

Devon Elementary School PTO Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2009

In attendance: Evelyn Shreve, Susan Drennan, Stephanie Thibault, Dr. Tobin, Elaine Whiteman Klinger, Nanette Chappellear, Sheila Czepeil, Karen Friedman, Lauren Baran, Cathy Rains, Suzanne Emerson, Suzanne Morris, Susan Stuber, Betsy Fadem

Welcome

- Evelyn brought meeting to order, mentioned that we are having out meeting early this month due to PSSA testing. She completed introductions and February's meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.

Betsy Fadem, T/E School Board President

- Dr Tobin introduced Betsy Fadem, School Board Representative. As our former PTO president, Betsy still makes the teacher's banners that adorn the halls of Devon. Betsy is now president of our School Board Directors
- Betsy was president of the Devon PTO 10 years ago. She has a son who is now a senior at Conestoga and another child at BU.
- Betsy stated that the School Board President needs a connection to the schools. She is always outreaching to others who may have an interest in joining the school board.
- We are in the middle of budget season. Elementary enrollment is up. All elementary schools are trying to be about the same size at about 500 students. We still have the Easttown location in case we need to increase. We are expecting about 30 new students across our total population of 6000 students. We are concerned that the economy may bring children out of private schools to our public schools. Although they are all welcome, if they did all come, it would be an additional 1600 students. Any gradual increase would be welcome. We are also in touch with the private schools and know that they want to keep their enrollment so will work with families in financial need.
- The School Board is struggling with determining the best ways to communicate to the school population. Now that technology is changing, Betsy asked if the school board should be using newsletters and insight, or do we need more info on the web site. There will be a survey on that topic.
- Betsy opened the discussion to questions.
- Betsy discussed what originally got her involved with the school board. At the time. The topic that brought about her interest was the consideration to do away with gym class for students that do an after school sport. She found out when she went to the education meeting and board meeting, the discussions had already happened. She learned she needed to start joining meetings sooner versus later. As of now, Students are required to participate in gym for all of 9th grade and one

- other semester. Some students opt out of gym in order to take more academic classes.
- She has been on the board for 8 years.
 - Question: were you involved in the GCA debate. Graduate Competency Assessment. We as a district like our local control. We showed three students who were not proficient in PSSA yet were still very successful in their post schooling. They have put language in this GCA to make them optional. So if a school district has a valid local assessment, they may be able to opt out. Now the question is if we choose not to participate, why we should pay for the implementation of the GCAs in the lump sum. She feels it would be better to have other schools come to us to see how we are successful and use us as a model instead of introduce more testing
 - Question from Evelyn: There was a survey conducted among teachers about our 6 day cycle. Is there a way parents can provide feedback? You can come to the school board meeting and there may be a way to have statements recorded in advance. She thinks the meeting is on the 12th of April at 1:30. At each of the public school board meetings time is put aside at the start and the end of the meeting for public comments. It is an informal setting and usually flows as a dialogue.
 - Betsy thanked us all for everything the PTO does to enrich the program at Devon. And asked us to continue enriching our relationships and continue to keep involved.
 - Dr. Tobin stated we have a really good board that makes decisions for the betterment of our kids.

Principal's Report: Dr. Tom Tobin

- On the in-service days the teachers have been having professional development experiences. The program they are working with is called Generating Expectations for Student Achievement or GESA. It grew out of gender expectations. The in-service day allowed for training and we have had teachers observing each other to note the application of the skills they are learning. This is one example of the tools we are implementing to help fine tune our excellent staff. Some of the topics considered:
 - Breaking into the boys club
 - What it is like for boys and for girls
 - There have been a lot of past interest in female expectations, now more emphasis on male
 - Female entrance into college has surpassed males.
 - Some of the professional schooling such as law shows more women than men
 - What is a “deadspot” in the classroom? A deadspot is defined as an area where the teacher may not move to or look to. Some students will move to that area to be unobserved.
 - Bias in children books is considered. Are the books purely Caucasian or biased to females or males
 - How to educate students for a diverse glove workplace.
 - Teacher observations have been happening among peers. Teachers look for dead zones. They also observe which children are being called on and

whether they are all getting a chance to respond. It gives teachers a chance to assess their own growth.

- Last year the emphasis was on Paths now it is GESA. It has been a valuable experience and does require the in service days.
- Next week is PSSA for grades 3 and 4. There are 6 tests given to the students over 5 days. They will be given in the morning. They will have one day with a test in the afternoon. 4th grade will get 2 on Tuesday and 3rd grade will get 2 on Wednesday. Snacks have been provided by PTO and some training for the tests have been done. Students are encouraged to do your best and the emphasis is on showing what you know. We are usually proud of the results our students provide. The PSSA receive a lot of public attention and press. We take them seriously. We get preliminary results in the summer and individual results by the fall. A student will get a result of advanced, proficient, basic or below basic. If a student falls below proficient, the school looks at that as an area of concern and extra support may be provided to the individual student. We believe in intervention early and start as low as kindergarten to give each student a chance to succeed. By 2014 we want 100% of all students to be proficient. In mathematics' we had 98% proficient, and in English 92%. 4th graders will get PSSA science at end of April for two days.
- Observation: Thanks you for not making any testing this week. Daylight savings really makes it difficult. The state sets the date. Someone mentioned that the first graders get a testing as well. In April the first graders have a screening test for skills that may place them into the challenge program.
- One calendar note, the group picture day is now March 31st. The date was changed due to first communion instruction was scheduled for same day so we felt we could accommodate the change
- The St Judes program – the 4th graders will raise funds to support St Judes. The kids will all learn about that and the early intervention kids participate in a trike-a-thon and all the kids cheer them on. The early intervention children are completing their last year at Devon as the program will move to Valley Forge next year due to space issues.
- Paying close attention to budget issues. All POs were ceased or frozen in January. The school district is affected by the down economy. Question: Will that impact the purchase of PTO purchases such as computers. The answer is no.

