

PTA Meeting Minutes for Thursday, March 5, 2009

Introduction: The meeting was called to order at 9:09 a.m. at the Hollywood School Library. PTA board members in attendance were Kierith Kurth, Sue Gersch, Denise Notz, Jennifer Perry, and Maureen Rurka. Laura Tracy was absent. Vicki DeVyllder, Jon Lamberson, and Janice Limperis were also in attendance.

Recording Secretary Report: The minutes for the February 24th meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's report was accepted and approved.

Corresponding Secretary's Report: Thank you notes were received from Adrian Charniak thanking the PTA for Founder's Day and from Diana Pescador for flowers sent to the PTA for her birthday.

District 96 Board of Education Candidates: MaryEllen Meindl, Linda LaBelle, Mary Stimming, Jennifer Leimberer, and Fonz Palmer each gave a short presentation of their candidacy for school board.

School News: Hollywood added a new staff member yesterday. Her name is Alex Witlaw. She is a certified teacher who is working as a collaborative teacher with Mrs. Schirmer in the Kindergarten. In the afternoon, Ms. Witlaw will do other things for District 96, including support for the KITE program. Ms. Witlaw should remain in the position for the rest of the year.

An Illinois Arts Council grant has just been completed by Kierith Kurth and Ms. DeVyllder. The purpose of the grant is to help pay for an eight week artist in residence scheduled for the 2009/2010 school year with Sonata Kazimieraitiene, who is a local artist who does tile work, ceramics, totems, etc. At eight weeks, the planned residency is twice as long as previous residencies. The first part of the residency will be dedicated to Ms. Kazimieraitiene working with students to design and create functional and decorative art for the Betty Kayse Memorial Garden. The second part of the residency will occur when the garden is in bloom, where the artwork will be arranged and installed. The grant request was written for \$12,000. The PTA must pay 40% of the cost of the residency and has committed to do so. It is hoped that Ms. DeVyllder will have a good idea of the outcome of the approval process sometime in May.

Because of the current lice problem, Mr. Ken and Mr. Ricardo are vaccuming all classrooms and common areas daily. In addition, they are using Davies Hospital Disenfectant to wipe down desks and other areas. Cubbies are also being cleaned daily. Ray Fernandez, the custodial supervisor, has also been highly involved. Because the problem seems to be largely centered on 2nd grade, the possessions of the second graders have been bagged in large ziploc bags and left hanging in their cubbies during the day. A parent requested student possessions be bagged for all grades using cubbies, not just 2nd grade, because there was a first grade student sent home yesterday because of lice. Ms. DeVyllder disputed that until the student was named and it was pointed out that another first grade student was sent home today. A total of 14 children were sent home yesterday because of lice. Janice Limperis, the principal of Central School, agrees that all student possessions in cubbies would be bagged. Students in 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades were head checked yesterday. Today, kindergarteners, 1st and 5th graders are being head checked. Multiple parents expressed disappointment and

frustration with how the lice problem has been handled. Several 2nd grade parents said that they had received seven lice exposure notification letters since the end of September and felt that lice had been a constant problem since that time. Parents of children in other grades expressed unhappiness that they had not been notified that this been occurring until the lice had spread to other grades. One 2nd grade parent stated that she intended to keep her children, both of whom currently have lice, home for the next two weeks. She also said that her daughter has had lice three times since late September. In addition, she said her family had incurred expenses having their home professionally cleaned.

Ms. DeVyllder stated that students are not allowed to return to class until they had been checked by the nurse. Many parents felt that more frequent head checks should be done of all students of Hollywood, not just currently affected grades. Several parents felt that this reoccurring problem was the result of one or two families not following through with the multiple steps necessary to eliminate the lice. Ms. DeVyllder expressed concern about the idea of singling out certain families and said that the school was limited in what it could do. Janice Limperis said that everything that could be done was being done and related her own personal experience with lice. She said she understood the frustration of parents.

One parent pointed out that every member of the family must be treated if one person in the family has lice, even if no one else in the family has it. A parent asked Ms. DeVyllder if comprehensive instructions were being sent home to parents of children sent home because of lice. Ms. DeVyllder said that the school sent home packets of comprehensive instructions to parents of affected students and that extra copies were available in the office. A request was made that these packets be sent home to all families. Ms. DeVyllder said she would have that done.

