



Douglas Elementary PTO Meeting Minutes

Thursday September 17th, 2026 DES Media Center 3:30 pm

Board Members: Raechel Hardin, President/Becky Starring, Vice President/Renee Russell, Treasurer/Alison Mixan, Secretary/Deb Wall, Member-at-Large/Michaelle Gust, DES Principal

Meeting called to order at 3:30 pm by Raechel Hardin, President

Others in Attendance: 6

Board Members not present: None

I. President's Update (Raechel Hardin)

- A. Diana Smoltz presented a proposal regarding the need for new instruments that would be implemented during 2026-2030.
 1. Diana proposed replacing ukuleles, tubanos, and world drums since many of them are 10-15 years old and therefore showing wear.
 2. She laid out the timeframe (2026-2030) detailing the costs of instrument replacements. The grand total would be \$13,873.50, which would come to \$3,468.38 a year. It would cost PTO \$0 for maintenance fees.
 3. All students would benefit from new instruments as each grade level uses them daily and/or monthly.
- B. Mark Niedlinger addressed the PTO regarding the Demerest property adjacent to DES that the district has acquired. He thinks this would be a fantastic opportunity for PTO to invest in making the property a useable space for all DES students. He has met with Michaelle Gust and Raechel Hardin and explained his vision of building a new field where students can play soccer, football, and other active playground games. Boys and Girls Club could utilize this space as well.
 1. The existing house on the property will be removed and relocated to another property. The removal of the house would not be covered by PTO. However, Mark is requesting that PTO cover the cost for filling the hole and any remediation that would come along with it. In addition, PTO would cover the construction costs for installing a new field. The estimated cost is \$40,000-\$60,000, not including fencing (which would be necessary). Mark mentioned he has gotten three bids for this project and is waiting on one more.
 2. Leah Root, a parent in attendance, suggested approaching a company that could work out a deal to complete this project with DES and earn recognition as a sponsor/supporter of the district.
- C. Mark announced the dates for community open houses regarding the upcoming bond proposal. The dates are as follows:
 1. Tuesday, September 22nd at SHS 6:00pm
 2. Tuesday, October 13th at DES 6:00pm
 3. Tuesday, October 27th at SHS 6:00pm



- D. Raechel has talked with Birdie Holley from Friends of Saugatuck Middle and High School about helping to sponsor youth nights at the high school. We will determine if we are able to add it as a line item. If not, we can explore other ways we can contribute when we convene next week to discuss how we want to spend the excess money in our account.
- E. Raechel will talk to Brian Cochran to see if he has any needs for the gym.
- F. Alaina Hale suggested adding a small line item for extra funds to cover something specific for teachers' classrooms that the budget doesn't cover opposed to a grant.
- G. Alison Mixan represented DES at the district's community night. She felt it gave PTO some visibility and collected contact information from several parents who wanted to be more involved with PTO.
- H. Raechel organized a pickleball tournament as a fundraiser for walkathon; it took place on Sunday, September 20th. A recap of this event will be provided at next month's meeting.

II. Treasurer's Report (Renee Russell)

- A. Renee presented August's treasurer's report (8/1/26-8/31/26) and the year-to-date report as of 8/31/26. As shown in the report, the income from student donations as of 9/18/26 walk-a-thon is \$9100; however, Raechel noted businesses have donated around \$25,000 at this time.
- B. Renee mentioned she has been reconciling the budget behind the scenes, mostly related to walkathon as many business donations have come in. There will be more reconciling in store as student donations continue to be made throughout the next month.
- C. An audit has been scheduled for the third week of October.

III. Principal's Update (Michaelle Gust)

- A. Michaelle previewed several upcoming dates:
 - 1. October 1st: Picture Day
 - 2. October 13th-16th: The fire department will set up a smokehouse outside of the school to educate students on fire safety.
 - 3. October 6th-8th: Parent/Teacher Conferences; October 8th is a half day.
 - 4. October 9th: No school

IV. Teacher's Report (Alaina Hale/Nicole Robb)

- A. Teachers appreciate the raffle being held at the end of the day to eliminate distractions during the school day.
- B. Raechel will email Alaina the incentive information, so teachers can promote and create excitement for the fun prizes.



V. Committee Reports

A. Garden Committee (Kayla Bosch)

1. Kayla has been pricing convertible benches to add to the garden. Each bench is \$300.

B. Parent/Teacher Conference Meals (Jessica Lombardi)

1. Jessica plans to meet with John Tolley who has organized meals in the past. She will create a signup genius to ask for food donations to provide meals for teachers/staff

C. Book Fair (Becky Starring/Jenna Maisonville)

1. Jenna will be taking over the lead next year, and she plans to assist Becky this year. Katy Seely will also assist. They will coordinate class walkthroughs with Stephanie Allen.
2. This year's book fair will take place October 6th-8th.
 - a. October 6th: Open shopping 3:30-7pm
 - b. October 7th: Open shopping 3:30-6pm
 - c. October 8th: Student shopping 8-10am

D. Walkathon Update

1. Student Fundraising (Becky Starring)

- a. To date, over 70 percent of students have registered, and we're currently around 46 percent of our goal as a school.
- b. Dates have been set for several events including Rock Star Recess (possibly October 15th; Kayla needs to double check with Michaelle), donuts with the Douglas police department on October 13th, and lunch with Mrs. Gust on October 20th. Classroom pizza parties will take place on the ½ day of conferences.
- c. Becky has begun the raffle, which keeps kids motivated to earn prizes. Prizes that involve an experience (e.g. drive in a police cruiser) will be announced at the end of the walkathon.
- d. We need someone to take the lead for incentives next year. Perhaps send a group email to parents who expressed interest in volunteering?

2. Kickoff Event (Kayla Bosch)

- a. Kayla felt the event went well, and the kids got excited to see the band in the hallways. She has more ideas in mind for next year. Kayla also mentioned that a teacher suggested noise-cancelling headphones for students with noise sensitivities.

3. Main Event (Miri Kakon, Kelly Schloss, Jennifer Forsythe)

- a. Miri stated that planning is underway. The subcommittee has planned 9 stations representing different countries where kids can get their passport stamped to earn prizes. A signup genius for volunteers has been created and will be sent out soon.
- b. Miri is working on walkathon shirts. Raechel requested a few extras to have on hand. In addition, Miri is also creating water bottles for the top 10 earners.



VI. Additional Items

- A. Raechel plans to email the walkathon committee to schedule a meeting.
- B. Raechel would also like to meet with board members to discuss how we would like to spend our PTO money since there are a few areas that could use funding. It is important to note that our current year's budget will not be affected by how this money is spent. Our meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, September 24th at 3:30 pm.
- C. Leah Root requested to be on the agenda for our next meeting. She would like to discuss screen-free week and the use of cell phones in school.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 pm Minutes compiled by Alison Mixan, Secretary