

PTA General Meeting Notes
January 10, 2013
Mantua Elementary School

The president called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Present at the meeting were:

Executive Board: Lesley Kowalski, Carolyn Stephan, Jennifer Epley, Shannon Murphy, Teresa LeMair, Julie Middleton

School Representatives: Jan-Marie Fernandez, Tina Tingler and Amy Alley

General Membership: Lori Recher, Lori Prendergast, Karen Hemmerdinger, Reeva Spradlin, Amy Halstead, Julie Lifland, Hongliang Cui, Michelle Collins, Janet Sottolano, Rajesh Pillai, Serena Chan, Margaret Scheele, Kathy Phillips, Chris Geslen, Karen Cheng, Donna Pentek, Megan Burski Wells, W. Mays, Mr. Wilson

Vote: The Minutes from the November meeting were reviewed and voted on by the membership.

President's Report: Patty Reed was invited to come to the January and February meetings, but she is unavailable both nights. There are a number of issues going on in the county right now: proposal for increased AAP centers, Fairfax-Lanier boundary issues, Facilities plan, Superintendent search. There is a link to the superintendent search survey at the bottom of the agenda. Lesley encourages everyone to take the survey. You can go to FCPS web site (<http://www.fcps.edu/index.shtml>) to find information on all of these issues.

With the money that we won through the Phoebe Hearst award, we are developing a parent resource center in the library. Monica Cameron is working with the school to develop resources to help parents feel more comfortable in the school. Many of the materials will be available in different languages.

FYI- the U.S. Forest Service offers fee-free days throughout the year. The next one is January 21st. June 8th is National Get Outdoors Day

The Super Teacher award nominations are due Friday, February 15th. This award is given by the VA Lottery. Eight teachers from across Virginia will win the award. Each winner receives \$2000 cash and a \$2000 credit for classroom supplies. Anyone 18 or older can nominate a teacher for this award. If you nominate a teacher from Mantua, send a copy of your application to Ms. Fernandez.

FCPS Teacher of the Year award nominations are due in January. Mantua nominates a teacher every year for this award. This year, Mantua is nominating Diane Grice (see principal's report below). The VA PTA national convention is in July.

Treasurer's Report (Carolyn Stephan): We made \$5500 at the Book Fair this year which has been given to the library to buy new books. The net profit for Spirit Wear sales is higher than anticipated at this point in the year. We received our first first payment of the year from Amazon: \$24.20. The PTA helped to pay for field trip expenses in December. In addition, basketball expenses will continue for a few more months.

Principals' Report: Before the winter break, we had many lovely performances: a choral concert, band concert and the school-wide winter sing-a-long. The Front Office will be closed on Monday,

January 14th in the afternoon. There is no school on January 21st due to the holiday. The Winter Strings concert is Thursday, January 24th at 7 p.m. School will be closed January 28th and 29th for teacher work days (the 29th is a professional development day for teachers. We have nominated Diane Grice for FCPS Teacher of the year. She is the 6th grade language arts and general ed teacher. Tomorrow is the deadline for this nomination.

The county is still examining possible changes to Advance Academic centers, however most changes are likely on hold for now. It's possible that a few of the Middle School Centers might open next year. It is unlikely that any changes will be made at the elementary school level, which means no changes to Mantua.

Dr. Dale is submitting formal budget tonight to the school board that includes a 1% cost of living increase for staff. The 1% increase will likely just cover the teachers' increased contribution to their pensions. No other salary increases are proposed.

The Talent Show is Saturday, February 2nd and I will be hosting it again.

Digital text books- schools are starting to gravitate more and more to online textbooks. The digital textbook is another resource for kids to use, but it's not the only one and students usually don't have homework from them. In the case of the Math text books the cost is covered by the school (25%) and the school system pays (75%). Social Studies is digital for 4th grade and 6th grades. There was teacher training scheduled on the online textbooks, but it didn't happen due to a lack of sufficient available internet technology. The county is working towards a parent training session on the digital textbooks.

Ms. Alley discussed current testing happening in the school. A test for ESOL students to determine their English level of proficiency. There is a speaking part which is administered one on one. This testing starts Monday, January 14th. In addition, 6th grade students who are in the 6th grade advance math class can take the Algebra aptitude test. Parents must give permission for their kids to take this test.

Groups and club pictures being taken tomorrow so make sure your kids wear their uniforms. Mrs. Sottolano wanted to mention that she is happy to know that Diane Grice is being nominated for Teacher of the Year.

Report of First Vice-President for Community Outreach (Teresa LeMair): Enrichment programs started this week. We have over 150 students involved over 4 days. The companies we chose seem to be really good. Unfortunately, one of the companies, Hullabaloo, closed unexpectedly because the owner had to move overseas. However, we found a new company that offers Lego activities which will start next week. We are offering 3 robotics classes.