Many parents expressed extreme displeasure with how the situation has been handled to present. One parent brought her 4th grader, who was home sick, into the school yesterday for a head check. The child did have lice. The parent requested that her kindergartener be checked as soon as he entered the building today, not after he went to class and hung up his coat. When the parent arrived for the PTA meeting this morning, she checked with Mrs. Schirmer, who had no idea that the child was to have a head check first thing this morning. Ms. DeVyllder apologized and said that it should not have happened but did not know where the break down in communication occurred.

When it was revealed that the first graders had been sent to the 2nd grade classroom so Mrs. Barhorst could attend part of the PTA meeting to discuss new lunch rules, several parents expressed outrage that their children had been sent to the classroom that appears to be the epicenter of the outbreak.

Dr. Lamberson asked Keith Kurth and another PTA board member to attend a meeting at 10:00 am tomorrow morning to discuss how to go forward. Suggestions were made, such as have the school thoroughly disinfected over spring break and instituting a return program for the first day back from spring break where students would be subject to a head check prior to being allowed back into class. More information will be available after this meeting has occurred.

New rules have been instituted for lunchtime and hallways. Mrs. Barhorst said members of the school leadership team discussed what would be done differently and came up with the new rules. At the beginning of the day, students place their lunchboxes into a class tub. At lunch,

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students line up and are escorted to the gym, where students have assigned seats and must sit with their grade. Each table must wait to be asked to come up to retrieve their lunch boxes. Each table must wait to be asked to come up to get their milk. Students eat their lunches. Garbage bins are placed in the middle of the gym and each table is called up to dispose of their garbage. At the end of lunch, each table waits for their classroom teacher to escort them back to class. Ms. DeVlyder said that students are allowed to get up and throw their garbage out before their table is instructed to do so. Mrs. Barhorst said that since the new rules have been implemented this week, the gym floor is much cleaner after lunch. The idea is to teach students personal responsibility.

A parent expressed unhappiness that students were not allowed to sit with their friends who are in other grades. Another parent complained that the rules were too rigid and said that items in students' lunches were being squashed. 5th grade girls enrolled in Great Books were late for that program yesterday because they had to wait for their lunches and milk. When one student stood up to tell the lunch supervisor that they needed to go to Great Books, that student was told to sit down and be quiet. This parent felt that the current level of supervision at lunch was not sufficient.

One parent pointed out that if lunch boxes were being taken away from students to prevent students from hitting one another with them, students might resort to hitting or pushing each other.

One parent said she felt the new rules were a good idea and that she had seen similar rules at other schools work well. She also said that she personally has almost been knocked down by students and that students could pose a danger to older visitors. She asked that parents give the rules some time.

Ms. DeVlyder said that the rules were not created to punish students or that because there was a huge problem. The school leadership team thought the rules were a good idea to teach students personal responsibility and respect for others. Ms. DeVlyder also expressed the hope that the new rules would translate to better behavior for students at home.

Nominations for Hollywood PTA 2009-2010: The nominations submitted by the sub-committee for the 2009/2010 school year are as follows:

PTA Co-Presidents	Kierith Kurth & Denise Notz
1st Vice President	Maureen Rurka
2nd Vice President	Joyce Clarkson
Treasurer	Linda Maher-Osowski
Recording Secretary	Sue Gersch
Corresponding Secretary	Amy Lodolce

Recess in Winter: Jennifer Leimberer expressed concern with how winter recess during inclement weather is being run. Students spend time in the library watching videos. One parent complained rules were not consistent and without warning, students were not allowed to talk to each other in the library during recess. When they are in the gym, all students must play the chosen game and are not allowed to entertain themselves in other ways. Students have not been allowed to read books during recess. One parent said that her daughter deliberately did

things such as leaving a school book at home to be kept in Mr. Trimmer's classroom for recess so she could read her book. One parent said that her child's classroom teacher had complained to her that the child was inattentive and squirly. The parent felt it was partially the result of her child watching TV during recess instead of expending some of his excess energy. Ms. DeVlyder said that she would address these concerns and parents were asked to communicate any concerns they might have to her. One parent said these same problems regarding recess have been brought up at a PTA meeting a year ago and that she did not see any changes within the past year.

