

**PTO Council Meeting
October 6, 2015**

7:30pm - regular meeting

Education Center, Room 210

MEETING MINUTES

Attendees:

Executive Board

Betsy Blagdon, Co-president
Karen Manning, Co-president
Bree Lucas, METCO
Jo-Louise Allen, Special Education Rep.
Kim Thurmond Treasurer
Christina Hardway Secretary
Jen Abbott, Equity Representative
Rhanna Kidwell, Technology
Frieda Dweck, Political Action/Education
Theresa Fitzpatrick - Ex Officio, Co-Pres Brown
Caroline Wilson, Website Manager

Other attendees

David Fleishman, Superintendent
Alicia Bowman, SRTS
Dawn Fleming, Newton PD SRTS
Kathy Marchi, NPS AWARE
Sandy Sloane and Jenn Martin (SRTS, Zervas)

PTO Presidents by School

Sarah Kish, Peirce
Carol Ann Delmonico, Mason-Rice
Sally Brickell, NNHS
Annmarie York, Bowan
Jessica Davis, Zervas
Megan Flynn, Ward
Kerry Prasad, Countryside
John Oliver, Horace Mann
Meredith Andrews, Underwood
Autumn Sarzana, Underwood
Josh Krintzman, Williams

Jessica Davis, Zervas
Leslie Gonzales, Countryside
Lindsay Pike, Day
Dana Hanson, Day
Melissa Chatfield, Burr
Helen Hay, NSHS
Nora Horick, Franklin
Grace West, Franklin
Marie Yunis, Memorial Spaulding
Matthew Miller, Memorial Spaulding
Shawna Conaghan, OHMS

Next Meeting Date

December 1st, 2015

Introductions

Superintendent's Update; David Fleishman

School is off to a good start. Newton didn't have as many children show up in school as they expected. Horace Mann had about 3 fewer students show up than expected. In Bowen, the projected enrollment was 490 and the actual enrollment is about 450. Mason Rice is up a bit, but Zervas may take some of the pressure on Mason Rice after it opens.

Other Facilities that are in flux

- ***Angier:*** The new Angier building will open in January.
- ***Cabot:*** is next in line will move to swing space next.

Curriculum

This year has fewer curriculum changes than previous years.

- Last year the PARCC was a big change.
- In November, the State will be voting on whether PARCC will be implemented. If it doesn't get voted in, then they will have to retool MCAS.
- It's hard to predict what will happen with standardized testing in the state.

Security Issues

- There was additional police presence at a school at the start of the year. The district worked to be transparent about the process.

School Assignment & High School Start Time

- One working group on school assignment will be finishing up soon, and there will be another starting up.
- Another working group will be considering start time for high schools.

Q&A

Q: Have you done any evaluation of the PARCC scores?

A: Not yet, but it will be done soon.

Q: The decision by the Board about standardized testing that will be made in November—will that affect the testing that is administered this year?

A: Probably it will, but it's really not clear yet.

Q: Any insight on the sleep committee? What would the timeline look like?

A: Natick considered it for two years, and they decided not to do it. Duxbury, on the other hand, indicated that they were happy that they had done it. The Newton Group is very thorough and has a completely thorough work plan in place, including good community engagement, traffic plans, an analysis of the impact on sports. The Superintendent is very confident in the group and there is a very competent program manager to direct the effort.

Q: What is the research on sleep?

A: Adolescents don't get enough sleep and their cycle is later than other groups. Kids are much better with more sleep.

Q: What is the best way to voice support?

A: There is going to be an announcement sent out and a sign up for meetings. Those who are interested should definitely sign up to stay informed.

Q: What were the extra police? Were they in uniform?

A: In districts across the country, there is a large range of ways to have police presence in schools. Some schools have metal detectors and then there are other places that always have police in uniforms. In Newton we don't usually have police in uniforms, but there are often police who have regular shifts so that they can build relationships with kids and be woven into the fabric of the school. There were extra police at the beginning of the year but those issues have largely been resolved.

Q: Interest in Communication: Why only a survey to 3rd grade, 7th grade, and 10th grade parents?

