

PTA Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2016

- A. Meeting called to order at 7:35 pm
- B. March minutes approved and added to the record.
- C. Treasurer's Report: Susan Higgins
 - 1. **Current Budget Update**
 - a. Currently spending money on carnival.
 - b. The only reason the net is down is because skate night deposit for 2017 has already been paid.
 - c. No further questions on the current budget were raised.
 - 2. **Proposed budget for next year**
 - a. Revenue money is guaranteed to come in next year from fundraisers and dues.
 - b. We have money in reserves. Some of that money has already been set aside for things next year.
 - c. Most committees have the same or similar funding for next year. **Committee chairs please check your budget.**
 - d. Where committees are not spending money, we have tightened up, but nothing is set in stone.
 - e. We will no longer do the charitable program involving the donated backpacks and supplies. Instead we will put the money towards strengthening our relationship with our sister school, Viers Mill, adding on to programs the coat and book drives.
 - f. International Night actually is producing revenue, even though that has not been the goal. The budget might count on that money.
 - g. Also note that we are funding an Artist-in-Residence for the ED students. This year they made a beautiful mosaic with grant support from the Montgomery County Arts and Humanities Council.
 - h. Teacher allocation amounts could decrease in our proposed budget. Data from past years shows that not all teachers spend their money. Currently teachers who are new to the school or to a grade receive \$500, other classroom teachers get \$350 and part-time specialists receive \$150. This proposal would move allocations down to \$450, **\$300** and 150.
 - i. A member expressed discomfort with reducing the teachers' allocations. Orly clarified that these cuts are based on data from recent years.
 - j. Another member suggested that we make a process for teachers who need something but have had their budget reduced.
 - k. Another member pointed out that during years with tons of new teachers, you could be over budget. Tough line to draw.
 - l. Question from the audience: How much money was not used? \$7K went unspent in teacher allocations in the past few years.
 - m. Ms. Lane clarified that the PTA allocation is not the only source of funds for teachers. There is money in the school budget.
 - n. Another cut will be for the Science Committee Teacher Stipend.
 - o. Question from the audience: *Do we have to cut this? Shouldn't we be bringing in more science?* Ms. Lane clarified that this issue is less about cutting science and more about following Montgomery

County rules. A teacher who takes on a paid position in addition to their classroom job may only be paid for a maximum of 100 hours. Most teachers do not have that kind of time to put in on top of their regular teaching hours. To budget a stipend for 50 hours is plenty. And besides, the maximum hourly rate we can pay is \$14.50 per hour. Teachers generally don't jump at the chance to put in more time than already do for that wage. Although some would be willing to donate their time Ms. Lane is uncomfortable expecting them to do so.

- p. There are a few special projects (which are not part of the operating budget) to fund in this cycle, i.e. the courtyard project, enhancing the teacher lounge, and replacing the current drinking fountains with new bottle filling stations.
- q. For the lounge project, money has been taken from the teacher allocations not spent. The project involves reconfiguring the small space, supplying fresh paint. (Caroline Smith has been hard at work on this and will have before and after pictures for anyone interested.)
- r. The new bottle filling stations will allow students to both sip filtered water and use a separate spout to fill a bottle. These will replace up to all 7 current water fountains (which are unfiltered). The cost is estimated at approximately \$7700. This covers the machines. The maintenance includes buying filters for every several hundred gallons, and that is included in the proposed budget. Ms. Lane will check to see if MCPS can pay for the installation of these seven fountains. If MCPS cannot pay for the installation, the PTA would need to cover the price for installation. The only other school in our cluster with these types of fountains is Rock Creek Forest Elementary (a newly built 'green' school).
- s. **Please note we will vote on this budget at next month's meeting. If you have a concern on a specific line item, please email us and let us know.** In the meantime, we will try to get a sense of how the teachers would feel about reducing allocations. Colleen Dahlem will aim to get a sense of that in the next few weeks and report back to us. **And if you are a committee chair, please do check your budget and let us know your thoughts.**
- t. Question from the audience: *What is "Safe Routes to School"?* It is a National Program that we are going to begin to implement here at Westbrook to help drivers and walkers do their best to be safe around the school. For this program, we are estimating that we might need some money.
- u. Other items eliminated in the budget include Aqua Eagles and the 4th grade bay initiative, because we usually get grants for these. But if we don't get the grants for some reason, there is money in the reserves for these programs.
- v. Question from the audience: *How much money is in the reserves?*
Answer from Treasurer: **Currently, \$65,549 in the bank in reserves. If we pass this very budget, funding special projects laid out--even with no auction money next year--\$46K will be leftover.**

