

**Museum Alliance for Science and Technology
P.S. 154 PTA - General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, January 13 2009, 6:00pm
Multi Media Room**

Welcome

PTA President, Deb Capone opened the meeting by thanking the 1st grade parents for hosting the potluck. She then introduced future events and innovations with a call for volunteer help. The *Walk-Run-Scoot-a-thon* is planned for the last weekend in May. A volunteer is needed to run the event which basically entails getting participation and collecting sponsors. Assistance is also needed to *redesign the PTA website* to make it simple and more user-friendly. The hope is to be able to drive more traffic to the site and make it a better sell when we pitch our sponsorship packages to businesses. The PTA would like to pursue more corporate sponsorship for events like the 100th Anniversary Celebration or the Spring Carnival so that not all the fundraising falls to the parents of the student body. The PTA would like to open the *School Store* with more regularity. A volunteer is needed to staff the store perhaps one afternoon per week, manage the inventory and the money.

PTA Budget Update

Treasurer, Diana Plunkett reported that the annual membership drive has brought in more than half of its goal, at approximately \$11,375.00, with a goal of \$20,000.00 for the year. The Winter Festival netted more than double the anticipated amount, now totaling, \$7,942.96.

Capital Improvements

The School Leadership Team (SLT) has a space committee comprised of staff and parents. As a follow-up to a meeting of the School Construction Authority (SCA) held at PS 321 on December 18th, Deb requested funding for the following:

- A) Redesigning the space of the Multi-media room to provide an enclosed art room, a small library, closed offices for therapists, ensuring privacy, additional semi-private office space, and optimum space and aesthetic expediency for the larger space (Parent/Architect, Eric Epstein has drawn plans to redesign the Multi-Media Room)
- B) Plumbing issues, including the replacement of current difficult flushing mechanisms
- C) Sound proofing the cafeteria

A walk through is being set-up with the Director of Space and Facilities. Apparently there is funding remaining in District 15 from a new elementary school plan that was not executed over the last year.

Plans for the new playground at PS 154 continue to move along. The contract is going to bid at the end of January. It's an expedited three week process. The construction work will begin at the end of school, breaking ground on June 26th. The SCA has promised that 90% of the work will be completed by the start of school, barring any natural disaster or plagues.

Bill De Blasio addressed the PTA

City Councilman, De Blasio spoke at tonight's meeting. He confirmed the start of the PS 154 playground project and its final completion for September/October, meaning that the playground will be usable by the beginning of school with some minor tasks to be completed. He also informed us that groundbreaking for the Vanderbilt playground will begin in the spring with completion planned for the following spring. He announced that the "Science for All" program will be refunded and that he is hoping to secure annual technology funding of \$35,000.00 by June for PS 154. Mr. De Blasio is trying to get legislation passed to eliminate Styrofoam from the New York City school system. He gives credit to PS 154 as a model as often as he can for starting the bio tray program at the school and expects that other schools will be getting in touch with us to eliminate Styrofoam trays. Mr. De Blasio is working on

getting a hearing on the Styrofoam bill. Concerning reforms in education, he is very interested in more checks and balances in education policy as well as more district decision making. He believes that there is presently too much testing in the school system that costs a “boatload” of money. He suggests that if cuts need to be made, that rather than cutting classroom instruction as proposed by the mayor, he recommends making cuts in central administration, consultants, and testing. He believes that excessive testing undermines student learning as well as teachers’ instruction. He emphasized that if cuts are made to in class instruction, he will not vote on the budget.

Testing Presentation by Assistant Principal, Eric Havlek

Mr. Havlek gave a presentation on standardized testing that is administered to children in New York State. The present system of testing dates back to 2001 with the advent of “No Child Left Behind”. The Federal Government mandated testing in English Language Arts (ELA), Math and Science. Testing is administered in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. Historically 4th grade testing results were looked at in preparation for middle school. More currently, more emphasis has been placed on 3rd grade testing results. (For detailed information about which tests are given to which grade and when, please see the following website: www.nysed.gov.) ELA is administered in 2 days for 3rd and 5th grades and 3 days for 4th grades during the month of January. Math is administered similarly during the month of March. In addition, 4th graders are tested in Science (April/May) and 5th graders are tested in Social Studies. The school offers test preparation free to students. Test prep is a blend of Teachers College, Kaplan and Early Morning Intervention styles. Six Saturday morning prep academies, 3 hours each are offered.

These tests should not affect a child’s grade on their report card, although feedback from a parent tonight indicated that their child’s science grade was influenced by their testing score. If children score level 1 in grades 3 or 5 they need to go to summer school to re-take the exam, scoring at least 2 to be promoted to the next grade. A state report card on all schools tells whether a school meets its progress. PS 154 is in good standing.

For the future of No Child Left Behind, President (Elect) Obama has been vague, having indicated that he agrees that accountability and standards are important, but recognizing the flaws in the current program.

Upcoming Events

- Movie Night – January 23, 6:00pm, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
- Read-a-thon – kicks off on January 26th. A couple of volunteers needed for paperwork and publicity. This is potentially a great event and good fundraiser. It will take place over the course of 3 weeks starting, February 9 – 27th.
- PS 154 Ice-skating – February 12th, 7:00-9:30pm at Wollman Rink, free skate rental and admission
- 100th Anniversary, save the date, April 3rd. This is an adult event, centennial celebration, taking place in a gallery space in Chelsea and including a silent auction and possible live auction. Plans include displaying children’s artwork in the space. Historians interested in uncovering some PS 154 memorabilia for display would be very welcome.
- Spring After School registration beginning at end of week. Afterschool begins the week of February 9th.

The meeting came to a close at approximately 8:00pm. The next PTA meeting will be Friday morning, February 13th, at 9:00am.

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Altman