.

Overall there was a 3.14% budget increase which was low in comparison to other local districts. Decreased to debt was largely to credit for this otherwise the increase would be approximately 4.5%.

Madison capital improvement projects: The town of Madison is giving the Board of Education \$5 million for school projects. Roof units for the high school, (which also affects the accreditation process) will be started in the summer of 2025. Also funds for the Brown school move, signs, etc.

- **Building Project/Naming Committee:** Groundbreaking on the new school building should be happening late March. Construction bid package will be submitted on February 9. Building project is still on target. The naming committee has narrowed it down to three finalists that have been presented to the Board of Education. Approximately 150 submissions were received from residents and students. The Board of Education will take action at their next meeting. The three names are Neck River Elementary School, Marguerite P. Bowes Elementary School, Hammonasset Elementary School.
- **Reading Waiver:** Zoom meeting later today with the Dept. of Education, Dr. Cooke, our representatives Christine Cohen and John Michael Parker and two Board of Education members, to get further guidance on how we can get approval for the waiver. The deadline for implementation of the new reading program was moved to July 2025. Erica from Ryerson asked if there is a grant to help cover the \$600,000 cost to the town to implement the reading program. Dr. Cooke said the state did offer \$33,000. Liz asked are we in consultation with similar districts for how to move forward with the State. Dr. Cook responded they have conferred with other districts and there's a general feeling that there's a disconnect between the legislation that was put forth and the state mandate.

- **Other business:** Another request from Ryerson (echoed by Brown) for public Wi-Fi access in the school buildings. Dr. Cooke said he would ask again and that he feels it would be possible. Laura asked about any imminent plans for redistricting. Dr. Cooke assured everyone that this is not happening as of now. Laura asked if this could be put in writing along with the option for students to be allowed to finish in the school they start in if redistricting is ever put on the table. Affordable housing committee would still like to address parents possibly through a joint PTO meeting. Erica expressed concern about the PTO role in town committees. Zoe emailed Bennet Pudlin contact info.

3. Review of October 20, 2023 Minutes

Motion to approve minutes by Liz Tucker Plazky, seconded by Jan. The motion passes.

4. School Update Report

- **Ryerson:** Ryerson will be hosting a Kindergarten screening day on April 4 for incoming students whose 5th birthdays are Sept through Dec, and whose parents would like the new date requirement waived. We had a successful toy drive in November and December, all donations were given to the MPD toy drive. Created an Amazon wishlist and this was helpful for families who weren't able to physically donate a toy. We hosted a Holiday Store on December 6 and the kids had a great time shopping for family and friends. We held our first fundraiser with Charleston Wrap (giftwrap and gift items) in November and December. We scheduled it so that all items would be delivered before the first day of Hanukkah. The participation rate was not as high as other fundraisers but the profit margin was good and we've received wonderful feedback about the products. We hosted a Ryerson Day at Bridgeport Islanders on January 7. About 20 families attended and had a great time. We are in the middle of our Winter Workshop 4-week extracurricular series. We have a little over half the school enrolled, and 13 classes run by parents and paid teachers. We will be running our next extracurricular series Feb 26 - March 18. We are planning to sponsor 5 cultural arts/SEL assemblies in the second half of the year. The students have been working on their artwork for our Square One Art fundraiser. The store will open in early February and families will have the chance to purchase gift and household items customized with their child's artwork. We are holding a Ryerson Day at Adrenaline Rush on Feb 6 early dismissal day. Adrenaline Rush donates a percentage of each admission fee paid by a Ryerson family. We are coordinating a Junior Achievement Day on March 15. Parent volunteers will be coming in to teach JA curriculum in each classroom for 2 hours that morning. We are collaborating with Jeffrey to host a Movie Day at Madison Cinemas on March 29. We are holding our annual Variety Show on May 10 at DHHS. Ryerson Field day will be May 31. We will be gifting each student with a t-shirt and sponsoring a water/popsicle/rest/dress up booth. Third Grade Celebration is being held on June 6. We will start convening the planning committee in February. Our Annual Give to Grow parent party will be on June 1 at Surf Club. We are planning a Ryerson Day at Hartford Yardgoats on June 16.
- **Jeffrey:** December: We had our holiday shop where kids could shop for two dollars for their families! It was another successful year! The kids decorated their bags in the classrooms then shopped, got their gift wrapped and wrote greeting cards to go in their gift bags. We gave our staff and teachers, holiday gifts as well as a new Keurig coffee maker, Coffee, and sponges and soaps for the faculty lounge.