- w. Speaking of the auction, a member asked: *Where is the auction money going? And is it still a FOWS auction or is it a PTA auction?* A member clarified that while the money raised from the auction ultimately ends up in the same place, whether it goes to buying prizes for carnival games or directly into funding PTA projects, it is important to consider how we brand the auction--as FOWS or PTA. Another member raised the point that the Carnival Chairs should not be responsible for also organizing the auction in order to make money for the carnival prizes. That is way too much work for two people. We also make a point at the beginning of the year to tell families that we only ask for a one-time donation, so that people do not have to spend excessive amounts of time on fundraisers through out the year. Some members seemed to agree that the way we organize and brand our silent auction should be reconsidered. One member suggested maybe calling it a FOWS auction and putting it under the FOWS accounting system.

D. Principal's Report: Jennifer Lane

- 1. Since the PTA has so much in reserves, the PTA asked Ms. Lane to present a proposal for Professional Development. Principal Lane would like the PTA to consider funding several projects in the 2016-17 school year. She broke down her proposal for using \$20K in a couple of different areas. These are areas that align with our school improvement plan.
 - a. Responsive Classroom Teacher Trainings. Given the positive input from students and parents, benchmark assessments, etc., the Responsive Classroom has seen a lot of success at Westbrook in the past two years since it's introduction. This is due to a lot of work and a good investment. Ms. Lane urges us to consider maintaining that good work and stay on the path to changing our school's culture by continuing to fund the professional development that trains teachers to use Responsive Classroom methods.
 - b. "Walk Throughs." Ms. Lane would like to be able to continue this practice, which she described as very successful this past year. Basically, three times this year, a group of staff members took a walk through the halls, visited other classrooms, and took down data on what's happening here in our classrooms. By bringing their peers in, teachers can get valuable feedback. Staff members who get to observe their colleagues get insight on ways they can improve their practices, as well. Examples of how these findings improved classroom learning include the reorganization of the math block and incorporating higher order thinking into student work. The walk throughs are only possible if Substitute Teachers can be placed in the classrooms while teachers go into other classrooms. That is where the funding comes in.
 - c. Arts Coaching for Arts integration. This would involve both workshops for the entire staff and arts coaching for a team of individual teachers.

