

PTO Meeting  
9/14/21

- I. Welcome and Introductions
  - a. Samantha Eads, Brit Fitzpatrick, Stacy Sedory, Kerry McGarry, Oniffe Grizzle, Kristian Cassimire, Maggie Sher, Leah Simoni, Jen Rhoda, Glen Hopkins, April Stillwell, Maryellen May, Sarah Daughtery, Mayo Baker, Keisha Odom, Lauren Rosner, Michael Baladi, Kelly Ridge, Hopi Stosberg, Rachel Voorhies
  - b. Oniffe shared a link where attendees could share something they are thankful for. <http://www.menti.com/3hdzqaa9g5>

Members indicated that they are thankful for the following:  
Home, teachers, family, health, UES, sleep, growth, spouse, love, joy, friends, home, books, connections, meaningful work, good food, pets, hope, peace, tea, the ability to travel, bed, sunshine, children, friendships, flexible schedule, quiet time and questions.
  - c. Verification of quorum-5 members are needed for a quorum and there were 20 present.
- II. Meeting Agreements and Present the Agenda
  - a. Be present, deep listening, set aside judgement.
  - b. Speak your truth; respect the truth of others
  - c. All questions are welcome and appreciated.
- III. Reports
  - a. Principal-Glen Hopkins
    - i. Faculty meeting -Mr. Hopkins shared that “we are starting to find our stride at school” and specified that people in the right places, lunch duty is covered, and bus duty is covered. The line is moving well in the morning and drop-off is done by 9am. Afternoon pick up is done by 4:00 and busses are getting out before 4:15
    - ii. There was a special board meeting today to discuss a software purchase agreement that gives bus drivers GPS to help them get to their destinations more efficiently.
    - iii. Mr. Hopkins expressed that he is proud of our teachers and students; they are doing a great job. Masks are a topic of conversation this year as staff is giving a lot of paper masks away each day at school due to lost or damaged mask. Teachers are working with kids on the importance of masks and reminding them how to wear them properly. In the lunchroom, students are 6 feet apart and are reminded to put their mask on when they are done eating.
    - iv. Community is very important to Mr. Hopkins and he is very excited about Ms. Odom’s work with staff on restorative practice and community circles.

1. Students were asked “if you had a superpower, what would it be and why?” Kids can go really deep with their thought process with this, and Mr. Hopkins is really excited to see what Miss. Odom does to get community circles built in classrooms. This leads to conversations about conflict in the classroom and how can we all own what is happening in our rooms and move as a collective group in our community. Ms. Odom did this in her previous community.
  2. Mr. Hopkins encouraged parents to stop by and see Ms. Odom if you have not had a chance to meet her. She is the new assistant principal and is stepping in and stepping up and doing great things with our kids. Some kids were recently having a disagreement at recess recently and rather than reprimand, she had lunch with the students the next day. Mr. Hopkins provided an example of the community circle in which Ms. Odom had a conversation with the students about building friendships the right way. Mr. Hopkins said this is “just one example of greatness that I have seen with her so far.”
  3. One of Mr. Hopkins goals is to build a staff where students have mirrors, windows and doors. He is working on that with support staff, teachers, custodians and kitchen staff looking to provide students with mirrors for their lives and excited about where we are growing in that area.
- b. Treasurer Report-Kerry McGarry
- i. Oniffe explained that a priority this year is to provide detailed information regarding one line of the budget at each meeting so by the end of the year, members will be more familiar with the budget. The line item for this meeting is Outdoor learning/Gardens and Kerry McGarry will provide the details.
  - ii. Kerry- This month’s expenses include Literacy facilitators pay checks (they are paid monthly), every faculty member received \$150 for classroom supplies and \$563 was paid for the movie license that allows teachers to show media in class. Income in the last month includes \$78 from amazon smile and almost \$1200 in t-shirt sales.
  - iii. Outdoor learning/ Gardens- In years past, the budget had a line item for playground and outdoor lab. Many years ago, every grade had a garden to take care of. The teachers at that time took kids out regularly to maintain the gardens but as new staff came in, this practice stopped. The original purpose for the garden budget was to buy supplies and the playground line item was to raise money for the equipment and maintain the path that goes around the soccer field. As district staff changed, they took over the cost of mulch and the PTO paid for the new playground equipment. In light of these changes, we combined the two line items. The focus now is on outdoor learning spaces and funding our garden

club. If you have questions about the school gardens, Kerry stated that you can direct your questions to her, Ms. Loudermilk or Ms. Harpering. She also provided the update that Fairview Elementary's outdoor shelter has started, and we are next so we should have our pavilion soon. This will be paid from the project fund.

