

Minutes- PTO Meeting
November 9, 2015, 6:30 pm
Manhattan Middle School Counseling Conference Room

- I. Welcome and Introductions, Michele Marshall, Chair (michelemarshall@comcast.net)
 - Michele welcomed the group and introductions were made.
 - Meeting participants included Persia Houston, Mary Dineen, Karen Gall, Margo Gasta, Arlene French, Kristy Lane, Shannon Collier, Loli Hudson, Mary Ellen Steele, John Riggs, Michele Marshall, Nicole Wobus.
 - Michele shared that a Manhattan student's father recently passed away suddenly and that the family is in need of assistance with funeral expenses. She suggested that the PTO donate \$200 to the family. The group voted in favor.
 - Michele announced that Nicole Wobus volunteered to serve as PTO Secretary and those in attendance voted in favor of Nicole serving in that role.
 - Mr. Feeney needs volunteers to help with the Turkey Trot on November 20. The event will consist of a fun run around the school. Michele Marshall and Julie Chang are meeting with Mr. Feeney to review what he needs. Volunteer needs will likely include purchasing and storing turkeys in advance of the event. The turkeys are given out as prizes to the top female and male finisher in each grade.
 - Michele is working with another PTO member to finalize updated bylaws, which they will circulate soon.
- II. Principal's Report, John Riggs
 - Mr. Riggs thanked the PTO for its efforts running the successful Magic Phoenix fundraiser. Funds raised will amount to roughly \$30,000 once remaining funding commitments and matching funds are received. The funds raised are sufficient to support all the teachers' wish list items and some expenditures are already being made. Teachers are required to spend the funds by mid-January so that current 8th grade students will be able to benefit from the funds donated by their parents.
 - Preparation for the open enrollment process is underway. This year's 8th grade class is the last of a few years of large class sizes. The school could lose staff if open enrollment numbers are low this year.
 - The biggest open enrollment event, an open house, is scheduled for December 2. In the past students have sat with their parents in the auditorium for the presentation by Mr. Riggs and the teachers. This year the plan is for students to go to the gym and do activities with the 360 leaders immediately upon arrival at the event rather than sitting in the auditorium for the presentation. The 360 leaders will do activities with the kids for a half hour and then take the kids on a rotation through the classrooms to orient them to the school.
 - The open house presentation by teachers will include a visual component (a presentation and/or photos). The presentation will aim to "tell a story" about what it means to be a student at Manhattan. There will be a common theme running through the presentation. It will highlight the elements of Manhattan that make it unique (e.g., creative exploration, building relationships, teachers taking the time to get to know the

child as an individual), and the fact that Manhattan teaches the same curriculum is as other BVSD middle schools.

- There was discussion of a handout that parents can take home from the open house event, as this is something that several of the other schools provide at their open house events. Having a handout will help prospective families keep the key take away points from the Manhattan open house presentation fresh in their minds when comparing attributes of different schools. Nicole Wobus offered to review / support preparation of that handout. The handout could also include some background information on the teachers (pulling from their websites) since Manhattan's teachers have such interesting backgrounds that inform the worldview they share with the students.
- Attendees suggested having photos from the Keystone Science trip showing outside the auditorium (as was done during the parent-teacher conferences), and showcasing some of the highlights of the school, such as the Tall Ships trip, student art work, and the poster / presentation the Algebra class recently prepared about how they have "grit."
- Mr. Riggs would appreciate parent support at all the various events during open enrollment, especially the coffees and school tours. Meeting attendees expressed the importance of having current Manhattan parents participate on all tours so the prospective families can hear the perspective both of the students and of the parents of current students.
- Mr. Riggs confirmed that the Tall Ships trip is definitely back, but that it cannot be a large program right away. The new company that runs the trip is still growing and learning. Teachers who have attended in the past (Ryan Root and Kim Green) note that the company is learning and improving based on past experience.
- There was discussion about whether a sufficient number of clubs are offered at the school. In the past there have been more clubs but some were cut in response to budget cuts that occurred under the last principal. Parents in attendance were interested in having more clubs, but Mr. Riggs noted that a teacher has to be present at all club activities and it is difficult for teachers to find time in addition to their regular school responsibilities to support the club activity. There was discussion about funding for clubs and whether grocery card funds could be used to support them. Mr. Riggs will confirm whether PTO funds can be used to support clubs or whether the club funds need to come directly from the school. Mr. Riggs will also check on whether paras or academic tutors can staff the clubs as the school representative, instead of needing a teacher in attendance. YMCA staff was also noted as a possibility to support the clubs.
- Dress code has been a focus of discussion with some students recently and there was a recent article on the topic in the Boulder Daily Camera. Mr. Riggs noted that some female students believe the dress code is gender biased, both because it says that students cannot wear clothing that is "disruptive and distracting," and because it is not consistently enforced. These students believe that girls are singled out for "disruptive and distracting" clothing more often than boys who also engage in dress that violates the code (e.g., some boys were shirtless on a field trip and did not get called out). Mr. Riggs asked for the parents in attendance to review the code and noted that it is very similar to the BVSD's own dress code. The BVSD code is thought to be too outdated and arcane in its language which is why the school developed its own code. [Note: There are

typos in the dress code that was presented at the PTO meeting that should be fixed if it is an official copy of the code.] Some parents suggested that the code focus more on the positive and what the school wants to see in the students' dress (e.g., "dress that supports a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment") rather than what is not allowed. However, others noted the importance of being clear and objective to support enforcement.

