

PTA Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 2, 2014

Maureen Kramer, PTA Co-President, called the meeting to order at 7:32 pm

Approval of the Minutes

Davida Kales, PTA Secretary, asked if anyone had corrections or additions to the minutes from the June 2014 meeting. As there were none, the minutes were approved and entered into the record.

Treasurer's Report

Nan Hartman, PTA Treasurer, shared the proposed budget that was approved last June, and walked everyone through it. Afterward she asked if anyone had any questions about it, but no one did.

Co-Presidents' Report

Maureen Kramer and Erin Harcourt, PTA Co-Presidents, thanked everyone for a good start to the school year. They additionally thanked the following:

- i. Jesse Gordon for maintaining and updating the school website throughout the summer and during the school year.
- ii. Meredith Hammond for coordinating and purchasing the donuts for the Open House.
- iii. Cybele Bjorklund and Simmons Lettre for running the 2014 PTA Fundraising Campaign.
- iv. Nicole Schwenker and Kathleen McDermott for such fabulous Spirit Wear. Spirit Wear was available for purchase at the Open House and will be available again at Back To School Night. They will also be selling Spirit Wear items online, as a result of a new model this year for which they ordered the items in advance and will sell them until they are sold out.
- v. Emily Warke for helping to kick start our after school activity program. The new activity coordinator, from Chevy Chase Elementary, she is working with has great offerings.
- vi. Orly Isaacson (Co-VP) for handling ICB requests.
- vii. Marina Bowsher and Janet Gaffney for organizing, compiling, writing and editing content for the school directory.
- viii. Kerry Lawrence and Christine Ryan for organizing and training Room Parents. They will be meeting with and training all the Room Parents next week.
- ix. Melanie Fleeger for creating the Birthday Bulletin Board.
- x. Crissy Upston and Kristin O'Brien for planning the Back to School Picnic (this Friday 6-8 pm on the field). Potomac Pizza will be there.
- xi. Orly Isaacson and Leyla Kenny (Co-VPs) for providing snack tonight, and for future meetings.
- xii. Benny Smith for the room set up in advance of this meeting.

Next, Maureen and Erin shared a little about the PTA, and how it operates at Westbrook.

- i. There are regularly scheduled meetings, (on the first Tuesday of the month, at 7:30 pm). There is a schedule available in the back of the room.
- ii. Decisions are made at these meetings, so please come and have a voice.

- iii. Make sure you join the school list serve so that you get the various PTA messages being distributed. John Crupi runs our list serve. He asks that when you sign up you list your child's name and grade so he can keep track.
- iv. Our PTA Patter newsletter is comprised of articles written by our parents and students, and is distributed three times per year. Please consider writing up a little something and sending it to Jennifer Lavorel. The deadline for articles is September 15, January 15, and May 15.
- v. Join us on Facebook! It's yet another way we can reach you with PTA updates.

PTA Fundraising

Cybele Bjorklund and Simmons Lettre, PTA Fundraising Co-Chairs, explained the need for PTA Fundraising to new parents (and reminded parents who are not new to Westbrook). Westbrook's PTA is asking every family to make a Family Contribution of \$150, donated at the start of the school year. Monies are used to fund all the great (fundamental) activities provided to our children that the county can not entirely cover. The \$150 ask is not arbitrary, but instead PTA-calculated. For comparison, in DCPS, families are asked to donate \$600-\$1000 per family. Parents are asked that if they can't meet the \$150, if they could please donate what they can. And of course if they have the ability to donate more, that would be very appreciated. This is a once-a-year ask from the PTA. You can pay online at www.payforschoolstuffonline.com, or write a check. More than \$18,000 has already been raised.

Principal's Update

Jennifer Lane, Westbrook Principal, thanked everyone for the great start to the school year. She felt our school had an advantage this year in knowing what the building was like, and for her, personally, knowing her staff and the Westbrook families.

Ms. Lane announced how pleased she was that due to a generous grant from the PTA she will continue professional development to support Westbrook's instruction in Writing Workshop. This grant will also support a more sustainable approach to our Artist in Residence program, and bring Teaching Artists to the school who can coach our teachers in the use of Arts Integration instruction in the classroom.