A: They are working with a professional group who do a random sample, and it is a start on the process of communication, and they will probably get a broader sample too.

Kathy is going to present on a grant and the work that is ongoing for socio-emotional health.

Project AWARE Presentation (Kathleen Marchi, NPS)

Kathy has been working in the district for the last 7 years, and she has had several grants. She is working with the Socio-Emotional Learning group. Amy Kelly is the director of the department. There is Project AWARE training, which several people have gone through. There are a lot of things that everyone does, but they would like to ask people to do more training(s).

- One training is the QPR training, and it stands for Question, Persuade, Refer to intervene and prevent suicide –it is about a 2 hour training, and she has been doing this training for some time. It is meant to help adults learn how to ask adolescents Questions, Persuade them that you would like help, and then Refer them to help.
- Project AWARE: The 8 hour proposed training is a broader teen-focused mental health training focused on helping larger concerns that teens typically face. The first 4 hours is to provide information and is designed for people who come into contact with you. The afternoon training is practice for raising questions and working with youth. It is designed for people who come into contact with teenagers. It is analogous to CPR training so that it doesn't help address a major medical issue, but it makes it possible to help stabilize a young person and address issues a teen may be facing. Often, people will sense something is wrong, but will be uncertain how to proceed from there. This gives people tools to help young people in a potentially emergent situations.
- There is a training on Oct 8 and Oct 15 from 9 to 1pm (it's broken up into 2 sessions).
- There are other trainings available.

Then the question is how to bring it to a larger group. When? How best to deliver it? Where?

Question: How do you pitch it to parents of elementary school kids?

Comment: Fifth grade parents could be grouped according to the feeders for middle school.

- They are tasked with training 250 or so people and they have trained about 100.
- The training is really for everyone
- Newton.ma.gov has info and there will be more info through the Newton Public Schools website.
- Also, program information can be sent to all the schools.
- We can have a summary on the PTOC website with dates.

Comment: Going back to dates for when it is best? It's hard to say for certain, but giving a variety options would be important.

Q: Can it be changed to different timelines?

A: It's a prescribed program.

With other questions or other thoughts, please e-mail Kathleen Marchi at NPS - kathleen_marchi@newton.k12.ma.us.

Safe Routes to School (Alicia Bowman & Officer Dawn Fleming)

Theresa Fitzpatrick and Alicia Bowman started the program 10 years ago. It is a federally-funded program to make the routes to schools safer, partially by promoting walking, biking, and taking the bus.

- They brought in everyone so that there were many voices at the table. They wanted representatives from many schools and other school officials.
- The district-wide group is looking for more participants. The time commitment isn't that big, and it's a support group to encourage students, parents, and the administration to get children to walk, bike, or bus to school. Please go back to the school and find if there are representatives who are willing to represent your school.
- There is a district wide SRTS leadership meeting this Friday at the Waban Library.
- Two representatives from Zervas came to discuss their efforts. They discussed the ways that they are promoting walk to school events (Posters and flyers and other promotional information—for example—the walk to school day is 10/7/2015, and they have small prizes to recognize those who walk to school). At Zervas, 85% of kids live within a mile, so getting many kids to walk to school is an achievable goal. They do a lot to promote walking to school at Zervas. Parents also work to remove physical barriers kids face as they are walking to school (e.g. snow that prevents kids walking on the sidewalks; leaves on the aqueduct; and construction sites that can be a problem).
- The benefit of coming to the Safe Routes to School meetings is that people will get answers to the problems that they face (e.g. construction vehicles in the road, etc.). There are resources in the knowledge that people have. For example, they were able to work with the city to get them to remove snow from the bus stops, etc.
- The Five Components: Evaluation, Engineering, Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement.
- Dawn Fleming, Safety Officer from the Newton Police Dept. spoke, and discussed the importance of ensuring safety. She encourages children to develop positive relationships with police officers by wearing her uniform. Her office does a bike safety program, and she would love to work with every school. Traffic officers help, and during the Bike Day, kids come to ride on the road (but it isn't for learning to ride but rather for bike safety). If kids aren't able to ride, then they may participate by walking. There are also obstacle courses that can be put in as well. There will also be another bike safety day in the Spring. They give kids safety information, and help them to understand what it means to ride a bike safely. The police dept. can provide helmets to children who don't have them.
- While ideally they would work K to 12, they are focused on providing education to kids in grades 2 through 6.
- They are also working with Physical Education teachers.
- There is a range of educational materials available.

