

Highcrest Middle School PTO  
General Board Meeting Minutes  
November 3, 2010

Margaret Tilson and Anne Williams, PTO Co-Presidents called the meeting to order at 9:20 am and welcomed everyone.

**Approval of Minutes** – The meeting minutes from the September 1, 2010 General Board Meeting were approved.

**Approval of the Budget**-The budget was approved for the 2010-2011 school year.

**Guest Speaker** – Pam Katz and Hillary Harvey, Highcrest Social Workers, presented different areas of development: physical development (similar to the rate of an infant, huge growth changes, bones growing faster than muscles leading to more breaks and sprains), these rapid changes lead to feelings of self-consciousness. Rates of development vary greatly from child to child. Their physical health tends to be affected, good nutrition is very important. They will need reminders regarding personal hygiene. Let the girls know that they can go to the nurse for products for their period. During these years middle schoolers experience intellectual development, going from concrete to abstract thinking and they start to consider the impact of world events. They are still quite egocentric and will argue their point incessantly. Must still set limits. Their peers have more influence over parents. They are very loyal. They are concerned with fashion and style. With technology they will want privacy, you should keep an eye on what they are using, you need to have access. Not an invasion of privacy, it is the way it is going to be. You should not view texting or emailing as a diary, but it is how they are communicating with their friends and you have to make sure they are safe.

Their emotions and hormones are changing so rapidly and they may not be able to tell you the source of sadness since they often don't know. You should teach them coping skills. Try to understand feelings versus dismissing them. Validate and acknowledge their feelings. If you see long withdrawn moods over an extended period of time, you need to tune in and perhaps ask for resources. They are at risk for depression and anxiety. Change in sleeping habits, eating habits, etc for more than two weeks should cause concern.

Students can approach the social workers on their own. The social workers would notify the parents.

**Principal's Report** – Luke welcomed everyone and thanked the PTO for another fabulous Freaky Friday; over 600 students attended and there was no fire alarm during the event. We also had Make A Difference Day and it went well. We did a brief veteran's holiday stocking drive that was very successful. The Youth

Connection play is this Friday. We hope you can make it. Next week Wednesday –Friday are parent/teacher conferences. There is no school on Thursday and Friday. You should print your schedule; the email function has not been working consistently. The teacher luncheon will take place next Thursday from 11:30 to 1:00 and Luke thanked the PTO.

Drop off for early morning band, orchestra and chorus should be a single line not a double line. Students should exit curbside, not to the left of the standing cars.

**Teacher's Report-** Melanie Briggs reported the following:

**Biggs/Taylor** - We will be collecting all food donations for Greenwood Elementary in our classrooms - Rooms 139 and 141. Thank you for your support of this amazing service project!

**Mosaic** - The art department completed the first installment of the mosaic project. This is funded by the PTO. It was very successful and the new art students cannot wait to do their section of the mosaic.

The photographs can be found on the art department website.

<http://www.wilmette39.org/~stevense/Art/Welcome.html>

**Farm** - The mini-farm is now closed for the winter, but we had a successful first season. Our harvest included tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash, pumpkins and many other types of vegetables. Leaves are now composting to ensure rich soil next year. We are looking forward to expanding the mini-farm even further in the spring!

**Spanish** - The Spanish classes are off to a great year!

Fifth grade classes finished an "All About Me" unit. The students made posters about themselves and presented them to their classmates in Spanish. They just started a "School" unit. They are looking forward to making Piñatas in December and talking about some of the customs and traditions that Spanish speaking countries celebrate.

Sixth grade classes are looking forward to taking a field trip next week. They will see Spanish films brought to us by the International Film Festival. They just started a new unit "Mi Comunidad Nueva". In this unit, students will learn how to identify and describe places in a community, follow directions and read a map. As the unit progresses, students will be able to ask for and give directions and tell where they are going and why. Many of the students are excited to apply this new vocabulary when they go on winter or spring trips to Spanish speaking countries!

**French** - All French classes (5th and 6th) are going to be recording themselves this

week. The students will be given real life situations and (without using scripts) will be challenged to present themselves as well as they can using the French language. They will then watch and evaluate their own French language skills. It should be "magnifique"!

### **Board Reports**

**Ways and Means** – As part of Environmental Awareness, Julie Arment is selling Highcrest water bottles for \$12 if you need one. Kids are Key campaign has raised \$23,000, from 337 families, 44% participation. The prize drawing will take place at the Parent Party. The book fair is next week during parent/teacher conferences. They have day and evening hours. You can sign up on-line for Birthday books. It is up and running. The school store is doing well. It is open on Wednesdays. Gift-wrap will be delivered on Thursday, November 4. They are sorting tomorrow, gym A 1:00 to 2:30. We raised over \$6,000 and we can continue with online ordering and we get 40% of the proceeds.

**Enrichment** – Julie Jenkins reported that enrichment is on track for the year.

**Volunteer Coordinator**-Pam Levy reported that Sarah Condry is moving and Lisa Axelrod needs help in overseeing the 5<sup>th</sup> grade room parents. We are looking to develop a more efficient way to send email correspondence.

**Parent Party** – Gayle McCormick reported that the party will be on November 10. They want everyone to come. It is a low-key event. It is an after-conference after the book fair event. Ticket price is \$20. Venue holds about 300 people, at the Wilmette Golf Club. It is not a fundraiser, just a way to meet other parents. If you want to send a picture of yourself as a middle-schooler that will provide some fun and décor they would love to have it.

**Communications** – Katie Hauser reported that they are attempting to address the best way to communicate to parents. We are working with Luke to determine what should go in his weekly communication. We are considering doing a survey monkey to try to better understand how parents want to receive information. Some parents are not receiving any information from their room parents. She will be asking current PTO members to send in a one or two line description of their positions to use for nominating next year.

**Administration**– Tiffany Flanagan reported that Cecilia Clarke got the directories out and you can still join the PTO on the website to get a directory. You can purchase an extra one for \$5.

**District 39 School Board of Education** - Keith Dronan, board member, suggested that we pay attention to the upcoming board meetings. The next one will be on

November 15. School financing is the big issue and on the District 39 website we have information regarding costs for programming that could be cut. They are trying to be as open and transparent as possible. Katie will post the next meeting date in the Headlines.

Our next General Board meeting will be an evening meeting on February 2 and Dr. Ray Lechner will be our speaker and he will be discussing the District 39 budget.

**Upcoming Dates –**

November 4 – Gift wrap delivery

November 8-12 – Book Fair

November 11-12 No School - Conferences

November 22-23 No School – Professional Development

November 24-26 No School – Thanksgiving Break

**Thank You –** Cecilia Clarke for getting out the directories. Julie Arment for handling Environmental Awareness Week. Thank you to Toni Stapel and Colleen Denunzio for a fabulous Freaky Friday. Thank you to Marci Blunk and Michelle Paul for gift-wrap sales. Thank you to Gayle McCormick and Lisa Aiken for putting together the very fun Parent Party.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 am.