Additionally, Ms. Lane explained that this year Westbrook will be using the Responsive Classroom approach to support Social Emotional Learning. All staff received a full day of training on this approach during pre-service. The training was delivered by an expert from the Northeast Foundation for Children, developers of the Responsive Classroom program, and included professional staff and para-educators. As a result of Westbrook's shift to a Responsive Classroom approach, we revised our school rules with input from parents and staff. The rules are designed to be both "broad and inspiring" so that students can use and apply them everywhere. Our Westbrook School rules are:

1. Be safe, friendly and respectful in all that you do.
2. Keep our school clean and green.
3. Work hard and allow others to work hard.

Next, Ms. Lane shared that today was the first day of the school's PEP program (Preschool Education Program). The morning class still has spaces for non-disabled peers who are 3- or 4-year-olds. Students can live outside of the Westbrook attendance area. No transportation is provided, and there is a small fee. Teachers are certified, and teach the MCPS preschool curriculum. The afternoon class in this program is not set up for non-disabled peers.

Ms. Lane said she hoped to see many parents back again next Tuesday, if your children are in K-2, or the next Tuesday after that, if your children are in grades 3-5, for Back to School Night.

Ms. Lane reminded parents that September 23 is the Dedication Ceremony of Westbrook's new wing, and all the beautiful new things that comprise our school's now being fully open for business. She explained that this is also our 75th year as a school, and we will be celebrating that along with some expected dignitaries, our families, and students who will be performing.

Lastly, Ms. Lane mentioned that right before school started we hired a new attendance secretary, Linda Crawford. Ms. Lane asked that all make her feel welcome.

Vice President's Report: Natalie Atkinson

Natalie Atkinson reported the classrooms were all settling in and the school year was already getting underway with the following:

K – Getting used to rules and routine, starting curriculum, Reading assessments, Math workshops

1 – Continuing to set up a safe and warm environment (Please make sure students are bringing in healthy snack they can eat independently.)

2 – Writing personal narratives, identifying story elements in Reading, using mental strategies to add and subtract in Math, Collaboration

3 – Making inferences while Reading, rounding number within 1000 in Math, discussing American Democratic principles and citizen's rights and responsibilities, Summer Memory in Writing

4 – Reading historical fiction, opinion writing, first Field Trip to the Bay this month, received a letter from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) asking to help collect data about our school watershed

5 – Science inquiry project

Committee Reports

Artists in Residence

Chris Dixon Barone explained that PTA funds allow every single grade to work individually as a grade with an artist for one week during the school year. AIR is a special opportunity for the kids to spend time on art like this, in a way that is not in the MCPS Core Curriculum. Many programs have a performance at the end of it. She announced we have many returning artists this year.

Chris also announced that Westbrook is adding professional development this year, so the artists will work with teachers in addition to the week or more with the students, to help give them tools to use in the classroom.

Chris asked for help from any parents willing to volunteer. If interested, please reach out.

Trash-Free Lunch

Chris Dixon Barone explained that trash-free lunches help teach students to be environmentally conscious. She wants to encourage parents and students to bring trash-free lunches every day, but that once a month she checks student's lunches, and students can earn prizes (ie: recyclable containers). Chris and her committee are always looking for help to check lunches, to teach the students why we are doing this, and to talk to students about being environmentally conscious.

Teacher and Staff Appreciation

Erin Harcourt spoke on behalf of this committee and shared that it had hosted a bagel breakfast and catered lunch to the teachers during pre-service week.

The Teacher and Staff Appreciation committee will be hosting six grade-level potluck lunches this year. The lunches are set up in the staff lounge for teachers to gather together and enjoy the food.

Also, Erin announced that National Teacher Appreciation Week is the first week in May, and various activities will be set up during it. If anyone wants to help, please let us know you want to be involved.

Wellness Committee

Leyla Kenny described her committee's mission: To promote the understanding and encouragement of nutrition, fitness, and mindfulness of Westbrook students to promote academic achievement and overall well-being.

Leyla announced to parents some great programs the committee has planned for the near future. September 19 is National Run Day, and students will be running during recess. Also, on October 15, Westbrook's PTA and Wellness Committee will host guest speaker Kelly Dorfman, a nationally-recognized nutritionist who focuses on children's nutrition, from 7-8:30 pm in the Media Center. The presentation is for parents only, and is free of charge.

