

**Museum Alliance for Science and Technology**  
**P.S. 154 PTA - General Membership Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 6, 2009, 6:30pm**  
**Multi Media Room**

**Welcome**

PTA President, Deb Capone opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and alerting people to help needed for upcoming events and programs including:

- International Food Festival: Friday afternoon October 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00pm
- Boo Bash: Annual Halloween Celebration on the evening of October 23<sup>rd</sup>, contact Sherry Dietzman at [sheryyd@earthlink.net](mailto:sheryyd@earthlink.net) if you are interested in volunteering
- Lunchtime Volunteer Program: Orientations will be held for interested parent volunteers every Friday following Parents as Enrichment Partners or before PTA general meetings
- Parents Night Out: One planned for November and another in April.
- Winter Festival: Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>

**Executive Board**

Executive Board positions were voted on. The Bylaws changes were reviewed pertaining to the co-presidency and change in number of Members at Large. These changes need to be posted for 30 days before taken to a vote.

**Budget**

Diana Plunkett reviewed the 2009-2010 Budget, explained the organization of the budget and fielded questions. Membership dues collected so far this year total \$2,100.00 whereas last year at this time they totaled \$6,000.00.

**Middle School Application Process Presented by Joyce Szulflita**

Joyce Szulflita is a Brooklyn resident, mother of two children, now in High School and has 10 years of experience researching and interviewing resources concerning school admissions processes, i.e. Middle School, High School, Pre-K, K, etc. She is a resource for parents in Brooklyn and her company is called NYC School Help. She offers private consulting and a free newsletter.

Ms. Szulflita explained that the Department of Education, a city agency, divides the city into 32 distinct geographic school districts and each district is then broken down into smaller zones. P.S. 154 is in District 15. For purposes of Middle School admissions, zone does not matter. Children applying to Middle School have district wide choice or can apply to individual middle schools that are not part of a school district. A Middle School directory can be found on-line on the D.O.E. website: [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov), go to "enrollment" then Middle School, then publications and you can download a PDF file of the directory. The directory has good procedural information. In the fall, go to individual school websites and arrange for tours of the schools. Apart from the D.O.E. application process schools outside of the district exist that are referred to as "school based application" schools. One such school that is new is Brooklyn Prospect Charter School. School based application schools (like, ICE Twain, Nest, Brooklyn Prospect) that entail separate applications are listed at the back of the directory. Students apply to these schools independently and get the applications from the individual schools.

The Middle School Fair is scheduled for October 22<sup>nd</sup> at MS 88 from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Parents and Ms. Szulflita discussed the pros and cons of attending these fairs. Some find the fairs overwhelming other find them useful for asking general questions without having to identify the applicant. Sometimes the

Principals Fair is more helpful. The application process begins in the fall. Ms. Szufliita strongly recommended ranking as many schools as possible on the application up to 15 schools, but only to rank schools that you would actually send your child to. D.O.E. does not have to comply in giving people their choices. An appeals process is available but difficult. Make a copy of your application and any supporting documents that accompany it (like a doctor's letter explaining an extended absence for sickness). Provide a copy of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade report card with the application. Let your Guidance Counselor know if there were any extenuating circumstances around multiple absences. She recommended using your guidance counselor to discuss the middle school application process for your child.

Introduce yourself and your child to the Guidance Counselor. Meet them. They are your advocate. The Guidance Counselor at PS 154 is Kristin (Muscatella) O'Rourke. Her days currently are Wednesdays and Fridays. Get your applications to her early so she can review it.

All applications go to the DOE which then makes a list of kids choosing schools ranked at 1 and 2. Schools interview those kids. The schools pay attention to the ELA exams, grades, attendance and punctuality, and take into consideration the child's behavior, the interview, the essay, group activity and auditions in some cases. Lateness and absences are looked at in the Middle School acceptance process. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade are very important years of focus and 4<sup>th</sup> grade (and 7<sup>th</sup> looking forward to High School) are especially scrutinized for lateness and absences. The match is made between the school that is ranked highest by the student with the school that matches or chooses the child. The interviews are generally done by the principal and guidance counselor at the school. They understand age appropriate behavior etc. You may want to do a couple of mock interviews with your child just for practice.

Tours begin at the start of the school year, right after Labor Day. Find out each school's tour schedule from each individual school. Fairs and applications come out in the late fall. The deadline for applications this year is December 15<sup>th</sup>. Placements are made in May and then the appeals process becomes available. Ms. Szufliita can be reached at <http://nycschoolhelp.com/aboutus.aspx> and [joyce@nycschoolhelp.com](mailto:joyce@nycschoolhelp.com) for a free newsletter.

### **Other Upcoming Events**

Save the date!!!!!! Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup> is Parents Night Out!  
The Theme: **"Studio 154"** at HighBar in Manhattan

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation Committee: There's lots to do! Chair person, Maxine Park highlighted the fundraisers, trips, yearbook, photos, and slideshows all preparation for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade graduation. Contact Joe and Pam to help with the 1<sup>st</sup> event on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Election Day Bake Sale.

### **Executive Board Meetings**

Executive Board Meetings are open to the school community. They will be held twice a month on the second Fridays at 9:00am in the MMR at the school and the last Thursday evening of the month at 6:15pm circulating at different parents' homes. If you have an item to place on the agenda, please contact Deb Capone ahead of time.

### **Question and Answer with Mr. Havlik**

Mr. Havlik discussed the availability of the Park Slope Armory hopefully in January. The YMCA may be able to provide instructors. Transportation help may be needed. PS 107 and PS 154 have been the most persistent in pursuit of using this space. It will be an incredible resource. Focus on its use will probably fall on 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders, idea for perhaps once per month.

In regard to testing go to: [nysed.gov](http://nysed.gov), testing. Old tests are posted. Mr. Havlik reviewed some of the dates and changes from the last PTA meeting. NYS ELA is now in April and Math is now in May. Saturday prep sessions will be changed to accommodate, the first 8 weeks after February break. Test scores should be back in July.

Gym classes have been going to the park if there are enough parent volunteers to accompany: one adult per 10 children.

No Update yet on the Flu Vaccine.

The meeting came to a close at approximately 8:00pm. The next PTA meeting will be Thursday November 12, 2009 at 6:30pm.

Respectfully submitted by Carolyn Altman