

Museum Alliance for Science and Technology
P.S. 154 PTA - General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, September 9, 2008, 6:00pm
Multi Media Room

Welcoming Remarks:

Deborah Capone, the Parent and Teachers Association (PTA) President conducted tonight's meeting, assisted by Vice President, Brenna Beirne. Deb began by welcoming everyone, thanking participants for their efforts so far this year and encouraging membership and donations to the PTA. Emphasis was placed on the fact that all parents are part of the PTA whether they choose to be active participants or not. Parents can participate by volunteering at events or on committees or both. This year Chairs and Co-chairs will coordinate events and committee work.

Membership dues (suggested \$95.00 per child in the school) were collected at the meeting and will continue to be collected by Treasurer, Diana Plunkett, mailed to the school or placed in the PTA mailbox in the school office.

The next PTA meeting will be held on October 7, 2008. Generally the PTA meetings will be held on the 2nd Tuesday evening of each month with every 3rd meeting on a Friday morning. Childcare and homework help are available. If people are interested in the potluck format, email Deb at debcapone@yahoo.com. A list will be compiled with all the future dates for PTA meetings and events. The PTA Executive Board meets each Friday morning at 9:00am. This is an open meeting; anyone interested can attend and request items to be placed on the agenda by contacting Deb Capone beforehand. A real effort will be made to post information on the school website and sent via the PTA list serve. In addition, the school handbook is almost complete and will be distributed in the coming weeks. For information regarding the PTA please visit the school website at <http://ps154pta.org>. To get on the PTA list serve, email PS154_PTA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

The PTA is open to all free money possibilities (for example: boxtop collecting or receiving a % of money from purchases on amazon, etc...). Please contact the PTA with any ideas or suggestions in this realm.

Nominations:

Nominations were taken for the following PTA Executive Board Open positions: Amanda Cicarelli for Vice President of Membership. Additional Members at Large nominated were Jen Sirey, Patricia Julian, Jane Rennert, Theresa Claire, Amy Way, and Joelle Held. Open positions remaining are, Vice President of Fund-raising, Corresponding Secretary and the Arts Advisory Committee Chair. (The Arts Advisory Committee, later explained by Joe Elliot, is a Department of Education mandated committee composed of parents and teachers organized to ensure Arts in the school. For instance the music program, the school play, and the band are supported by this committee. The committee meets monthly. All PS 154 community members are welcome.)

For all of the remaining Board positions, parents can nominate a friend or self-nominate. New nominees will be voted in at the October 7th meeting.

Budget and Treasurer's Report:

Dianna Plunkett, the Treasurer, presented the PTA budget and fielded various questions. The budget is divided into three major categories, Fund-raising/Community Events, Self Funding Events, and Funded Programs. The budget will be voted for via a line item vote at the October 7th PTA meeting. Anything \$500.00 or above needs to be voted on. Those items that need to

start before October were voted on in a preliminary budget last June. Ideas and volunteers for After School programming - let Diana know. Specific questions concerning individual committee budgets can be answered by the committee chairs.

Brenna explained that class enrichments can be evaluated and changed, however the PTA tries to maintain some consistency year to year. The plan is for each grade to have a parent representative to coordinate enrichments. Community members are invited to make recommendations. A suggestion to evaluate existing enrichment choices was made. Possible Before School Enrichments are being explored by Connie Walsh. Please contact Connie if you have any before school enrichment ideas.

Several concerns were raised about lice and Licenders. Germaine Grecci and Principal Ortiz explained the present program as well as D.O.E. standards of practice. Licenders comes in 4 times per year to check the entire student body and has been enlisted for the past 3 years. The cost is \$4,000.00/year. In this time the number of children with lice has reduced from 18 to 5. Licenders is a preventative program. Children with lice are sent home from school with instruction for the ridding of lice. They are checked again by Licenders upon re-entry. A letter is sent home to parents of the students of these classes. Suggestions and recommendations for competitive preventative programs are welcome.

Since Physical Education and playground equipment are always needed, it was recommended that we post a list of needed equipment that parents can donate or donate funds toward the purchase of the equipment. Ms. Variale and Ms. Guzzi will be consulted.

Sandy Callahan, the school's United Federation of Teachers (UFT) representative defined Teachers Choice Money. Last year the funding was cut from \$260/year to \$150.00/year, resulting in teachers spending their own money on supplies. (See below for more information.) When teachers do request money, this has been as a result of the cuts.