- iv. Sam stated that we have \$1,000 to spend from this budget so keep that in mind as we talk about what we want to do in those spaces for students and teachers as the gardens can be used as outdoor learning spaces. She also that it is harvest time for the raised beds back by the playground. There are tomatoes and anyone can pull from those gardens so feel free to help yourselves to it. We have courtyard gardens in the school, and we need help to maintain them. This will be discussed further later in the meeting.
- v. Oniffe stated that we need volunteers, so if you are interested, please indicate that in the chat.

c. Committee Introductions and Request for volunteers

i. Events Committee- Sarah Daughtery

- 1. We had a meeting on Friday to get to know one another and talk about what we want to do this year. There are a number of projects we are considering for later in the year and we have 2 projects to start with this fall
  - a. Planting some fall bulbs and letting students sponsor a bulb and/or write a thank you note for their teacher and plant them.
  - b. In place of the potluck, we will put together a University Elementary School family cookbook. Brit's husband has agreed to do the layout for the cookbook, donate his skills and his time. Starting Monday, we will collect recipes from families (google form) and students may submit with artwork to be included in the cookbook. This fundraiser will begin December 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - c. The events committee is working on the student directory as well and Mr. Hopkins suggested we create a google form to send out to families as some families may not have had an opportunity to fill out the paper forms that were available during the 'meet the teacher' night.

ii. Equity Committee-Sam

- 1. Dinorah has been talking to Colette Eno, University's English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, about having a Spanish version for PTO meetings. If interested in PTO recap for other languages, please let us know.
- 2. We will make effort to get ahold of district representatives for resources that they can provide for our group. This includes Rafi Hassan (the MCCSC equity and inclusion coordinator). Last year

Mr. Hassan came and met with the equity group, and it was wonderful learning what equity might mean. Information will be sent out soon regarding meeting dates.

3. Publication of the parent guidebook was an idea that came out of last year's group. The guidebook is shorthand on how to navigate the school. For example, who to contact when. It is posted on the PTO webpage and Mr. Hopkins emailed it to families as well. If you have items you want to add, please let us know.

iii. Wellness Committee-Kristian Cassimire

1. This is a small group of parents thinking about projects for enhancing social, mental and physical health of students, staff, teachers and our school as a whole. The committee met last Wednesday and had a good conversation, lot of ideas in that discussion. The committee came up with a few simple things that require more time and investment such as adding affirmations to the morning announcement. Kristian provided the example "always remember, you can do great things" because when you hear something over and over it becomes true. The group also discussed issues in cafeteria trying to keep the kids looking straight ahead and wondered if we could have parent volunteer to help with that. They also discussed wellness geared signs in the cafeteria such as "apple a day keep the doctor away."
2. This group raised the questions, do we need a mask drive? Is there a need for air purifiers in the classroom?
3. The committee acknowledged the sentiment that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" and stated that if we keep going to Mr. Hopkins and teachers with numerous ideas, we don't want them to get burned out on us. We want to be a resource for Mr. Hopkins and the teachers who have so much on their plate already. To do this, we need open communication lines and would like to help however we can.
4. Comments: Leah stated this could be tied into the gardens and wellness initiative. Oniffe suggested a garden workday with the events and wellness committee. How do we turn these ideas into actions?
  - a. Mr. Hopkins- He received the email on Friday with the proposals and have been processing them. We are doing the morning affirmations-today we talked about overcoming challenges and learning from them and getting better. In the lunchroom, we hired another person, so we have 4 adults in the cafeteria to monitor. The decision regarding air filters in the classroom will need to be made at the district level. Mr. Hopkins also indicated that email is a great way to communicate about these

issues and suggested including Ms. Odom as well. He stated that these are wonderful ideas and “let’s see what’s going to be feasible to happen.”

Oniffe- Suggested that providing masks would be an easy way to help.

iv. Fundraising Committee-

1. Fall Campaign

- a. Hopi Stosberg-in past years (prior to the pandemic) we sent a letter and asked for donations. We had incentives for kids to return forms. The responsibility fell on the teachers to get the kids to return the forms. Hopi feels that this incentive piece needs to be re-envisioned this year, so the bulk doesn’t fall on the teachers. She also suggested incentives would encourage students to participate even if they can’t donate. She pointed out that even small donations add up and make a difference and we need to make sure it feels fair. The fundraising committee wants to be sensitive in regard to covid and the fact that families may not having as many resources as they used to in regard to time and money.
- b. Mr. Hopkins pointed out that another challenge with participation is the widely different class sizes.
- c. Oniffe provided link in the chat box for the pro fundraising page.  
<http://universityelementary.digitalpto.com/fundraising/>

