



United Steele Workers PTA Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 14th 2025 at 8:00 am

In-Person Meeting w/ Zoom Link

Meeting Attendees

Kara Offner	Joe Kunz	Kim Tran
Camille Gall	Tim Offner	Kate Fugate
Elizabeth Morris	Kaity Maddox	Lucy Lewis
Ryan Miller	Michael Smith	Trevor Thomas
Rhonda Tombs	Olivia Sebastian	Ingrid Black
Angela Smith	Lauren Gubbins	Ryan Thomas
Melinda Yocom	Stephanie Downing	
Taylor Nygaard	Amy Holcomb	

Governance

PTA President Kara Offner called the meeting to order at 8:00 am. A quorum was present.

PTA Board Introductions:

- Kara Offner: President
- Alli Klein: Vice President
- Camille Gall: Secretary
- Elizabeth Morris: Treasurer

All attendees then took a moment to introduce themselves.

Secretary Camille Gall presented the minutes from the December meeting. Angela Smith motioned to approve the minutes, Melinda Yocom seconded, and all were in favor.

Kara Offner welcomed everyone back after winter break and an additional snow day. She shared that an updated calendar of events was sent out via the front office, Dojo, and school communications. Newly added events include:

- Monday, March 9: Steele 125th Birthday Open House
- Wednesday, April 15: Stellinas Community Dinner, 3–9 PM
- Friday, May 1: Fifth Grade Talent Show

Principal's Report

Principal Ryan Miller delivered the principal's report and began by thanking the PTA and all volunteers, particularly those who have stepped up to serve as bond liaisons for the upcoming District 11 bond. Steele currently has approximately six to seven families serving as liaisons, which is more than most schools in the district. Mr. Miller expressed appreciation for the strong level of engagement and support.

The district is currently assessing building conditions as part of the bond planning process. No buildings in the district are rated “excellent,” and Steele is expected to fall within the “poor” to “fair” category, similar to many District 11 schools built in the 1960s and 1970s. If approved, Steele could receive approximately \$10–12 million in funding. Priorities include roof and HVAC improvements, as well as reallocating funds to support an approximate \$10,000 pay increase for District 11 teachers in order to attract and retain staff.

Mr. Miller reviewed STAR assessment data, noting that STAR is administered to students in grades 2–5 at the beginning, middle, and end of the year. The goal is for students to demonstrate growth at or above the 50th percentile. Steele was recognized for strong results, averaging 55% in English Language Arts with every class meeting or exceeding the 50th percentile. Math scores also averaged 55%, though a few classes fell slightly below the benchmark. Overall, Steele is in a strong position and students are growing as expected.

Mr. Miller discussed school photography services, sharing interest in transitioning from Lifetouch to a local professional photographer who offers personality portraits at comparable pricing. He noted that he made a similar change while at Grant Elementary and found it to be a significant improvement for families and staff. The photographer could provide both individual and class photos. Families were encouraged to consider the option for next year.

Communication was also discussed, with acknowledgment that families are seeking clearer and more frequent updates. The school continues to use Dojo across all grades and welcomes feedback on how communication can improve. Mr. Miller shared that his door is always open and encouraged parents to share suggestions.

The PTA webpage on the Steele website was identified as needing updates, particularly to support incoming families over the summer. Mr. Miller shared that Dojo will remain active during the summer months and that he will assist in updating the PTA webpage before the end of the school year.

CMAS testing dates were shared, with the testing window running from April 6–24. STAR testing will occur the week prior.

Positive feedback regarding Dojo was shared by Lauren Gubbins, and a parent suggestion was made to do a mid-year push reminding families how to sign up and use Dojo.

Calendar of Events

- Thursday, January 15: Used Book Sale, approximately 3:00 PM
- Monday, January 19: No School, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Tuesday, January 20: SAC Meeting, 5:00 PM

New Business

PTA Meeting Time

PTA meetings will continue to be held at 8:00 AM, as attendance is significantly higher at that time. Meetings will always include a Zoom option to increase accessibility. Evening meetings have historically had low attendance. A suggestion was made to record meetings and share them via Givebacks; Elizabeth Morris will explore whether this is feasible.

Treasurer's Report

Elizabeth Morris presented the Treasurer's Report.

December financial highlights:

- Income: \$700.41 (\$700 garden donation to offset previous costs; \$0.41 from Shop to Give/Givebacks)
- Expenses: \$0
- December bank statement requires two signatures: Melinda Yocom and Taylor Nygaard

A proposed budget modification was presented to add \$60 to the Staff Professional Development Support line item to help fund a teacher training.

Melinda Yocom motioned to approve the budget adjustment. Taylor Nygaard seconded. All were in favor.

PTA Board for Next Year

Families were encouraged to consider serving on the PTA Board. An email will be sent to the school community this week to begin outreach and recruitment for open positions.

Steele 125th Birthday Celebration

The Steele 125th Birthday Open House will take place on Monday, March 6, following the school day and coinciding with Focus Day.

Kara Offner shared that Tim Offner, Joe Kunz, and Rhonda Thombs are serving on the planning committee. Volunteers will be needed for Focus Day and upcoming events, including the Someone Special Dance.

A request has been submitted for Mayor Yemi to attend the event, and he has expressed interest pending confirmation.

Plans include spirit wear as a fundraiser:

- Hoodies: \$35
- Adult t-shirts: \$20

Ordering will open within the next week and remain open for approximately three weeks to ensure items are delivered in time for the event.

Spirit wear details include black, gray, and colored hoodies for adults and students, and class-color t-shirts for parents. A parent suggested tie-dye shirts as a future activity, potentially tied to Art Night; the idea was well received and will be explored with Mrs. Seal. Rhonda

Thombs suggested incorporating an IB logo on future shirts, which was not feasible for this order but will be considered next year.

Fifth Grade Fundraiser

Kara shared that Mundi Ross, Elisha Niebuhr, and Erin Sawyer are working on plans for the Fifth Grade Talent Show fundraiser scheduled for May 1. The event will include concessions and multiple performance categories, with participation capped to ensure variety. Fifth graders will help run the event between performances, with the goal of maximizing student leadership. Fundraising goals range from \$5,000 to \$10,000, with proceeds intended to support fifth grade activities in future years. Volunteers will be needed, and additional information will be shared closer to the event.

Teacher Appreciation

Kara shared that the PTA is working on plans for updates to the staff lounge, with Steele parent Jasmine Bible providing design guidance to create a cleaner, more welcoming space, possibly including updated appliances and utensils.

January teacher appreciation will be “A Sweet Start to the New Year,” featuring catered coffee and pastries from Boonzaaijer’s Dutch Bakery on Tuesday, January 20, following the long weekend.

February appreciation will include the annual “Souper Bowl,” with families invited to donate soups, salads, and snacks for teachers. A SignUp Genius will be shared next week.

Schoolyard Committee Update

Liz Harris provided a schoolyard update. District guidance confirmed that asphalt areas cannot be modified due to long-term preschool planning, as the district is considering placing preschools at all District 11 schools, potentially using asphalt areas.

Two elements not included in Phase 1, a sculpture/globe and a formal entryway gate, remain priorities. Funds remain from earlier fundraising efforts, though additional fundraising will be needed to complete these features without revisiting the full master plan.

The original Steele stone sign is believed to be in storage. The committee will explore locating it and potentially incorporating it into the schoolyard and 125th anniversary celebration.

Repainting the asphalt, last completed in summer 2017, was discussed as a possibility, with Mr. Miller exploring whether the district could cover the cost. Restoring or refreshing the wall mural was also discussed, with emphasis on obtaining approval from the original artist before making any changes.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 AM.