President's Report: Evelyn Shreve

- Two things: Please consider what role you want to play next year. The nominating committee needs to be established today. Kathy Antaki, Kelly Lee and Evelyn Shreve form the nominating committee and they will form the slate. If there is more than one candidate for a position, there will be a vote.
- Kelly would like to host a coffee for kindergarten and first grade parents. There will be a day time coffee and evening coffee March 31st at 7-8 for evening and

Tuesday March 24th is the daytime one – 9:30 to 11:00. All parents are invited but 1st grade and kindergarten is invited. Both coffees will be at Devon. There will be something in dispatch and an email going out. Also transfer families should be targeted for invitation. Children are welcome at the coffee. Do we need to approve money for these coffees? We will check with Kelly on whether that is needed

- Thanks for responding to the PSSA budget increase for PSSA snacks. In prior years it was not known that the PTO would provide the snacks. Now that the teachers are aware, the amount of snacks needed has increased. We need \$45 per classroom which comes to \$360 dollars an increase of \$160 over both years.
- Susan Stuber talked about building a sense of community. At Beaumont they have 30 minutes of coffee and sharing before each meeting. She felt that sort of casual time for coffee and conversation will improve our team work and camaraderie. Another idea she suggested was to provide a monthly or quarterly moms night out so that we can all get together as a community. In addition other ideas were contributed to the conversation to include cocktail parties/pot lucks per year or per classroom. The role of Home room parent was discussed as holding an important role on creating a sense of community and a link to the PTO. In order to increase attendance and involvement, the daytime versus nighttime meeting schedule was discussed. What is the history of having the meetings in the day versus the night? Several points were raised that people think of PTO activity as during the day not the night which prohibits working parents from attending. In addition, people may feel intimidated by the PTO and feel they cannot break in. Perception is a big part of why we don't have an increase in participation. We need to first build community and then people will participate. While we know that when there is a speaker attendance increases, we should not confuse attending a meeting with participation. In the end, it was decided that although the PTO cannot sanction "Mom's night out events" they can certainly be organized outside of the PTO. In addition, we will be starting out next monthly meeting 30 minutes early to provide a time for coffee and conversation.
- Meg Roberston coordinates the home room parents. It will be suggested that next year each home room parent host a pot luck, coffee, or cocktail hour. We will be recruiting for Homeroom parents next year and will look for a very organized person

Treasurer's Report: Stephanie Thibault

- Please see attached Treasurer's Report
- Highlights: the budget numbers have come in by most committee chairs. Get the rest in by March 15th. If you have any ideas for school gifts, submit them to Evelyn. Camp Fair \$13,971. We may be off by \$200 dollars. Nanette thinks we made just under a \$14,000 profit. Working on moneys coming in for school clubs. We already have \$5300 for summer camp. 240 total spots
- Next step on budget is to compile all the numbers and put the budget forward for a vote

Cultural Arts: Lauren Baran

- Lauren has a meeting planned tomorrow for Arts Express Week. Lauren has sent preliminary budget in some numbers have been moved around. This past year each school received \$500 from School board. We expect we won't get that money this year. Artists have been raising their prices but we are assuming they may start bringing their prices down. Can we negotiate the price? We do? Delta is an organization that comprises all cultural arts programs and are a collective organization that books block bookings and keeps costs down.

Fundraising: Elaine Whiteman Klinger

- New and creative ideas are being implemented to increase Boxtops participation
- Kudos to the Camp Fair team. It was a great success
- ACME receipts and \$ are still coming in
- Friendraiser Auction donation are coming in but with smaller \$ amounts. Suggestion to try a 50/50 raffle
- Spring Fair prizes are being purchased
- May 16th "Handles Spirit Day from 3:30-8:00. A portion of all sales goes to Devon

Social Functions: Karen Friedman

- 4th Grade party will be at Devon Bowling Lanes
- 4th grade yearbook underway

Issues, Affairs & Programs: Susan Stuber

- Susan Stuber Go for the Green, part of Keystone healthy kids program is being worked on.
- Meg Robertson is working on turn off the TV week

Upcoming PTO Events:

March			
	31	All day	Group Picture Day
April			
	15	9:30 am	PTO Meeting

Minutes Submitted by Sue Drennan, March 23, 2009