- Chat & Chew has 100 kids this year. The biggest challenge is finding space for the groups to meet each month. We would like to thank the teachers who give up their class rooms for these enrichment classes.
- Parent Programs- Margaret Sheele discussed our current parent education programs. We are hosting a coffee for parents to help educate them about transitioning to middle school on February 7th. A Frost Counselor will be here meeting with the 6th graders and parents will be invited to an informal question and answer period. On February 27th, there will be a similar evening program with counselors from Frost and Luther Jackson meeting with parents. We also plan to have parents who have had kids at these schools to discuss how things work.

- Drama Club- the performance of Treasure Island went very well. The PTA sent a survey to parents of current and former Drama Club members to find out their thoughts on the program and whether it should continue in a similar fashion. Based on the survey responses, Drama Club will definitely continue next Fall as long as there are volunteers to lead the activity. Many survey responders felt more parent volunteers at every rehearsal are necessary if there is going to be a big production. Mrs. Fernandez is a big proponent of Drama for students, but the last few years there has not been enough control of the kids. There were several comments on the survey regarding the drama club leadership this past fall and changes to who is directing the activity is requested. The situation must be safer if it's to continue. In addition, it has been very disruptive for the lower pod teachers. Shannon Murphy mentioned that we need to reject all of the misinformation that is circulating about Drama Club.
- Basketball- the season is just ramping up and is going well. However, the nice new floors are causing a few problems with injuries.

The Talent Show is Saturday, February 2nd and tryouts are next week. See the PTA website for details. The PTA is hosting a Valentines Sock Hop on February 15th.

We are going to need a lot of volunteers for the Carnival in March and the end of the year 6th grade party.

Report of Second Vice-President for Fundraising (Jennifer Epley):

Carnival- Julie Lifland discussed details of the Carnival which is scheduled for March 16th from 11 am- 3 pm. The theme is the "Future's So Bright." We decided on a career oriented theme for this year's Carnival. We will need a lot of volunteers, as usual. We are not doing gift baskets this year, but we are bringing back the raffle. The poster contest is being replaced with the Booth Banner. There will be a cupcake walk for the little kids and the cake walk for the older kids. This year, we will have 2 cotton candy machines. There will be a jewelry sale/white elephant sale. Ms. Alley will be soliciting teachers to volunteer for the dunk tank. Julie is looking in to an Ipad/Iphone App for processing credit cards.

Yearbook- plan to order your yearbook before the price goes up on February 1st.

Fundraising- January 24th is our next Restaurant Night at Baja Fresh. Our next box top competition starts on January 14th. Since many were disappointed that we didn't do Sally Foster this year, we are considering doing an online sale if we can find a volunteer to run it. We will not be doing the Entertainment book sale again. Amazon seems to be going well, but we have only receive one payment so far for \$24.

On April 12th, Mantua Staff will play a basketball game against Camelot Staff at Woodson HS. There will be ticket sales in advance at Mantua.

Report of Second Vice-Presidents for Membership (Shannon Murphy)-

Over 400 families have joined the PTA so far this year. There is still time to join the PTA. Anyone who joins will get a directory.

Old Business:

AMC-8 test administered on November 13th; good to really good on test; 3 did excellent; 5th and 6th graders take it; 2 fifth graders at the highest level and 1 6th graders

New Business: Reeva Spradlin asked questions about how the school is dealing with the issue of sanitation and health issues related to the flu. Mrs. Fernandez said that teachers are wiping down the desks and trying to keep their rooms clean as well as reminding the students to wash their hands. Ms. Spradlin offered to help with the Lost and Found items. She could possibly take pictures of items so that parents could see what is there. In the past, both the Kids Care Club and the SCA have worked on this issue.

STEM club- space for once-a-month; have professionals come in from different STEM careers; going to have a science fun night in April 25th. Eva Bousbouras- evening event- 3rd-6th grades; k-2 students- science and hands-on day

If anyone is not getting the Alert News, please let Amy Halstead know. You can reach her at amyhalstead@verizon.net.

Time for Kids- a parent said that she doesn't think this publication is appropriate for the classroom. She believes it is biased and the kids should be provided with alternative points of view. Mrs. Fernandez said that unfortunately there are not a lot of resources available for this age group. We have chosen this publication to introduce students to the idea of persuasive writing. It's not meant to be viewed as the only source of information on the topics discussed. Ms. Fernandez explained that this issue is not anything the PTA can aid with so further discussion should occur with the administration outside of a PTA meeting if that is deemed necessary.

Web Site- John Nicholas and Nicole Armstrong are leaving the school because their kids are moving on to middle school. We are looking for someone to take their place as webmaster. In addition, the PTA is working on a survey to find out how parents currently use the website and how they would like to use the website in the future. This survey will help us design a new website.

FUNGI Award- Lesley awarded the FUNGI award to the "Lori's"- Lori Recher and Lori Prendergast. Both "Loris" were board members last year and continue to help. Lori Recher runs the Take Home Reading Program this year, was a co-chair for the Book Fair, and updates the PTA marquee in the front lobby which Lesley is extremely grateful for! Lori Prendergast ran our Reflections Program this year and is involved with Girls on the Run – thank you Lori P. for your continued PTA help!

Meeting adjourned at 8:34 PM.