

FRANKLIN PTO 12/2/08 GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Executive Committee Members in Attendance:

Susan LaPierre - Co-Chair

Tracy Soehle - Co-Chair

Eva Zervos - Vice- President

Deb Rooney - Treasurer

Lisa Chedekel - Secretary

Amy Kelly – Principal

Call to order at 7:40 p.m. and welcome by Susan LaPierre. Agenda and PTO budget for '08-'09 were distributed to all in attendance.

Treasurer Rooney presented an update on the PTO budget, explaining that most accounts were within budgeted expectations, with some fluctuations. Proceeds from the gift-wrap fundraiser are expected to be slightly above budget, as are PTO dues, while proceeds from the Halloween Bash fell slightly below expectations. Co-Chair LaPierre reported that the PTO had funded emergency supplies/backpacks for the school from the co-chairs' discretionary fund.

LaPierre raised a discussion of changing the PTO meeting times to either earlier in the evening (6:30 or 7 p.m.) or mornings. Several parents in attendance said morning meetings would be difficult to attend; others said 6:30 p.m. meetings would be too early, but that 7 p.m. was a reasonable option. LaPierre said she was introducing alternative times to solicit parents' input.

Brief updates on the book fair and auction were presented. Co-chair Soehle said planning for the April 3 auction was underway, and she invited parents to get involved.

LaPierre spoke briefly about the process of awarding PTO Mini-Grants to teachers and staff. 15 applications were received, to be reviewed by a committee of PTO members, Principal Kelly, teacher Donna Devaney and parent Walter Devine. The PTO has allocated \$6,000 for the mini-grants, to be awarded in mid-December.

In a general discussion, several parents expressed concerns that crossing guards stationed along Derby Street had not been on duty some days during school arrival times. Principal Kelly said she would check on the situation.

Principal Kelly and several teachers gave an update on the work of the school staff to establish a "vision" for Franklin School. Teachers and staff have discussed their vision for the school at recent meetings, working to answer two questions: What are the qualities of the school they would they want their own child (or relative or friend's child) to attend; and what kind of school would they want to work at? Among the priorities that has emerged so far is the concept of "safety," both in terms of children feeling safe enough to take risks and make mistakes, and staff feeling secure enough to express their opinions and share ideas freely. The school council, composed of parents, also is discussing its vision for the school, which will be combined with the staff's vision statement and circulated to parents for feedback, Kelly said.

Guest speaker Greg Hurray, Newton's coordinator of English language arts, spoke about the language arts curriculum, including the importance of children reading at home and the emphasis in school on small group interaction around texts. Teachers work with children on cognitive reading skills that range from literal to inferential to critical thinking.

Hurray said he was "very disappointed" in some areas of Franklin's 2007-08 MCAS test results, especially in composition. He said reading scores showed "many positives" and "good strength in reading," but noted that Franklin had scored below the district-wide average in language arts overall. "What went wrong? It's the composition scores," he said. He said composition (ie, writing) is an area that teachers and administrators are working on. He acknowledged an "unequal distribution of (literacy) resources" among Newton schools that puts Franklin at a disadvantage, and explained that Franklin had a higher percentage of "at-risk" or special-needs children than other schools in the district. Several parents asked questions about the literacy curriculum, homework and the MCAS.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. No votes were taken.

Minutes taken by: L. Chedekel