III. Teachers' Report, Mary Ellen Steele

- Ms. Steele thanked the PTO for the running the Magic Phoenix fundraiser and expressed the teacher's deep appreciation for the resources the funds will support. She also thanked the PTO for the recent parent-teacher conference dinners. The teachers enjoyed the meals and greatly appreciated parents' efforts to provide them.
- **Treasurer's Report**
- The treasurer was not in attendance but Michele reported that the PTO budget is in a favorable position.
- Some parents leveraged corporate matching funds for the Magic Phoenix fundraiser, and do so for other activities as well. There are two Cisco employees and two Google employees, among others who leverage matching funds. The Math Counts leader is a Google employee who gets paid by Google for his volunteer time, and the school gets paid for that volunteer time he contributes as well. The payment from Google currently goes directly to Math Counts via a "Benevity" account. Mr. Riggs requested that in the future the PTO write a check for those funds to the school and then the school can write a check to the Math Counts program for purposes of transparency.
- Magic Phoenix funds have to go to the school board for approval before they can be spent. Any expenditure over \$1,000 (confirm) needs to be approved by the school board.
- The Community Dinner at the Kitchen Next Door raised \$400. There are a variety of requests for spending the funds from the community dinners. The Latino Club has requested funds to paint bathrooms and the Robotics Club has also requested funds. Those in attendance were in favor of using community dinner funds to support clubs. Mr. Riggs noted the importance of receiving his approval for those expenditures. For example, the bathrooms cannot be painted without the approval of Mr. Riggs and others.
- School Store is open Wednesdays from 3:30 – 4. Margot Gasta offered to staff it on Wednesday afternoons, taking over for Deana Zimenoff. The store does not make much money but it helps promote school spirit and provide kids with snacks. For comparison the vending machine takes in about \$400 per month.

IV. Committee Reports

- Magic Phoenix, Amanda Wember (awember@yahoo.com): As noted a total of \$35,000 was raised after accounting for committed funds still coming in. 44% of families participated and all teacher requests will be funded.
- Trip Tracker, Lori Winslow (icecreamalchemy@msn.com): The most recent set of numbers haven't come in yet. Trip tracker (TT) dollars will be distributed again on Thursday November 12. There was discussion about the best time to distribute trip tracker dollars so that all kids who record travel can receive the TT dollars. Some

suggested distributing during study hall rather than lunch. It is hard for volunteers to staff the lunch periods, and it is difficult to get students to focus on picking up their dollars because lunch is such a social time. Study halls are also when Allies and Student Council meets but it may be able to work if the dollars are distributed at the beginning of the period. There was discussion of coming up with a more efficient system to identify the dollars that should go to each student, involving merging data from the Excel file that comes from the TT program. Mr. Riggs suggested that Anita could help with that task.

- Conference Dinners, Persia Houston (persiahouston@yahoo.com): There were many great donations from parents. It worked well to use the teachers' lounge since there weren't too many teachers in there at any given time. In the future it was suggested that all meals include a list of ingredients since some teachers have food allergies and need to avoid certain foods.
- Project Committee: Julie Chang is leading this effort to complete tasks requested by teachers. Activities so far have included improving the aesthetics of bulletin boards throughout the building (black backing) and cleaning out the math department closet by Karen Gall and Shannon Collier, which was a major and much appreciated task.
- Grocery Cards: Kristin would like someone else to take over this task. It may help boost activity to be clear about what the funds are used for. Since the Magic Phoenix fundraiser was so successful some parents may wonder whether there is still a need for funding. Michele Marshall said she would like to see these funds used to support scholarships for activities such as the 6th grade field trip. To boost participation the school could put cards in school welcome packs at the beginning of the year, just zeroing out the balance. This is what several other schools do including Boulder High and Creekside Elementary. This would mean the cards couldn't be tracked to their owner if they are lost or stolen. A few in the group expressed that that tradeoff may be worthwhile if it yields increased participation. Some people suggested adding Liquor Mart to the group of participating stores because it yields 10% return for the school, the same as King Soopers. The suggestion will be communicated to Kristen for consideration.
- Milk Caps: Ms. Blackford's students have taken over administering this program.
- TAG: a "most likely to succeed" presentation / workshop event is coming up.
- There was a question about whether there will be a talent show this year. The show was typically held in the spring and overseen by the theatre department. There have been complaints from parents in the past that their kids worked hard and weren't selected to perform in the show.

Additional Information

District and Community Representatives:

- TAG DAC & BVGT- Kristin Kusmierek (kusberry@me.com)
- SAC & DAC- Troy Thornberry (kusberry@me.com)
- DPC – Kate Lacroix (katelacroix@gmail.com)

Volunteering Opportunities:

- Second Vice Chair (position of training for chair)
- Winter Social (January volunteers)
- PEN representative (Parent Engagement Network)

Upcoming Events:

- Nov 17th - Band Choir & Orchestra Performance 6:30 to 8:30pm
- Nov 18th & 19th - Theater Performances
- Nov 23rd to 27th No School ---Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 2nd - Open Enrollment, Open House 5:30 to 7pm
- Dec 5th - Boulder's Parade of Lights
- Dec 7th - Open Enrollment, Manhattan Experience 10-11:30am
- Dec 8th - Arts Festival 6:30pm
- Dec 9 - Open Enrollment, Principal's Coffee 9am
- Dec 14 - 6:30 - 8:00, next PTO meeting