

**Museum Alliance for Science and Technology
P.S. 154 PTA - General Membership Meeting
Friday, November 14, 2008, 9:00am
Multi Media Room**

Welcome

Deb Capone welcomed everyone to this morning's meeting. She gave an update on the "missing envelope" situation which has been addressed by creating a secure PTA mailbox for cash, credit card forms, and checks only. This new mailbox is next to the other mailboxes in the office. Please put all other PTA correspondence in the regular PTA mailbox. Also a reminder that the PS 154 Music Concert Series continues, today, Friday, November 14, with singer/song writer Sasha Nolan and world renown guitarist Ben Rubin. Parents are welcome to attend.

PTA Budget

An additional line item for 5th grade graduation expenses as well as 5th grade fundraising events were added to the budget, explained, and put to a vote today. The PTA is taking on this new role due to Department of Education policy that necessitates the 5th grade classes to have an entity to accept and allot money. The Election Day Bake Sale for the 5th grade made \$695.00.

Treasurer, Diana Plunkett explained that cash flow has been good so far this year. The PTA has raised \$33,000.00 so far this year and has spent \$23,000.00. Diana encourages families to please continue with their membership contributions. The annual drive has made \$8,000.00 but has a goal of \$20,000.00 to meet the challenge of upcoming budget cuts and the end of our Magnet funding.

School Leadership Team (SLT) Update

Project Respect, a project of the SLT started last year, has been in development stages to institute a process or code of conduct for effective communication and respect throughout the school. Many of last years participants had children who graduated from the school. New members are welcome. The committee meets alternate Wednesdays at 10:30am. The next meeting is November 26, 2008.

Jim Short from the Museum of Natural History will be Principal for the day. Our hope is that he will be able to bring the "Moveable Museum" to the school. A plan is also in the works for a pilot program with the museum for additional training for PS 154 staff and instruction at the school from museum staff.

Magnet funding stopped last year. Although Mr. Ortiz was able to budget the money to have enough for this years science and technology needs, funding for next year will be a challenge.

Due to the growing population of children in the neighborhood, the school will need to close a Pre-K class next year in order to make room for an additional 2nd grade class.

Annette Tacconelli discussed a new initiative of the SLT to complement the curriculum. With each teacher's interest and the curriculum in mind, the committee would gather resources in the community to visit the school or arrange for trips for the children. The committee would also compile a list of parents who are professionals in the fields of art,

music, service, etc...to give presentations or demonstrations of their expertise. Volunteers are needed to compile the information and arrange for visits and trips.

A new committee has formed to assess how best to use the school's limited space. The MMR in particular will be evaluated for more effective and aesthetic use of the space. The volunteer consultation of parents in the fields of architecture, interior design, civil engineering, etc... would be greatly appreciated. Deb Capone is leading this committee and should be contacted directly if you could help.

Liz Farrell brought up the idea of a school blog to get the word out on a regular basis of events and happenings at the school. She will attend to setting this up.

Committee Updates

Parents Night Out was a huge success and many thanks go out again to Nicole Bilu Blier for her generosity in donating the space and food and open bar, as well as to Jane Rennert for donating all of the wine for the event.

A call for donations is out for the auctions at both the *Winter Festival* coming up on December 6th as well as the *100th anniversary event* scheduled for April 3rd. The Winter Festival will have a focus for the children and the 100th anniversary event will be geared for parents.

In class enrichments are as follows: Pre-K - Puppet Works; K and 1 – Chess; 2nd grade – Dance and Spectrum; 3rd grade – Story Pirates (in the works), Chinese Calligraphy, Museum Mobile Unit; 4th grade – Shakespeare and Chinese Calligraphy; 5th grade – Ballroom Dance.

A *Go Green* assembly will be held on Tuesday November 18th for the children to get them to buy-into the school recycling program. All the children will be asked to wear green that day and hand-outs will be going home to promote and encourage involvement in the recycling programming, the *Africa project* and *Free money* opportunities for the school. Parent Coordinator, Shikka Dalal announced that a textile recycling table will be set-up at the assembly.

Reminder to please turn in *Art Card* permission slips.

The *Lunch Volunteer Program* needs more volunteers. The next orientation will be on December 9th. Positive feedback from staff and volunteers has been received thus far.

Jim Brennan speaks

Assemblyman Brennan spoke to the PTA this morning. He has allotted the school \$30,000.00 for equipment purposes that should be selected over the next couple of months. He has also given PS 154 a \$7,000.00 operating grant.

He explained that the Mayoral Governance Law of 2002, that which makes the Mayor the head of the school system, is due to expire at the end of the year. In January, he is sponsoring a community conference inviting constituents to weigh in on the current structure of the NYC school administration. The Legislature will be evaluating the current structure between January and June.

Mr. Brennan explained that there is a 14 billion dollar deficit in the state (out \$65 billion in the pot) that needs to be made up. Governor Patterson is holding a special session with the legislature to address cuts. The governor, like the Mayor, is calling for about a 2% cut in education in January. He is asking the legislature to make decisions about funds and budget early this year. The hope is that the Obama administration will help the states with some additional financial assistance.

Africa Project

Mark Grashow, a former teacher of 35 years spoke about the non-profit organization that he and his wife established linking U.S. schools with schools in Africa. They are currently assisting 50,000 kids in Zimbabwe and Tanzania. A third of the students are orphans. Schools are in horrible shape and teachers are leaving. Mr. Grashow gave a slide presentation and fielded questions. Sarah Goodman introduced herself, as she will be coordinating the Africa Project efforts at PS 154. Donations needed for the schools in Africa are toys, books, crayons, pencils, pens, notebooks, puzzles, blocks, and vehicles. Bins will be set up in the PTA office to collect supplies. Also, if any family wishes to sponsor a teacher in Zimbabwe or Tanzania, the cost is \$250.00. Mr. Grashow plans to take his next trip to Africa in January and may take some of our teachers with him.

The meeting concluded at approximately 10:30am.

The next PTA meeting is on Tuesday December 9, 2008 at 6:00pm

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Altman