Science and Environment Committee

Laura Colton explained that her committee aims to bring more science and environment into the classroom. The committee is divided into 4 categories:

1. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) – Organizes in-school field trips, hands-on scientific demonstrations, and STEM professionals recruited for Learning Lunches.
2. Gardens - Organized by Melissa Greene, an Edible Learning Garden will begin to grow this year thanks to a grant from the Captain Planet Foundation and matching funds from the PTA. Located in the school courtyard, the garden will be a place where students can engage in outdoor learning, healthy eating, and build their connection to the environment. Grade levels work in the garden at different times of the year with their classroom.
3. Green Team – Organizes and supports a number of ongoing recycling activities at our school (plastic bags, ink cartridges, markers, glue, and clothing). Our Recycling Center should be arriving at the front of the school in the next weeks.
4. Earth Week – Each spring, the Westbrook community celebrates Earth Week with activities planned for each day including assemblies, Trash Free lunch, Walk to School Day, and other events designed to highlight the important of our planet. We are currently seeking a subcommittee chair.

Carnival

Beth Marans announced that she and Julie Crain will chair this year's Westbrook Carnival, planned for the first week of May. She explained it is an "all hands on deck" carnival, during which every single family participates. Planning will begin in early November.

Yearbook

Yearbook Co-Chair, Deborah Eichhorn thanked parents for the summer pictures they emailed. Deborah also thanked parents for the Back-to-School pictures that have already come in. She asked that during the year, the more parents can take pictures of the in-classroom activities, more spontaneous class- and grade-wide moments, classroom parties, etc., it will really help in creating a quality Yearbook.

Book Fair

Tracy Schwartz announced Westbrook's Book Fair will be the week of November 10 in the Fireplace Room. All funds benefit the PTA and our school's library. Tracy stressed it's a good community event, which depends upon parent volunteers.

Tracy also explained that we run a Book Drive for our sister school, Viers Mill Elementary, at the same time. This Book Drive provides books for their library and students.

Enrichment Academies

Emily Warke, explained that Westbrook is using a different afterschool program this year. Last year we used Flex Academies, but this year we are switching to Enrichment Academies. All morning and afternoon clubs will be represented in a catalog that will come home in students' backpacks later this week. Clubs are a mix of teacher-run, former Westbrook parents, neighbors, or vendors (ie: Flying Kicks, Tae Kwon Do).

Emily announced that registration is online and starts at 6 am on September 9. There is an administration fee of \$25 per child, once a year, to sign up. Classes will start the week of September 29. A parent at Chevy Chase Elementary runs the program, and will email the listserv to explain what is necessary for registration.

Volunteer Coordination

Liz Brown announced that last year Westbrook's parents logged almost 8,000 hours. She believes we came in 4th place of all MCPS schools.

Liz encouraged all who would like to be involved, whether you work at home or in an office, to let her help you figure out how you could be most useful. Come October, teachers will be in touch with you with how you can get involved in the classroom.

Liz did emphasize that every parent volunteer has to sign the Statement of Commitment (student confidentiality) in order to volunteer, and you could learn more about volunteering at Westbrook at one of two new volunteer training sessions she will hold on October 3 and October 7.

Lastly, Liz reminded parents that there is a notebook in the front office into which volunteers should log their hours.

Directory

Marina Bowsher encouraged all families to verify their information by September 8 in order to be included in the school directory.

Other

Co-Presidents Erin Harcourt and Maureen Kramer encouraged parents to check listserv and come to future PTA meeting to hear more about other committees and school events.

Erin and Maureen also made one more plug for parents to join the PTA. Membership. Cost is \$20 and includes directory.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Upcoming Westbrook Activities/Dates:

September 5: Back-to-school Picnic, 6-8 pm
September 9: Grades 1-2 Back-to-school night
September 16: Grades 3-5 Back-to-school night
September 23: Westbrook Re-Dedication, 7-8 pm
September 24: EARLY RELEASE DAY – dismissal at 12:35 pm
September 25: No School – Rosh Hashanah
September 26: Principal Coffee
September 29 and 30: Ledo's Pizza Night
October 7: PTA meeting – 7:30 pm in media center
October 8: National Walk to School Day
October 13: Parent Visitation Day
October 15: Parenting Seminar: Kelly Dorfman
October 25 and 26: FOWS Celebration of Westbrook's 75th
October 30: Halloween class parties