IV. Existing Business

- a. Oniffe-Not everyone is available to attend these meetings on Tuesday evening but that he and Sam want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to share ideas, concerns and feedback. Therefore, Sam and Oniffe will be present after school on Fridays from 4:00-5:00. If you would like to have a conversation with them, they will be located by the playground.
- b. Outdoor Learning/Gardens
  - i. Request for Garden Workday  
Sam- Thanks to everyone who is working to get things done. We have new volunteers. We have numerous gardens and there is a lot of maintenance involved. We had it under control and had a garden workday a couple weeks prior to the pandemic. However, we haven’t seen it in a year and a half so now it is overgrown.

1. Gardens-We have a lot of gardens at the school.

- a. The secret garden is located off of the library and has a pond and perennial plants. The pioneer garden includes massive stone turtles to climb on. The rock garden

contains rocks and wind chimes. There are also raise beds behind the school. The raise currently has veggies and wildflowers. The butterfly garden by bus circle and included plants that attract butterflies.

- b. When asked which garden would be the first priority to work on, Mr. Hopkins sated the secret garden is a priority because Mr. Simonton (the social worker) takes lunch groups out there all year weather permitting. It is used all day long 10:40-1:30 by Mr. Simonton. Staff members also eat lunch there in this garden and classes use the space as well.
  - c. Oniffe stated a garden workday would involve large groups of people. What does that look like due to covid? Mr. Hopkins said it's a big project so Saturday would be the best or do some evenings. Families will need to wear masks because you will be passing one another in the building and working closely.
  - d. Some options for garden maintenance in addition to a garden workday include Individual volunteers during school hours and classes who want to help could also do so during the school day.
    - i. Maggie believes that things just need to be cut down and feels this won't take long. Maggie stated that weed pruners are needed and she does not feel that this would be a kid friendly clean up. She asked if the meeting on Fridays be in the garden?
  - e. Sam- Thanked those who indicated in the chat that they would like to volunteer. We will contact you to arrange. If we can organize a few days with volunteers, we can make the space workable for Mr. Simonton and teachers who want to use it. If you know anyone who wants to be involved, let them know. Volunteers: Lauren, Leah, Mayo, Kelly Ridge.
  - f. Mr. Hopkins- We can have a garden club for kids once we have it cleaned up.  
Sam-We have kids garden gloves and shovels available. Kids love it.  
Lauren- "To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."
- ii. Gratitude Garden-Kelly Ridge
    - 1. Events Committee discussed community, appreciation and possibly fundraising events. The first event suggested is to leave a flower bulb in all teachers and administration mailboxes and kids can bring a bring in a dollar or less to sponsor a bulb. We could

then plant these as a group or have kids do it after school. Kelly asked what space could be used for this and suggested the secret garden. We would like to get everyone involved and help kids show their gratitude and watch it grow over the years. The committee would love ideas, input or advice.

- a. Loren suggested painted rocks could be an idea to have in the garden as well, not just plants but decoration.
- b. Sam stated that this is a beautiful idea.
- c. Kerry said this is a good idea to watch it grow every year.
- d. Maggie suggested the empty space in the secret garden where the pumpkins were planted prior to the pandemic. We tried bulbs in the rock garden in the past but there was a lot of weed mat so it might be easier this time.
- e. Kelly asked if we should have kids plant their own bulbs?
- f. Leah suggested planting some by the front sign on Russell Rd.
- g. Hopi suggested that rock painting would be a good station for learning festival later in the year.
- h. Kelly asked how many bulbs we would need for each teacher to have one and Mr. Hopkins 50 Kids bring in \$1 to sponsor the bulbs. Give a note to the teacher saying a bulb was sponsored in their honor. "Thank you for helping me grow."

\*After the meeting, a parent expressed concern that some students could be excluded from participation if a donation is needed. It was therefore decided that the PTO would pay for the bulbs with the garden funds. Students are encouraged to bring in notes of appreciation for their teachers.

V. New Business and General Comments

- a. Mr. Hopkins stated that Mr. J, an interventionist at the school, approached him and Ms. Odom about doing pink Fridays for breast cancer awareness. He has lost family members to breast cancer and would like raise money for the cancer society by having kids bring in loose change and wear pink on Fridays.

Minutes Typed by Rachel Voorhies  
Reviewed by Oniffe Grizzle and Samantha Eads  
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