

EWG Minutes

Monday, April 8, 2019; 9am; Underwood School

Present: Kathy Smith, Maggie Schmidt, Kathy Shields, Andrea Steenstrup, Orla Higgins-Averill, Christine Dutt, Kerry Prasad (call-in)

Review of PTO Board Surveys

Respondents have strong perspectives,

One Fund, Raise the Bar, Flat Percentage were most popular
Strong dislike for Enrichment Fee and Vol Contribution ideas

Presenting detailed information to the SC would be useful

Choose 2-3 exemplary comments focused on 3 pooling ideas that were most popular (One Fund, Raise the Bar, Flat Percentage)

Maggie will select quotes

These plans need more detail

ex: Some math on Flat Percentage shows that 5% makes no difference- 2 schools would get an extra thousand dollars

We would have to think about how the flat percentage would work to be impactful

Definitions

What is the need?

What is the amount we would need to raise? How much would bring other schools up?

What is the goal?

Supplement for CAS? Cover all curriculum-related items?

The *goal* will determine the *amount* that is needed.

There are several ways we can look at purpose of fund; we will try to determine the purpose based on the answers we received; that will help us to come up with what kind of fund we recommend

Doesn't have to be one solution for all of the problems

Possible definitions of Equity

There needs to be a definition of “Equity” for the purposes of this Equity Working Group; based on what we found in our research we can see these possible definitions of **equity**

Equity: in terms of enrichment

Equity means substantially similar access to enrichment opportunities and teacher classroom support across all schools.

Equity: in terms of community belonging

Equity also means that all parents feel they can support their children in school

That was a feeling that came out in focus groups

The goal of equity is to create sense of belonging so no one individual or demographic group feels marginalized / overlooked

Implementation of equity guidelines and centralized fund should be done in a way that includes / is mindful of a sense of belonging of everyone in our community

Example from Zervas: “The Zervas PTO will continue to focus on community-building and supporting the educational goals of our school through family involvement, volunteerism and fundraising.”

Small Group Professional Development

- Should we recommend that PTOs do not pay for small group professional development for teachers? It is neither enrichment nor community building
- Only 2 schools seem to really spend a lot on small group professional development Angier (4k) and MR
- These small group professional developments go through regular providers that district works with
- NPS has a great deal of Professional Development; in the view of many administrators, it does less to impact teaching and learning than does one-on-one guidance with mentors and peers

Classroom supplies

Should PTO be prohibited from spending on classroom supplies; or is that cutting too close?

Underwood PTO has reduced the amount of money for classroom supplies significantly over past few years

Scissors and markers vs. books for classroom libraries

Curriculum support

What is meant by “Curriculum support?”

One thing that came up often in surveys is that people feel they pay taxes and that taxes should fund “curriculum support.”

On the other hand, “Teacher classroom support” means _____

Fund-Raising

Feeling in Focus Groups that PTO spends too much time fundraising, feeling that if we don't do it, our kids will suffer

Some schools view fund-raising and community-building as going hand-in-hand, others see them as distinct from one another

Some schools have just a few big donors, others have to do lots of little fundraisers

Some schools get the lionshare of their money from big donors

At Burr, a large donation is 1K; At Ward, it is 10K

Idea: Middle School Cohorts

Cooperative fundraising based on middle school affiliation, 4 fundraisers for One Newton Fund? Combines 2 ideas

Frustration around eq guidelines is idea that capping will not lead to greater equity; inequity exists beyond PTO spending (buildings, etc) issues around perceived lack of transparency

Summarizing ideas to this meeting

- Things that we feel have come out of the Equity Working Group's work:

- It is clear that the Newton community believes in equity- how can we rally people around that? how can we achieve it?
- Response to our efforts has had the effect of pushing NPS toward paying for technology
- Questions have been raised about the spending cap
 - Cap is a first step
- Making people think about role of PTO
- This can be seen in a bigger arc, looking forward, this is foundational work for being in a better spot in 4 years
 - this is about change, it takes time for humans to change
- We have to get SC to see that this is going to take a long time
- All of our data will help show to School Committee how complex this issue is
- Only thing that will become public is our summary/ analysis

Next meeting:

Mon 4/22 9am Underwood

Everyone should read and comment on the docs EWG members have submitted by Wed 4/10

HW assignment-

Brainstorm recommendations/ things to consider

How to shift PTO spending so it is more in line with the ideas of *teacher support, enrichment and community-feeling/ belonging* as opposed to *curriculum support*

What through our work we think needs to be considered