

Westbrook PTA Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 4, 2016

1. Meeting called to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. September minutes were approved and added to the record.
3. Treasurer's Report – Ed Valado

The current bank balance is \$61,825.32. The amount raised from Pay 4 School Stuff is \$30,144.03. The fundraising goal (combination of family contribution, PTA dues, class dues and directly sales) is \$51,165.00. The amount reimbursed to teachers to date is \$4,527.77. Notable large expenses include \$7,654.86 for spirit wear inventory. Spirit wear sales to date are \$1,158.14. As a reminder, individual PTA committee budgets are posted on the PTA website (www.westbrookespta.com).

4. Co-President's Report – Jesse Nickelson and Karen Thornton

Parent Contribution Update

- We have raised only 50 percent of our fundraising goal. We will be sending additional emails, but please remind your friends. Room parents will also be emailing parents. We have also become aware that there are some language issues with the Pay 4 School Stuff website.
- Thank You
 - Valerie Parker and Tracy Schwartz for becoming the 5th grade transition chairs
 - Helene Krasnoff for organizing Ledo Pizza night
 - Katie Funk for working on the school directory
 - Kerry Lawrence for organizing the room parents and the parent socials
 - Grade level social hosts
 - Kelly Fraser for Safe Routes and preparing Trash Fee lunch and giving us all of the dates!
- VP for the remainder of 2016

- We are still looking for a VP for the remainder of this year. If you know of someone that may be interested, please contact Karen and Jesse.

6. Principal's Update: Jennifer Lane

Progress Reports: If your child is in grade 1-5, you should have received an interim progress report. This year, everyone will receive an interim progress report. Kindergarten will receive a similar document at the end of the first quarter. Please don't be alarmed if information is incomplete, since only half the quarter has been taught. Also, please don't be alarmed if they're not at proficiency, since they have until the end of the quarter. If you are concerned, please ask your teacher. Parent-teacher conferences will take place at the end of November.

Halloween: Westbrook's Halloween parade and party will take place on Monday, October 31. The parade and parties will follow the same format as past years. We will send out detailed information later this month, but we are not planning to change anything about Westbrook's celebration at this time. There are other schools that no longer hold Halloween celebrations because many parents have opted out. At Westbrook, we do allow children to opt out since it is our goal to be welcoming and inclusive, not exclusive.

Volunteer Training: We will be scheduling a formal volunteer training. We have not yet scheduled it because we wanted to give parents time to do the online training. Remember, we can't have volunteers that have not completed the training. For the extended day trips it was a scramble for parents to get fingerprinted, but then we were not able to do the field trips due to the weather. Our teachers are planning great trips and for extended day field trips we need a list of volunteers more than one month in advance. This year we are going to closely review all field trips because the volunteer training is so much more involved. There will be a link for more information on the PTA website. The online training takes approximately 30 minutes and you can do it at home. For the fingerprinting, you must go to a MCPS approved site. We will provide as many reminders as possible, including on the PTA website and in This Week at Westbrook. We are hoping that you only need to do the online training once. We do know that each school handling the

trainings a bit different. Please note that parents do not need online training to attend the Halloween party or parade. To volunteer, do the test online and you will find out the confirmation number. If you pass, there is a certificate that you can print out. Then the main office will keep a list of approved volunteers.

Homework: I have had discussions about homework with our teachers and they are really interested in discussing homework with Westbrook parents. My goal as principal is to keep homework consistent across each grade level. One grade has indicated a desire to eliminate homework for that grade, but we know that we are not the only decision makers since homework does have a big impact on the family. We have some teachers who are willing to do a panel before a PTA meeting to start the conversation. I would like to establish a working group to discuss the role of homework, and whether or not to make adjustments, and firm up our guidelines for homework here at Westbrook. I really think it is necessary to have a broad spectrum of parents to discuss this topic. I am ok with not having homework. I don't love homework, because as an educator there is no research that shows that it makes a difference for elementary school students. As a parent, I felt that my children came home tired from working so hard all day. That's my personal opinion and that's what worked for me and my family, but I want other opinions. While there is no data that says having homework is necessary for elementary school, I know it is different for middle school and high school. I will put something out on the list serve about a homework working group and will bring in a panel of teachers at a future PTA meeting. I will pull myself out of the discussion, because I want to look at evidence and needs of the family. From a PTA perspective, it will be important to determine the needs of families who don't speak English and may have a different view about homework.