Jennifer Leimberer proposed the PTA donate games to be used during recess. Two school board candidates from Ames and Central said their schools had a "games cart" full of different donated games for inside recess. Ms. DeVlyder said that Hollywood did have some sort of games cart year ago and that she would support a new games cart. Jennifer will coordinate a games cart for Hollywood. Anyone interested in donating a game or helping with the project should contact her. One parent did warn that the games with the most pieces did not get a lot of use on the previous games cart.

Committee Reports:

Cookie Dough & Art to Remember: The cookie Dough fundraiser will launch hopefully on Monday, March 9th and run until the Friday before Spring Break (March 20th). Orders will be delivered in April. There is a new vendor this year so pretzels will not be available.

This year Art to Remember will be done as part of the March Artist in the Classroom presentations. The only effect this will have on the March projects is that different paper will be used. A magnet with each child's artwork will be sent home to parents, who will have the option of purchasing the magnet or other products. It is hoped that there will be improved participation by completing the artwork at school as opposed to sending it home, as was done last year.

Family Reading Night: Family Reading Night was a success but had lower attendance than expected. Next year, Jennifer Leimberer would like to hold the event in January on a Friday night as opposed to a school night. The cost of the event was way under budget but Jennifer is hoping to purchase a thank you gift for the Riverside Library from the library's wishlist.

5th Grade Games Night: The last 5th Grade Games Night was held last Friday at Hollywood. There is an upcoming planning meeting for the district wide games night that will be held on April 17th at Hauser. Volunteers are needed. Please contact Lisa Buffo for more information.

Hollywood Nights: Hollywood Nights will be held in May but the venue has not been chosen. One possibility is the Salt Creek Wine Bar, but cost is a concern in the current economic climate. Another possibility is an outdoor event at The Station but the committee needs to find out if it would be possible to close off the street for one night for such an event. Volunteers are needed to obtain donations. Please contact Maureen Rurka to volunteer.

Family Science: The theme of this year's Family Science Day is Solve the Crime. It will be held Saturday, March 14th.

Field Day: There is a planning meeting for this year's Field Day on Monday, March 9th at 9am at Hollywood School. Lots of volunteers are needed and all are welcome to attend.

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Adult Quiz Night: This year's Adult Quiz Night was a success even though it was not as well attended as years past. The event raised \$1,061.06 for the Hollywood School PTA. Dionne Mangan said she would continue to run this event next year.

Hot Lunch: Lisa Buffo pointed out that new order forms for Hot Lunch were sent out yesterday with a price of \$3.00 per lunch, a decrease from \$3.50 per lunch. This is the result of the Hot Lunch Committee taking on more shopping for things such as chips and desserts.

District News: Dr. Lamberson cut down the number of things he talked about due to the length of the meeting but said he would be available after the meeting to talk to parents. He brought copies of the new district calendar, which was approved at the last school board meeting. The calendar will also be available on the new district website, which will be launched the day after the March school board meeting. Tonight is kindergarten registration. Registration will continue until next Friday.

Dr. Lamberson also invited everyone to attend the Second City performance at Hauser tomorrow night. Tickets are \$20 and will be available at the door. A parent asked if this was an adults only performance. Dr. Lamberson said he believed it was, though it may be more of a PG-13 evening. The event is sponsored by REEF.

At the end of the meeting, Kierith Kurth read aloud a letter from a kindergarten parent who was unable to attend the meeting. Dr. Lamberson was given the letter to keep.

Dear Laura and members of the Hollywood PTA,

I am writing this letter in regard to my daughter's kindergarten experience this year. It seems that the kindergarten here at Hollywood school has an active and needy group of children who require extra attention and service above and beyond the needs of a typical group of kids. While waiting for assistance for Mrs. Schirmer (that thankfully is supposed to arrive this week), I feel that she has done what she can to put out the fires that have arisen.