- There is contact info; please feel free to give questions.

Q: (To Officer Fleming): Middle school parent would like to know if it is safe for a middle school female to walk to school?

A: It's important to give kids a sense of how to walk with "street sense." She would never recommend walking by themselves. Parents should know kids' routes to school.

Q: The Blue Zone?

A: Addressing the blue zone is the worst part of the walk to the school.

Q: Walk to school with no sidewalks? Dudley Road is a problem.

A: That is a hard place to walk. Memorial Spaulding is difficult. Drive to a place where there is sidewalk because that is usually a good place to learn to walk.

Equity Overview and Update/Q&A (Jen Abbott, Equity Rep.) [preliminary notes]

As some of you know, the council helped the school committee to make a revision to the equity policy. There are a few buckets of PTO funding. There are a few updates to the technology budget.

The spending at the elementary schools is limited.

- There is no allowable PTO spending for staffing and whole school development is disallowed.
- There are other places where it is restricted based on enrollment: libraries, and classroom curriculum materials; field trips, enrichment programming, and physical education;
- Technology has now been addressed because there were a lot of inequalities developing. There were some boundaries established, and that has helped address some inequalities.
- PTOs are allowed to spend money on a per pupil basis to sustain a technology standard because there are devices that are aging out. If you are not aware of the moment what your technology needs are, the technology department will send that information shortly. This will be detailed info about what has aged out and what can be replaced by the PTO. If you feel your school needs something, then it needs to be discussed with Leo Brehm (IT, NPS), and Jen (PTOC Equity Representative) is a good resource. The equity committee is a good resource as well. They will be meeting later this year.
- There are a few things with no restrictions like playgrounds, tissues, paper towels, or community things like newsletter and things that aren't related to the curriculum.
- There were some technology-related changes from last year. The main changes are that the larger schools of 20 classrooms are allowed 4 full sets/carts of devices (now including chrome books), and then libraries went from having 17 to 23 computers. At the middle school there are 30 for the library. Each classroom has a projection device and other things that are available. As those things age out, the most

current version are provided by the school. There will be 1 3D printer per elementary library.

Q: At the secondary and middle school there is no official equity policy. There is a range of responses about secondary schools.

A: The School Committee is looking to develop that.

Q: 3D printers? Is there going to be training and curriculum?

A: It was part of a pilot, and Jen will ask Leo Brehm, Head of IT, NPS

Open Discussion(All)

Betsy Blagdon provided a public service announcement about the upcoming municipal elections:

1. I'm speaking because I'm not related to any candidate or issue. A few people associated with Council are running, so we are going to avoid the appearance of impropriety by not mentioning names and letting me do the talking.

2. Which leads to the important point: The leadership of a non-profit is not allowed to endorse a candidate. Ever. An organization can take a stand on an issue, however. If one were to do that, one should consult with one's board before doing so. There is further elaboration of this on the PTO Council website: <http://newtonptocouncil.org/for-ptos/ptos-and-political-involvement/> (As an aside, I resigned as a School Committee member's treasurer when I started my term at NSHS PTSO, because we had enough non-profit status issues as it was.)

3. For the upcoming election, as community organizations, we should promote unbiased information about it. In this case, that probably means the fairly dry city government elections website, with its listing of candidates and issues. (<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/elections/default.asp>) The League of Women Voters is a good resource, but this year they have an issue on the ballot. This page does a fairly good job explaining the issue, mostly without showing bias: <http://lwvnewton.org/action/charter-commission-initiative/>. Candidate forums presented in an unbiased manner are also good resources, but you should be wary of any agenda that presenting organization might have.

4. The city's charter governs many things, including the makeup and terms of the school committee. I will bring a resolution to the PTO Council Board regarding whether PTO Council should support the ballot question to have a charter commission. If the Board agrees, we will present a vote by email to the council as a whole.