From Bill DeBlasio's Office:

Sarah Figuero from Bill DeBlasio's office spoke this evening. As three of her children have graduated from PS 154, she assured us of her strong allegiance and love for the school. In regard to the schoolyard, they have demanded a meeting for Monday with the School Construction Authority (SCA). The bid is up for contract and they expect things to move in 5-6 weeks. Final information will be related to Principal Ortiz. They expect that construction will begin during the school year and that ½ the schoolyard will be worked on at a time to give the children access to the other ½ during the course of the construction. She explained that their office will be meeting with city officials to restore the Teachers Choice Money. Ms. Figuero also announced that they are calling a Town Hall Meeting to assert to the Mayor to lay-off the budget. Sunday, September 14th on the steps of City Hall, they will be announcing a "How to Green Your School Essay Contest." Submissions can be sent to their office at 2907 Fort Hamilton Parkway. Prizes will be awarded to the top essays. Lastly, Ms. Figuero explained that their office is trying to reorganize the registration and placement process for Pre-K and Middle School. They have gotten 72 seats restored to Pre-K. You can contact Sarah Figuero at (718)854-9791.

Class Parents:

Ms. Bowen explained the role of Class Parents at PS 154. Class parents are liaisons between the PTA, teachers and parents. They generate class contact lists, organize class volunteers, Fruity Fridays, Parents as Enrichment Partners, and a Winter Festival class project (and they

coordinate the holiday and end of year gifts for the teachers). It is a gratifying volunteering experience and does not take too much time.

Parent Coordinator:

Shikka Dalal, the school Parent Coordinator offered her assistance to the community and has office hours Wednesdays form 9:00 to 10am. She is also in the lunchroom each morning at drop-off. She invites anyone to contact her if they identify a family that is “falling through the cracks”. If you have concerns about your own family or other children and families in the school, as well as barriers like language difficulties please touch base with Shikka. She will be circulating notices via the school listserve.

Upcoming Events and Fund-raises:

The Boo Bash is coming up on October 24th. Sherry is chairing and can use your help. Parents Night out is coming up November 3rd. It will be a cocktail party held at Nicole Bilubrier's restaurant, Aspen. The 100th Anniversary celebrations will consist of the Winter Festival for families and children and a separate event for the parents which will take the form of a Live Auction and Silent Auction. Jane Rennert has a connection to a Loft Auction space which may be donated to the cause. An International Food Festival will be held end of September/beginning of October in the yard. Parents of all nationalities will be encouraged to bring dishes to reflect all of the various cultures present at the school.

Principal's Report and Introduction of our new Assistant Principal, Eric Havlik:

Principal Ortiz welcomed new and returning parents to the meeting. He also welcomed three new teachers to the school, Marisa Maruchi, Olivia Kissen, and Myra Dios. He then introduced PS 154's new Assistant Principal, Eric Havlik. Mr. Havlik introduced himself and his experience including years of experience as a Math coach. As one of his roles, he intends to support the teachers in Math instruction.

Mr. Ortiz informed us that the large budget cuts that put the school at risk at the end of last year were restored so that a 5th and 3rd grade class did not have to be closed and a new 1st grade class was able to be added. Also the money for the Brooklyn Conservatory Music instruction in the school was replaced.

Since there are no more Magnet funds at the school, the school no longer has the means to support science initiatives like the Family Science Night or the Overnight trips to the Science Center. (The PTA plans to look at ways to possibly support these programs.)

Mr. Ortiz reiterated Drop-off and pick-up recommendations including keeping conversations with teachers to a minimum. Please do not double or triple park, as it interferes with safety and causes neighbors to complain. Parents, please enter the building through the front entrance and sign-in with security guard for safety reasons. Please have children wear sneakers on Physical Education days. If children are experiencing separation issues, he reminded us that the school guidance counselor has been very helpful in this area.

Increases in Achievement are notable. Mr. Ortiz expects a much improved progress report this year as well as much improvement in Special Education at the school. The school is partnering with Teachers College in coaching teachers in literacy. Mr. Havlik will be working on staff development with Math, and Literacy Support Systems will be working with teachers in Social Studies.

In response to a question about a Middle School fair. Mr. Ortiz reminded us that the fair had been coordinated by a parent in the past and hopes the same could be done again.

The meeting came to a close at approximately 8:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Carolyn Altman