- d. *Why does professional development help Westbrook?* Always consider whether we are making a difference for our children as scholars and as people. Professional development provides staff with the tools they need to do a better job in making this difference. Plus the teaching cohort gets stronger. If teachers are happy about their jobs, they will stay here. This is also an incentive to bring the best teachers to Westbrook. Remember that MCPS does not budget teacher development since we are not a Title One Focus school. Westbrook teachers feel very fortunate to get these experiences
- e. Question from the audience—*Westland Middle School teachers will submit an individual request to the WMS PTA for conferences they would like to go to. Should we think about allocating some funds for individual teachers to seek out specific field trainings and workshops?*
- f. Question: *How much freedom do teachers have in how much they implement from Responsive Classroom? Do you mandate that they must use Responsive Classroom techniques?* Ms. Lane responded that our learning progression is results-oriented. We do check up on them and expect them to use Responsive Classroom in order to change the culture of the school. New teachers next year won't know this stuff; they will need to be trained. And with staff here at Westbrook who are fully trained and experienced with Responsive Classroom, training new staff would not be complicated. New staff can be given articles to read and then observe a current teachers class. Then the new teacher can be observed to ensure they are using the methods correctly.
- g. Member – *Wondering if it is a valuable spend, just because we have the money, do we spend it? Are teachers on board? Other issues to consider are 1) If teachers end up leaving Westbrook, are we wasting our money by training them only to have them leave? 2) Are there enough qualified substitute teachers if teachers need to be out of the classroom for training?* Lane replied, this kind of professional development will change the culture of the school. To change a habit really takes time, it doesn't happen over night. If we don't put a little more money in, what was done could be lost. Both arts integration and responsive classroom can really set our school apart.
- h. Several members spoke in favor of spending the money. "This is definitely the avenue we want to take. Definitely where we want to our money."
- i. Question: *Did the teachers vote to do Responsive Classroom?* Yes, teachers did initially vote to move forward with this.
- j. Point from a member: Even if you get 80% buy in from teachers, that's enough. We should not expect full buy on. System-wide and long-range view of staff development is the way to go.
- k. A member pointed out that last year 20K was granted for responsive classroom and arts integration as a one-time ask. It was proposed to membership at that time as a one-time spend, so we need to be sure now if this is something we have the ability to support going forwards.

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I. Also, there was a request of Ms. Lane to send feedback from that \$20K used last year from the teachers and students, if possible.

The PTA Executive board would like for everyone to send us your thoughts, we really want the budget to reflect your priorities. We'll vote at the next meeting.

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2. Thank you for all the staff appreciation, the flowers, gift card raffle, etc. Teachers are enjoying everything!
3. School Art Show, Musical coming up.
4. There will be an extra half day at the end of the school year.
5. If you have any significant things you'd like to ask for from the Board of Education on behalf of Westbrook, now is the time. If we'll have an addition of an administrative staff member, only time will tell. Leyla Kenny reminded the audience that now is the time to ask the board of education again to for an assistant principal.

E. Teacher Liaison Report: Collen Dahlem

1. Kindergarten: In Math, we have been solving addition and subtraction word problems using a picture, a ten frame and a number line to solve and prove our answer. In Writing, we just published personal narratives and have started writing an informational text about our class. In Reading, we are identifying problem and solution in fiction texts. We are also identifying words that we don't know the meaning of and trying to figure out the meaning based on context clues. In science we have been examining external features of humans and animals. In social studies we just finished making recycled art projects to honor Earth Day. We just began a unit of study on culture and what makes each of us special and unique.
2. First Grade: In math, first graders started their geometry unit. Students are investigating different attributes of 2D and 3D shapes.
And also...
Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
First graders have been working
On poetry too.
3. Second Grade: In math, over the next couple of weeks, students will continue to add and subtract 3 digit numbers up to 1000. Students are using strategies including drawing a picture using base ten models, breaking apart the numbers into hundreds, tens, and ones, and using a number line to solve. In reading, students read informational text, including biographies. They will read about individuals that exemplify the academic success skill of effort/motivation/persistence. Students ask and answer questions about an individual and use text features to locate information. In writing, students will write an informative writing piece in which they reach a goal. During these weeks, students recall one of their accomplishments and the effort/motivation/persistence they used to meet that goal. They compose a short informative piece about the accomplishment, including relevant details and information such as the strategies they used to meet the goal. In Social Studies, students will be introduced to historical leaders of our past. In Science, we continue observing our Painted Lady Butterfly larvae. Currently most are in the

chrysalis stage. Please look for an invitation to our Butterfly Release Ceremony.

4. Third Grade: 3rd grade is working on multi step word problems and getting into telling time and working with problems involving elapsed time. In reading we are studying traditional folktales and myths. In science we are looking how animals adapt to different environments. In SS, we are studying budgets and money literacy. In writing we are researching and writing about an issue topic.
5. Fourth Grade: Echo Hill Field Trip where students explored swampy landscapes. Using Noodle Tools (a digital tool to help with citation) to research topics learned earlier this year. American Voices chorus performance.
6. Fifth Grade: 5th has been busy learning about and writing about specialized animal and plant cells this quarter. We had a fantastic journey on the Oregon Trail for our Westward Ho field trip. We are very excited for our visit to Westland tomorrow!

