

Highcrest Middle School PTO
General Board Meeting Minutes
November 4, 2009

Laura Hine and Kathleen Park, PTO Co-Presidents, called the meeting to order at 9:15am and welcomed everyone.

Laura introduced our new and improved website. The address is still the same but can now take payment for Kids are Key, Membership, Parent Party, Clubs, etc. Expanding the use of Paypay will hopefully make it easier for parents.

Special acknowledgment went out to the volunteers who have helped with more recent PTO efforts and activities:

- Web site - Cliff Ruemmler
- Freaky Friday – Toni Dragatsis and Susan Mackesey
- Clubs – Sonja Hickey
- Environmental Awareness – Julie Arment
- Directory – Cecilia Clark
- Membership – Lisa Philips
- Sally Foster Gift Wrap – Marci Blunk and Maureen Fagan
- Service Day – Julie Saltzman and Molly Sullivan
- Picture Day – Becca Lyman and Katy Schmeissing
- Parent Party – Lisa Aiken and Gayle McCormick

Approval of Minutes - The minutes from the September 2, 2009 meeting were approved.

Julie Engler, Parent Volunteer Coordinator - Julie announced that volunteer sign up for the cafeteria is extremely low. The time commitment is only 1.5 hours as opposed to the 2+ hours from last year. Parents can also sign up for a 45 minute shift if preferred. With over 700 families at HMS, we should be able to fill our volunteer slots. Please ask friends to sign up.

Melanie Biggs, Faculty Representative - Melanie shared that the peer mediation program has begun. 6th graders who were nominated by their 5th grade teachers have been trained. When experiencing a problem, students can request to meet with peer mediators to resolve a conflict. All parties need to be involved and present when mediation takes place. Peer mediators have done presentations in classrooms to introduce the program to the students.

Teachers are preparing for conferencing and educating parents on the new progress reports.

Ms. Biggs and Mr. Taylor will be doing a food drive again this year for Greenwood Elementary in Waukegan for Thanksgiving. Make a Difference Day was a success as the students enjoyed helping sort donated items.

Cliff Ruemmler, Treasurer - financials were distributed and they are posted on our website.

Laurie Cavalier, D39 Education Foundation – This foundation is a non-profit group that aims to expand and enrich D39 programs. Laurie explained that they are interested in funding innovative programs such as giving Smart Boards, the Central School clubhouse, and the garden at Ramona. Specifically, Highcrest has been awarded a mobile indoor 3-tier garden, fitness center, Outdoor Classroom funds, and a climbing wall.

In the past, funds have been raised at a Second City event for parents, the Kelly Miller Circus, Citizen of the Year award evening, etc. Two times a year, the foundation accepts Gripp grant applications which are open to anyone and available on their website.

Adam Denenberg, D39's Director of Technology and Media Services - Adam gave a presentation on Smart Boards. HMS has 10 boards. Last year, Adam conducted a 2 day extended training and has held summer training for staff. To date, 92 teachers have gone through training in D39. Adam will continue to offer training after school for teachers. Smart Boards are pretty durable with the exception of sharp objects. Advanced Math teachers at the Jr. High have had their Smart Boards for approximately 5 years.

Teachers can link to Smart Board lessons based on Illinois state curriculum standards. Teachers have uploaded their own lessons to share with others in the district. Google documents are being used like a wiki so that the documents can be edited according to need.

Adam demonstrated fractions and decimals lessons as well as some fun options when writing on the board. A whole lesson can be saved as a video to be watched later. Anything one can do on a laptop can be done on the Smart Board. Wireless, touch screen and speakers help support the effectiveness of the boards and are in the classrooms.

Adam gave the following responses in a Q&A:

- As more funding becomes available, D39 will focus on installing more boards at the Jr. High and Highcrest.
- Teacher use is varied so far. At first, teachers are encouraged to use boards as they would their “old” white boards just to get familiar. As they get more comfortable, using the interactive feature will be easier.
- Document cameras integrate well with the boards. Highcrest has a couple of document cameras that are shared.
- “Clickers,” student response systems, are remotes used at the elementary level. Students get remotes assigned to them and answer questions. This is one way teachers collect assessment information to gauge student understanding.

Luke Pavone, Principal's report - The Biggest Loser contest across D39 will measure postage, paper, electricity, and toner costs. This year, the focus will be on collecting data. Mr. Pavone is already working on ways to reduce these four areas.

Mr. Pavone stated that postage will be the easiest to reduce given most communication this year will be done electronically. Between Highcrest and the Jr. High, Mr. Pavone thinks \$4,000-\$8,000 can be saved. Paper and toner will be challenging. Highcrest is currently working with the Jr. High on purchasing paper and toner to hopefully save money by buying in bulk. To address electricity, bathroom light sensors have been installed in certain bathrooms and all will be encouraged to turn off lights when leaving a room.

The school improvement plan includes the new goal of a green school. Deliverables include enhancing the recycling program and having a waste free cafeteria. Mr. Pavone installed a new filtered water system last year and is considering adding another dispenser in the school. Students are encouraged to bring their own reusable bottles and fill them at the filtered water dispensers. He also showed parents a water bottle made by Green Planet. This bottle can be fully composted in 80 days in a commercial composter.

Mr. Pavone will also be providing homerooms opportunities to do green service projects such as the Nike reuse-a-shoe program, battery/toner recycling, and selling aluminum water bottles. A green tip of the week in the Monday morning broadcast has been added, and Mr. Pavone is considering including a green tip of the day during morning announcements. "Green" based public service videos may also be made by each homeroom so students can demonstrate what they are doing to support the green initiative.

Highcrest is looking for a parent volunteer to participate in the D39 Green Committee. The committee will meet three more times this year. Lorraine London, our Highcrest Cook, is also on the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 10:12 am.

Minutes submitted by Kathleen Park