MCPS Superintendent: We are hearing about a couple of focus areas from the superintendent – child abuse and neglect. And, data and how it supports student and how it is part of a student's overall Elementary milestones and levels of attainment. We will be looking at three levels of data -- classroom, school, and external. We are really expecting to look at milestones at the end of the year to see if students have met two of

the three milestones. This will help to tell us if our kids are making the progress we expect. We will also be looking at grades, school/district math and reading levels as well as the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) and PARCC tests. We'd love if your child hits all three, but we know if they have at least two, they're in a good place. Currently, we do not send home the MAP scores because we haven't fully trained our staff on how to assess the results. They're complex, but if we're developing a specific plan for a child we'll talk to the parents and look at the results together. Some teachers will proactively bring it forward because it will tell you something that the report card may not be. We are still determining if it makes sense to distribute the MAP scores to everyone. We are considering if those the data points you want to look at? Are they looking at the testing tools currently used? The MAP test is given across the country and we feel confident it does tell us meaningful info. It doesn't tell us everything, but it will tell us a lot about reading comprehension and certain areas of math. We don't know as much about the PARCC and will wait to see about PARCC.

Bus Dismissal Policy: The bus drivers have communicated to parents that there is a change in bus policy and the driver will leave until all students have left with a parent/designated adult. If a parent is not present, the bus driver will bring the student back to the school. If a student is permitted to walk home from the bus stop, they must be sent with a note every week. They will also not allow a student to be picked up by a sibling in middle school. This is new and we were not informed of this supposed change. We will check with the transportation supervisor and my supervisor. In previous years, a parent didn't even have to wait for a Kindergartner. This is an existing policy for special education students, not general education.

Principal Town Hall: Will Mrs. Stoll's presentation be posted on the school and PTA website.

Special Needs Students: Parents have expressed an interest in a meeting about resources and information for students with special needs. This includes knowing where your child may be falling "on the

scale," if they have ADHD, etc. Amy Cropp is the liaison and I will work with her addressing this need.

7. Teacher Liaison Report – Colleen Dahlem

- **Kindergarten:** In math we are counting one-to-one correspondence, identifying counting strategies, creating an equivalent set, counting and representing it with numerals and pictures. In writer's workshop, we are in the beginning stages of writing, learning to draw a picture, label with letters / words, and beginning to write sentences. In reading, we have been reading narrative texts and identifying characters and answering questions about key details. In science, we are learning about weather changes and how it affects our daily life. For social studies, we learned about U.S. symbols.
- **First Grade:** In reading, we are finishing beginning of year reading assessments and beginning guided reading instruction. Students will continue to use informational and literary texts to ask and answer questions using contextual evidence. In quarter 1, students will also continue to collaborate during literary centers and small groups to complete a task. There will also be an emphasis on respecting different ideas and materials. In math, first graders will represent any number 1-120 using words, numerals, pictures, and objects. Students will also identify numbers that are one more / one less and 10 more / 10 less from a given number. Students are participating in guided math instruction and stations referred to as "Daily 3," wherein they participate in activities by themselves, with a partner, and in math journals. In writing, students are building stamina as independent writers. First graders are finishing their personal narratives and beginning to write to inform about topics for which they are experts! In science, students continue to develop awareness of the relationships of living things.
- **Second Grade:** In Math, we are continuing to practice 3 digit place value and comparing numbers. Science & Social Studies lessons are integrated as we recognize and describe that water can be found as a liquid or a solid on the Earth's surface and as a gas in the Earth's atmosphere and understand how we can protect Earth' water. In Reading, we are finishing our study of literature with folktale

comparison and understand vocabulary using shades of meaning (synonyms). In Writing, we are authoring our published narratives about a specific event.

- **Third Grade:** We are doing research on a community action topic in order to produce an informative brochure. We are working on 3-digit addition and subtraction in math. In social studies we are learning about a democratic government and comparing the US government to the Roman Republic. In reading we are beginning informational text and using text features as we read.
- **Fourth Grade:** In reading, we are leaving the historical fiction genre and moving to expository reading. For the remainder of the quarter, we will practice determining main idea and develop note taking skills. Writing will include both expository and narrative, with the narrative piece being a short historical fiction story. In social studies, we are starting to look at Native Americans, specifically how environment influences culture. We continue to monitor our eco-columns in science and look forward to our rescheduled stream study field trip on October 13.
- **Fifth Grade:** We are going to Williamsburg on October 19th and Strathmore Music Center on October 25th. Additionally, we are starting to work on energy research projects for the second half of the marking period. The Kids Care Club would like to let you know about the "Manna Canned Food Drive" this week. Flyers will be going home by Thursday. The drive runs through October 28th. The Kids Care Club is organizing it and will be going in to classes to tell the students about it. If any parents have empty boxes at home, we would greatly appreciate them to collect the cans.