F. Committee Reports

1. Erin Harcourt updated us on the Middle School Boundary study. Last night, 3 more options were presented. Westbrook heads to Westland MS in all 10 options. Demographics look different in all options, take a look. If anybody has input or feedback our committee can incorporate that.
2. Due to time constraint, Amy Cropp will present on PEP classes at the June Meeting.
3. Kari Swenson and Nan Hartman presented our nominees for next year's Executive Board.
 - i. **Jesse Nickelson: Co-President**
Jesse and Idara Nickelson live in Green Acres and are the parents of a Westbrook 4th Grader, Isaiah, and a Westland 7th grader, Laila, who attended Westbrook from K-3. Jesse served as the Vice President of the PTA during the 2015-2016 school year. Jesse was the Director of Social Studies and International Baccalaureate Programs for DC Public Schools. He currently serves as the Director of Youth and Community Initiatives in the Office of Leadership Programs at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.
 - ii. **Karen Thornton: Co-President**
Karen is a proud alumna of MCPS schools and can say with pride and experience that Westbrook is the finest the county had to offer. Karen and Sean have lived in the Westbrook community since they were newlyweds and have 3 sons in 3 schools: Westland, Westbrook, and WCC. As the middle son graduates from Westbrook this spring, the youngest will enter in the fall. Karen's day job is as professor of legal writing at GW Law School. She has held several PTA positions from her first as co-chair of Superchance, to her current roles as VP at Westland and Welcoming ~~Committee~~, chair here at Westbrook, and has made many cherished friends along the way. Karen and all her sons study karate, which keeps her balanced (just barely).
 - iii. **Amanda Miller: Co-Vice President**
Amanda is the mom of Nathaniel, who is in Ms. Dahlem's Kindergarten class, and Zachary, who will be entering

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Kindergarten in the Fall of 2017 and is currently at Temple Sinai Nursery School. They live in Westmoreland Hills with her husband Jeremy. Amanda works as a consultant doing political and policy work. She has spent two years as the Parents Association co-President at Temple Sinai Nursery School and co-chaired their school auction, and she was a room parent this year in Ms. Dahlem's class. She is excited to learn more about Westbrook and become more involved at the school.

iv. **Ed Valado: Treasurer**

Ed is a Bethesda native who attended Westbrook Elementary until 2nd grade. After trying out a few jobs in Maryland (real estate salesperson, archaeologist, Spanish teacher), he moved to Tucson, Arizona where he managed a large bookstore for several years. He now works as Acquisitions Coordinator for a chain of bookstores based in Arizona, a job that allows him to nurture his love of reading and travel to a lot of cool places. Ed and his wife Trena have two daughters – a 2nd grader and an incoming kindergartener.

v. **Christi Cox: Assistant Treasurer**

Christi grew up in Colorado and has been living in the Washington DC area since 2003 and Westgate since 2008. Christi and her husband, Chase, have two girls, Kate and Maddie ages 8 and 7 respectively. She graduated from the University of Virginia in 1996 and the University of Colorado in 2002. She currently works as an attorney for Microsoft and enjoys hiking, skiing, playing tennis, and having dance parties with the girls.

vi. **Amy Fox: Secretary**

A native of Pittsburgh, Pa., Amy has been living in the D.C.-area since attending American University. She and her husband, Chris, along with their daughters, Kate (9) and Claire (4), moved to the Westbrook neighborhood in 2012. Amy works at Edelman public relations and is an avid reader and runner.

4. Carnival Committees Chairs Rachel Hirschberg Light and Laura Kolton are working on inclement weather plan.
- G. Meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.