

Boylston Elementary School

PTO Membership Meeting

September 9, 2021

Attendance: Please refer to sign in sheet.

Agenda:

Item #1: Principal report

Mr. Thompson said that it was a positive start to the school year and that it feels a little more like a typical year compared to last year. Students are doing a nice job learning new routines. He said that the school is working out a few kinks in the afternoon dismissal process including some glitches with the School Dismissal Manager program, and that he appreciates families' patience.

Mr. Thompson said that teachers have been administering beginning of the year benchmark assessments to get a sense of students' current learning. The assessments are typically brief. Teachers will use the data gathered to plan instruction that meets students' needs.

Mr. Thompson also shared that he has been in contact with the Worcester Railers hockey team to try to plan a BES chorus performance at an upcoming game. While the performance is still up in the air, an agreement was made for him to ride the zamboni during the team's home opening game. Students and families are welcome to purchase tickets and attend.

Item #2: Teacher report

Mrs. Gaucher thanked the PTO for their support of staff during the back to school season, specifically for the contribution for the teacher lunch and for the snacks in the teachers' room. She said that while the students were flexible and resilient during last year's hybrid model, staff are excited to begin the school year of fully in-person instruction and at the prospect of some typical school events like assemblies, etc.

Item #3: Beginning of the year recap

Libby Dumais, co-chair, gave an overview of PTO support and spending from the beginning of this school year to the time of the meeting. So far, the PTO contributed funds for a back to school staff luncheon, provided a beginning of the year gift to staff by stocking the teachers' room with snacks and beverages, and provided snacks and favors of bags of Hershey Kisses for the BooHoo/Yahoo Kindergarten send-off. In addition, the PTO is continuing to provide teacher reimbursements for supplies and materials. Full-time teaching staff receive a reimbursement of up to \$100, while new teachers or teachers switching grade levels receive up to \$200.

Item #4: Fall fundraiser overview

Libby Dumais reported that the main fundraiser planned for this fall is a magazine drive. This fundraiser typically raises enough money to fund a good portion of the year's spending. The PTO did not hold this

fundraiser last year to ensure that families had less to worry about while managing the new hybrid learning schedule. The magazine drive will be kicked off with a live-streamed event on September 24th. The first order collection will occur on September 29, with the top earner winning the prize of cutting Mr. Thompson's tie on October 1. The second collection will occur on October 5 with the second tie cutting on Oct 7. The final collection will be on October 12.

Item #5: Bobcat t-shirt sale

Libby Dumais reported that the Bobcat t-shirt sale is underway, with orders due Friday September 10. The PTO receives a small portion of profit from each shirt sold.

Item #6: Ideas for October family activities

Libby Dumais said that the PTO is looking for ideas for a family event to take place in the fall. The board had considered hosting an outdoor movie night, but Boylston Parks and Recreation is already hosting one at the beginning of October. In previous years, the PTO planned a family dance but that isn't a safe possibility due to Covid. Possible suggestions from attendees included planning a Worcester Railers hockey game outing, or a parents-only outing event at the School Yard in West Boylston. A meeting attendee suggested planning a fall outdoor event, such as a pumpkin walk, that families could attend and could also be used to raise funds. The group discussed the possibility of having families drop off carved pumpkins to be entered into a contest, setting up carnival or lawn games, holding a raffle, playing music, selling cider, cider donuts, or other snacks, or even inviting food trucks who might share part of the profit with the PTO. The group felt that this would be a good event for the PTO and BES, and a sign up was circulated to form a committee to begin planning the event.

Item #7: Book fair bake sale

Mr. Thompson said that it was too early to know for sure if there would be a book fair this year. Libby Dumais said that this topic will be revisited at the next meeting.

Item #8: School assemblies

Libby Dumais presented two ideas for school assemblies this year. The first assembly idea is a presentation by artist Rob Surette called Hero Art. He teaches students about the history of five famous figures while painting large portraits on canvas of each one in front of the audience. The school can purchase the art canvases afterwards. The second assembly idea is a presentation from The Science Wizard who appeared on America's Got Talent. The PTO brought this assembly to BES a few years ago, but students enjoyed it. Both assemblies can be tailored to smaller grade level groups like grades K-2 and grades 3-5 if needed. The group discussed scheduling one for the fall and one for the spring.

Item #9: Other items discussed

Worcester Bravehearts family event: A meeting attendee asked if the PTO had considered planning a family outing to a Woo Sox baseball game at Polar Park. Jackie Hoffses said that the PTO had made a deposit to the Worcester Bravehearts for a family game outing event in the spring of 2020 that was cancelled because of the pandemic. The PTO can either use the deposit to plan a family outing with the Bravehearts in the spring of 2022, or ask for a refund. The group discussed that families might be more interested in visiting Polar Park because it is new and because it has a children's play area. This topic will be revisited at a later time.

Trivia night: Libby Dumais asked the group if they felt the PTO should host another virtual trivia night fundraiser this winter. She said it was easy to set up and run and there was positive feedback. The PTO could ask teachers to volunteer submitting questions via the google spreadsheet again. The group agreed that a virtual trivia night would be a good event to plan this year.

Mini-grants for teachers: Jackie Hoffses brought up mini-grants for teachers. In the past, the PTO provided mini-grants for teachers in the amount of up to \$500, with a \$2000 limit for the year. Last year the PTO did not offer mini-grants, as fundraising was limited due to the pandemic. The board felt that mini-grants could likely be offered this year, but they would need to check with both co-treasurers Marie Johnson and Cindy Mackenzie, about the general fund balance before a decision can be made.

Mailchimp: A meeting attendee asked if the PTO has considered sending out a newsletter to let parents know about upcoming activities and fundraisers, and to let the community know more about how the PTO supports BES students and staff. Jackie Hoffses explained that the PTO sent out a monthly newsletter years ago, but discontinued sending it when Mr. Thompson started his weekly blog because he added PTO event information there. The group discussed how email newsletter would be beneficial because it could showcase PTO support of the school to encourage parents to donate to fundraisers and to get involved in volunteering. The service Mailchimp was recommended because it can also be used to create and share flyers for events. The group felt that this was something the PTO should try out.

BES parent swag: A meeting attendee asked if the PTO had considered selling BES Bobcat shirts or sweatshirts for parents to purchase. The group felt that if the items were of good quality, a lot of families might be interested in purchasing or wearing BES apparel. Perhaps an online vendor could be selected so it would be easy for parents to order. The board agreed to look into this.

The next meeting will take place on October 7 at 6:30 in the BES library.

Meeting adjourned 7:50 pm.

Respectfully signed,

Kristin Milton, Secretary