8. Committee Reports/Other Announcements

- **Yearbook (Deborah Eichhorn and Joanne Jee)** – We are encouraging students to participate to design the cover for the yearbook. Entries are due on November 4
- **BCC Cluster (Maureen Kramer and Erin Harcourt)** – The second middle school is being built and will be open in August 2017. Next

Thursday, the superintendent will make recommendations about the boundaries. Then the Board of Education will hold hearings. Anyone can attend the hearings, taking place on November 10 and 14. A final decision will be made on November 21. We will send updates via email. There were six original boundary options, now there are 10 options. The boundary committee evaluation includes a specific set of criteria. The superintendent will make his own recommendation, weighing the pros and cons of each. He will not be ranking options. In all of the boundary options, Westbrook students will go to Westland. The full report from the boundary committee is on the MCPS website. The number of students attending Westland will depend on which option is selected. The new middle school is smaller and will accommodate approximately 200 less students than Westland. The overall population at Westland will decrease but population size is really dependent on what is decided for Chevy Chase ES and North Chevy Chase ES because they both include a sixth grade. Westland's population will near 900 – 1,000 students. Currently, Westland is over capacity by a lot. With the new middle school, we are hopeful that there will no longer be a need for portables and there only be three lunches. An important consideration is that once the middle school population is at 1,000 students, the school is an additional assistant principal. So a Westland population of 920 might be worse than a population 1,000 students. The current boundary options do not take into consideration future cluster development, including any plans for downtown Bethesda, the Lyttonsville development, the construction of Metro's Purple Line, and the Chevy Chase Lakes development. Therefore, depending on the boundary decision, the new middle school could be over populated very quickly. We are hopeful that school population will be a part of the discussion of any these developments. As of now, the Westbard development is not a part of our cluster, so it is not included in any discussions. Additionally, the school board will not address developments that are not already built. The largest problem is BCC because it's beyond overcrowded and there is no room for expansion. Finally, we have three cluster coordinators who are very busy and they are looking for help. If there is someone who is interested, please let us know.

- **School Year Calendar** – The MCPS School Board has announced three school year calendar options, including the mandate from Gov. Hogan to start all Maryland schools after Labor Day and to end the school year by June 15, including snow make up days. One MCPS option includes applying for a waiver and starting school on August 28. Beginning the school year two week before Labor Day appears to be off the table. MCPS is hoping to receive a waiver to start school on August 28. The timing of spring break will also be impacted and the three contingency days would be taken from spring break. The School Board is taking comments now and will be voting at the November School Board meeting. To start before Labor Day, each Maryland county must apply for a waiver from the state. The waiver process has not yet been established. The School Board is feeling pressure to come out with the calendar, which usually happens in November. Please send comments along to the School Board. Information is on MCPS website and we will distribute additional information on the school list serve.
- **Carnival (Karen Thornton)** – It is never too early to start planning for Carnival, a wonderful Westbrook tradition. Last year’s Carnival chairs developed a comprehensive how-to manual and have come up with a plan to make sure we’re making the right decisions and getting feedback along the way. I will be sending out more information soliciting volunteers for Carnival. Please note that it is not just about signing up to volunteer, but it is also important for us to get your input about Carnival.
- **Beautification/Grounds Committee (Ami Susan Petrucelli)** – We will work with Ms. Lane for Clean Up Day and bulb planting. This year we would like more community involvement. Please note that any amount of time to help out is appreciated. The grounds have grown and there is a lot more to do. The committee, including Mr. Benny, are trying to figure out how to do manage the additional work appropriately. MCPS comes a couple of times a year for the bioswales and FOWS maintains the courtyard. The baseball field is Parks and Planning, but everything else is a part Mr. Benny’s responsibilities. We do now have a weekend grounds worker due to the weekend activities at the school. Since weekend volunteering can

be hard due to other responsibilities and activities, including sports, we may want to consider taking advantage of the half days to have people volunteer to clean up the grounds. Finally, if people have gas powered blowers, we could use their help.

- **Westbrook Sign** – The missing letters on the sign is a MCPS maintenance issue and we need to follow up on this. We have contacted them twice and have placed a work order. We may also want to determine what is causing the letters to come off the sign (e.g., climbing on the sign) and find ways to deter that activity. Also coming off because kids are climbing on the sign. Bird spikes on the top?
- **Bike Racks** – There has been a suggestion for extra bike racks, specifically for placement at the bottom of the hill on Allan Terrace. If there is budget money, a bike rack can be ordered and MCPS Security will let the school know where it can be placed.

9. Upcoming Events:

October

- October 5th – Walk/Bike to School
- October 8th – 2nd Grade Parent Social
- October 10th – Parent Open House (9:10 – 11)
- October 12th – No School
- October 15th – 3rd and 4th Grade Parent Socials
- October 22nd – 5th Grade Parent Social
- October 29th – 1st Grade Parent Social
- October 31st – Halloween Classroom Parties and Parade

November

- November 7 – Professional Day for Teachers/No School
- November 8 – Holiday/Schools and Offices Closed

- November 10 – Early Release Day for Students
- November 11 – Early Release Day for Students
- November 23 – Early Release Day for Students
- November 24 – Thanksgiving/No School
- November 25 – Holiday/No School

December

- December 1st – 9th – Book Fair
- December 6th – PTA Meeting
- December 26th – 30th – Winter Break/No School

10. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.