

# Birchwood Elementary PTO

## Meeting Agenda

October 5, 2016

9am

~~Conference Room~~, Possibly Cafeteria,, Birchwood Elementary  
Invitees: All Parents and Birchwood Community Members Welcome

- I. Call to order
- II. President's Report (Jan Brown and Erin Cassady-Dorion)
- III. Officer Reports
  - A. VP Programs & Services (Suzanne Brooksby)
  - B. VP Fundraisers (Jill Appert)
  - C. Treasurer (Maureen Younkin)
  - D. Secretary (Anne Burger)
- IV. Principal's Report (Deb Berndt)
- V. Teacher's Liaison Report (Amy Santandrea & Kathleen Vermilyea via emailed summary)
- VI. Committee Reports
  - A. Attachment
- VII. Board of Education Meeting Summary
  - A. Attached Summary of Relevant parts of the Meeting
- VIII. Old Business
  - A. Recap From Back to School BBQ
    1. Update notes for next year's event (Where too store these notes? Google Drive Account?)
  - B. FreshSchools/Directory
    1. Integration of Tools
    2. Notes on Process for Next Year
- IX. New business
  - A. Monster Mash
    1. Nature Walk?
- X. Approval of minutes from last meeting
- XI. Adjournment

Next Meeting: November 9, 2016 at 6:30pm

## *Committee Reports*

### **Cheryl Gerstler, Arts & Education**

All of these programs for 2016+17 are subsidized by booking through Capital Region BOCES.

Mrs. Berndt shared information with teachers regarding scheduling a workshop paid by the PTO with Scotia Glenville Childrens' Museum. To schedule a presentation, go to Scotia-Glenville Children's Museum website at and select "In School Programs"  
<http://www.travelingmuseum.org/in-school-programs.html>

The Basketball Family will be coming to Birchwood Elementary for a Character Education Assembly in our gym on Tuesday, October 11th from 1:05-1:55 pm. All grades (K-5) will have the opportunity to enjoy and learn from this performance! For more information about this group, visit:

<http://www.basketballfamily.com/>

A Silent Wings-Birds of Prey Workshop has been scheduled for the 4th grade for June 2017. This is also paid for by the PTO.

### **Tara McKenna, Monster Mash**

Monster Mash- looking good so far. We have received a monetary donation already that will cover most of the pizza! Have some donation requests out as well. We are in the bulletin and the sign up genius is under way. We checked out the basement, we have plenty of decs for the night. Pumpkins for decorating being donated and fire truck coming as well.

Working on the entertainment still, original idea fell through :(

Everyone feel free to pass along that we will always welcome a new exciting game for anyone who feels inventive.

### **Dawn Oppe/Danielle Richardson, ASEP**

ASEP is off to a great start. Looking to make some improvements as far as registration process. We were able to get some new instructors to offer different classes. Thank you to all the teachers are give up their class rooms for ASEP.

### **Maria Johnson, School Banking**

School banking will start on Friday. Through the end of October, new students accounts earn \$10 for Birchwood. We are trying to get this message out via the bulletin and possible flyers for K-1 families.

### **Laura Mirkovic, Visiting Authors**

Suzanne, the visiting author forms are coming in and Laura is creating spread sheet for the total. Checks will be made out to BW PTO. I gave Maureen a heads up that she would need to write the Open Door bookstore for the total amount, once collected checks are deposited in our account.

Soyoung is submitting the Boces paperwork and getting the bulletin board updated.

### **Milie Gnatek & Sonya Ward, Yearbook**

The committee had their 1st meeting. Yearbook cover was selected and submitted. We increased the yearbook to 80 pages this year due To the additional k class. This will allow for a bit more space for family ads which is where the pto makes money. The cost of the yearbook to students will be \$23. Committee members signed up for pages and to take pictures of events.

### *Board of Education Meeting Highlights – September 13, 2016*

#### Safe Schools Plan

Director of Student and Staff Support Services Mark Treanor presented information about the districtwide Safe Schools Plan and some changes in state law related to school safety. Over the last 18 months, the district has done a significant amount of work in this area, which has involved Mr. Treanor's office, the District Safety Committee, school principals and BOCES Safety Specialist Sherrie Strain. The districtwide Safe Schools Plan must be adopted by the Board of Education annually, and was approved at the meeting. A significant change in the law pertains to required school safety drills. Previously 12 evacuation drills were required. Under the new law, eight evacuation drills and four lockdown drills are required. Mr. Treanor emphasized that this has unfortunately become an area where training is important. Because lockdown drills have the potential to cause anxiety and concern, Mr. Treanor said that schools are working to approach this change in a sensitive, thoughtful manner. A parent communication will be developed in the near future. The district continues to work with local police and fire agencies on safety issues.

#### Potential Partnership in China

Ed Alston, director of the International Scholars Program, presented information about a potential partnership with a school system in China. The Wisdom Educational Group operates a K-6 Montessori program in China and is looking to expand its program to include middle school and high school. Last year, a representative of the organization contacted Mr. Alston through a colleague at UAAlbany to learn about the district. This was followed-up by a small group from China recently coming to Niskayuna for a meeting with

Mr. Alston, Superintendent Cosimo Tangorra, Jr., Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Lauren Gemmill and Marie Digirolamo, Director of World Language, Social Studies and English as a New Language. The organization is interested in establishing a partnership with the district that could potentially include assistance with their expansion of grade levels, professional development opportunities, classroom connections, and students from China attending Niskayuna through the International Scholars Program.

The Board was supportive of continuing to explore the partnership. As a next step, Wisdom Education Group has invited Dr. Tangorra and Mr. Alston to China at the expense of the organization. They plan to travel there in November. Dr. Tangorra said the fact that a school system from across the globe has identified Niskayuna as a model that it wants to emulate is both exciting and an affirmation of the quality of the district's program.

#### Summer School

Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Lauren Gemmill provided an overview of summer school participation. The district was able to provide early intervention services in English as New Language for 27 students in grades K-2 over the summer through a grant that she and Mrs. Digirolamo secured. Total middle school summer school enrollment increased from 49 in 2015 to 62 in 2016. The district was able to offer transportation for middle school students this year. High School enrollment in the joint program at Schenectady High School totaled 61 students, compared to 73 students last summer.

#### Student Enrollment for 2016-17

Total opening enrollment K-12 for this school year was 4,200 students. This is an increase from 4,120 in May and 4,130 at the start of last year. The greatest change is at the elementary level, which is up 76 students from last September. Dr. Tangorra said the district will continue to monitor enrollment and is likely to seek formal projections at some point. As the district enters a period of planning for future facility improvements, it will be important that capital projects include additional space if it is needed.

Board meeting date changes - The Board meeting scheduled for Sept. 27 will be held on Sept. 28, as members will be attending a Capital District School Boards Association forum with the Commissioner of Education on the original date. The Board meeting scheduled for Feb. 28, 2017, was changed to Feb. 27.