On our front however, although she is learning, my daughter's willingness to come to school has decreased considerably since November. She has often come out of class saying that she "did not do anything" right that day. While this is a shame coming from any child in relation to a school day, I am becoming more concerned about next year with the class potentially remaining the same in terms of students population, the school day increasing to a full day with added academic pressures and significant periods of unsupervised time being included with lunch and recess. I am interested in knowing if there is a plan to have additional help for the first grade teacher in class and during lunch/recess from the start of the school year so we are not in a similar situation next February, attempting to find someone to help while our children are lost for the majority of the school year. I would appreciate if you could share this concern of mine at the meeting on Thursday. Thank you for your assistance in sharing this for me.

Sincerely,

Kelly Stover Krupske

The kindergarten parents in attendance expressed agreement with Mrs. Krupske's letter. Ms. DeVyllder said she had been working with the Response to Intervention Team (RIT) since the beginning of the year to come up with ways to support Mrs. Schirmer in the Kindergarten classroom. Kindergarten parents in attendance also expressed the opinion that what had been done had not been sufficient. They said that they felt it took too long to finally get a certified teacher to support Mrs. Schirmer in the classroom. Dr. Lamberson said Ms. DeVyllder had followed the process in place.

Dr. Limperis said that an aide had not been added to the classroom because the purpose of an aide must be clearly defined according to the agreement with the teachers' union. Also, a solution must be based on the needs of the children. Mindy Keller, a kindergarten teacher at Central School, was sent to observe the Hollywood kindergarten class and spoke with Mrs. Schirmer about the issues in the classroom. Dr. Limperis said the addition of a co-teacher to the kindergarten classroom was a solid decision.

Parents echoed the concerns expressed in the Mrs. Krupke's letter about what would happen in 1st grade and asked if the 1st grade teacher would also have a co-teacher. Dr. Limperis said that she couldn't answer that question definitively. She said that a co-teacher was possible for 1st grade or perhaps some of the students may have IEP (Individual Education Plans) by the fall and be placed in other programs in the district.

Carrie Levin, the social worker and member of RIT, said many meetings with RIT had been held to explore ways to improve the situation. Ms. Levin said that the RIT uses a tiered approach and that several simple interventions had been attempted. Paraprofessionals assigned to other classrooms had been helping in the kindergarten classroom. Mrs. Rerucha and Mrs. Czubik were also sent to the kindergarten classroom to help students get ready to leave at 11:20.

A parent asked when Mindy Keller was sent to Hollywood to observe the kindergarten class. Dr. Limperis said the visit had occurred at the end of January. The same parent said that the situation in the kindergarten classroom had been bad for a long time. She felt that her child had spent the last six months in class that had not been fun, was a not place where he was regularly safe and that her son had not benefited from Mrs. Schirmer's considerable skill as a teacher. She felt that the serious behavior issues in the classroom have disrupted her son's education and that he has not progressed as he should have as a result.

Ms. DeVyllder reiterated the RIT has been involved since October. Another parent asserted that Mrs. Schirmer had been asking for help since September and expressed disappointment that intervention was tied to the students and not to Mrs. Schirmer's needs. Parents expressed concern that too much of the intervention and response was tied only to those students. Parents expressed dismay with how long it took to respond to the teacher's needs and the class's needs. The kindergarten parents in attendance also stated that Mrs. Schirmer did not receive the needed support in a timely manner. One parent stated that the teacher's job is to be sure students are successful and it is the administration's job to be sure the teacher is successful.

The parents also agreed that they did not want to repeat this experience in first grade. They expressed frustration that students have lost educational time. One parent said the RIT should

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have asked the question, what does this teacher need to do her job? They also agreed that it took too long for Mrs. Schirmer to receive help. One parent said she didn't care if some students needed IEPs; she cared that her child was not learning. Dr. Lamberson said that this is a first for the district and that this hopefully will ensure the success of this class of students. Parents restated that they expect a solution for next fall and that a slow response will not be tolerated in the future.

Announcement & Reminders

Kindergarten Registration - 3/5 at 7pm

Market Day pick up 3/11

Wee Deliver 3/12

Family Science 3/14 10 - 1pm

Hollywood Community House Pancake Breakfast 3/14 7am -Noon

Board of Education Meeting at Hollywood 3/17 at 7:30

Ecology Club 3/17 3-4pm

Early Release 3/20 11:30

Spring Break 3/23 - 3/27

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Jennifer Perry, Recording Secretary