January: We organized a parent workshop via zoom for Jeffrey, Brown, and Ryerson families from one of our parents, Dr. Eran Magen, On building healthy habits with your child, this week, on 1/23. We had a family bingo night on Friday, January 19 at Polson. It was well attended and the kids had a great time! We had the kids call the bingo numbers each round. We had specials rounds, where the tables played together, and then whichever table won, the entire table won a prize. We also had traditional BINGO rounds with prizes. We are in the process of signups for our third round of workshops for the year.

Fundraisers: We ran a Yankees ticket fundraiser with the Yankees (Because they contacted us- Red do not do this, and Hartford yard go through required us to purchase a bulk quantity of tickets). We sold 40 tickets. We are in full swing in preparation for our parents night out which will be Friday, February 23 at Stoney Creek brewery in Branford from 7 to 11 PM. We will be doing an online raffle via rally up in order to allow both people that attend the event, as well as people who do not the chance chance to win our raffles, which include many wonderful teacher experiences. We are still in the process of collecting items for our raffle/silent auction as well as sponsors. We started a fundraiser through Boon, which sells many reusable bags. This is another low maintenance fundraiser.

- **Brown:** December - PTO hosted a specialty hot chocolate bar with holiday treats as a thank you to building staff. Parents donated baked goods, decorated the lounge and volunteered to help make yummy hot cocoa.

January: We had our second general meeting on January 11 at 7 pm. At 6 pm, the school was opened up for anyone who wanted a self-guided tour of the school. Mr. Henderson then gave a building update during our meeting. Our next general meeting is scheduled for March 14. First week of workshops is off to a good start. We have approximately 65 students participating in a variety of teacher led sessions and 3rd party instructor classes. Wednesday, January 24th was our parent trivia night at James Madison House. While not heavily attended, there was good feedback from those who came and it was a really good time! We are simultaneously running a modest online raffle with local business donations and teacher experiences, which will close on 1/31.

Coming up: James Ponti, author of the City Spies Series, will be visiting Brown on February 8. Brown Family Bingo is on the books for February 12! Yearbooks will go on sale in February. Young Authors Day creative writing assembly will be funded by the PTO in March. A Brown Talent show is being organized for May 3rd and will take place in the Polson auditorium.

- **Polson:** The PTO had a very successful first Book Fair in December. We had a great volunteer turn out! We raised Scholastic Dollars which went back to the school to use.

In January:

- Winter interscholastic sports are in session
- 1/3 Principal for the day - 7th grade student got to shadow Principal Hart for the day
- 1/10 Speak Up Performance from DHHS. This was an anti-bullying assembly for 7th/8th students
- 1/11 and 1/25 Madison Experience (half day) 8th grade only - investigation into understanding artificial intelligence (students in cohorts, teacher led)
- 1/12 Afro Brazilian assembly for all grades - supported through a grant (science/art)
- 1/17 Chorus Concert
- 1/17 High School Counselors coming in to talk to 8th graders (answer student questions to promote a smooth transition)
- 1/22 8th Grade orientation at Hand. Transition process begins (all grades) with course selection in February
- 1/31 Band/Orchestra Concert (snow date 2/1)

PTO will be reaching out to Volunteers for Spring and 8th grade end of year activities over the next month. Our next Executive Board Meeting is 2/15. Our next general PTO meeting is 3/12.

- **DHHS:** 12/19 Blood Drive
 - exceeded our goal of 25 pints by collecting 30 pints
 - every parent volunteer shift was filled (so total of 6 volunteers)
 - donors received a t-shirt from the Red Cross
 - 10 plus students staffed the intake table during the day
 - 1 student volunteer will receive a \$250 scholarship
 - next blood drive March 19th

Holiday Teacher Gift Card Raffle -PTO distributed candies and 30 chances to win a \$10 gift card to all the teachers and staff via their mailbox

Scott Cochran and Catherine Barden attended our January PTO meeting and shared the results of the Search Institute Survey.

5. PRC/PTO Reminders/Discussion/Subcommittee Assignments

- Political Action (Candidates Forum/Vote Campaign/Signs)
 - Discuss Candidates Forum – Will PRC continue to help?

- PTO Best Practices Task Force:
- Transportation Council (Attend Quarterly Meetings & Bus Driver Appreciation)
- Food Council (Attend Quarterly Meetings)
- MYFS/MADE (Attend Monthly Meetings)
- PTO Best Practices Task Force:
 - By-laws/ Budgets/Treasurers Reports/Insurance/Websites
 - PTO Websites/Forms/Fundraising/School Gifts/Forms
- Staff Appreciation: Custodians & Banner
- District Wide Outing or Social Event Ideas
- PRC Speakers

6. Old Business

7. Future Agenda Items

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Sarah DeBenedictis
Brown PTO
1/26/2024