CMIT General Body PTO Meeting

Key Takeaways

- First PTO meeting of the 2026–2027 school year was held at CMIT South Elementary, with technical difficulties causing a delayed start.
- School administration introduced the communication protocol hierarchy: classroom teacher → grade-level assistant principal → Principal Lewis → Dr. Lance Pace.
- Writing has been identified as a critical school-wide initiative for the current school year, with data showing it as a key gap area across all subjects.
- Several academic support programs are launching: Power Hour tutoring, Saturday Academy, and TAG services.
- Upcoming events include a Read-a-Thon fundraiser, Anti-Bullying Spirit Week, Fall Coat Drive, and "Leveling Up with Principal Lewis" chats.
- The PTO reported a current balance of approximately $11,500, down from a starting balance of $16,000 in July.
- The PTO has two vacant board positions (VP of Communications and Community Engagement) and is actively seeking volunteers.
- A separate virtual session will be scheduled to walk parents through key apps and websites (ClassDojo, Canvas, ParentVue, Clever, etc.).

Discussed Topics

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was opened by Jennifer Epps, co-president of the PTO, who introduced board members present in the room.

- **Details**
  - Jennifer Epps: Introduced herself as co-president and acknowledged co-president Stacey Winningham, secretary Amber James, and teacher liaison Ms. Herbert.

- **Conclusion**
  - The PTO board was formally introduced to attendees for the 2026–2027 school year.

School Leadership Presentation

Principal Lewis, Dr. Watkins (AP for K–2 and Special Education), and Ms. Patton (AP for 3rd–5th and 504 Plan Administrator) presented updates on school operations.

- **Details**
  - Principal Lewis: Outlined the communication protocol — first contact is the classroom teacher (48-hour response window), then the grade-level AP, then Principal Lewis, and finally Dr. Lance Pace (Instructional Director of Charter Schools) if unresolved.
  - Principal Lewis: Highlighted successful events including Back-to-School Night (split over two nights), Grandparents and Special Friends Day (200+ attendees), and National PTO Appreciation Day.
  - Principal Lewis: Reminded parents of safety and dismissal procedures, car line rules, early pickup cutoff at 1:30 PM, and the Lost and Found located in the cafeteria.
  - Principal Lewis: Announced the second annual "Leveling Up with Principal Lewis" principal chats scheduled for November 4–6, split by grade bands (K–1, 2nd–3rd, 4th–5th).
  - Dr. Watkins: Presented writing as the school's primary academic initiative for the year, citing data showing writing as a critical gap across all subject areas. Encouraged parents to engage children in writing at home — discussing topics, planning, and expressing ideas even through pictures for younger students.
  - Ms. Patton: Provided updates on the STEM Fair, including Parent University sessions (hybrid on September 28th, virtual on October 12th, and another in November). Outlined requirements by grade: K–1 students complete a STEM career project board (handwritten); 2nd grade completes a board, video, and paragraph; 3rd–5th grade completes a board, video, and research paper.
- **Conclusion**
  - Communication should follow the established hierarchy, with teachers having 48 hours to respond.

- Writing is a school-wide initiative; parents are encouraged to support writing at home.
- STEM Fair packets with rubrics and dates have been sent home; parents with questions should contact the classroom teacher, then Mr. Holloway, then administration.

Academic Support Programs

Administration detailed three academic support programs launching in October.

- **Details**
  - Ms. Patton: Power Hour tutoring is offered to 1st–5th grade students performing two or more grade levels below, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3:00–4:00 PM, running October 7th through March 18th. Currently 56 of 110 invited students have confirmed. Program is led by Ms. Matthews.
  - Ms. Patton: Saturday Academy supports reading, math, and 5th grade science for grades 2–5, running October 11th through March 21st, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM, led by Ms. Caple-Price. Invitation-based, targeting students at the 41st percentile and below.
  - Ms. Patton: TAG (Talented and Gifted) services begin October 13th for 66 identified students. Pull-out services are available for grades 2–5 only; 1st graders identified as TAG receive in-class differentiation. Assessment begins in 1st grade, with reassessment in 3rd and 4th grades and for students new to the county.
  - A parent asked whether Power Hour would open to additional students if invited students decline — administration confirmed this approach was used last year and would be applied again.
- **Conclusion**
  - All three programs are invitation-based; families will be contacted by Ms. Matthews and Ms. Pinkard regarding TAG scheduling.
  - If October 11th Saturday Academy start date is delayed due to ongoing testing, dates will be adjusted.

After-School Clubs and Parent Volunteers

Administration announced the launch of after-school clubs and a need for parent volunteers to lead them.

- **Details**
  - Principal Lewis: Clubs run on Thursdays from 3:00–4:00 PM and are coordinated by Ms. Pinkard. Parent volunteers are needed to lead clubs, not just support them.
  - A parent asked what is at stake if volunteers are not found — administration confirmed that some clubs may not be able to run without sufficient volunteer leaders.
  - Principal Lewis: Clubs are capped at approximately 15 students each. Volunteer commitment is weekly.
  - Principal Lewis: Parents must complete the county's volunteer approval process (including fingerprinting) before volunteering or chaperoning field trips. Details are posted on ClassDojo by Ms. Reese.
- **Conclusion**
  - Parents interested in leading a club should follow the volunteer approval process and watch for posts on ClassDojo.
  - Without enough volunteer leaders, certain clubs may not be offered.

Upcoming Events and Fundraisers

The PTO and administration outlined several upcoming school events and fundraisers.

- **Details**
  - The Read-a-Thon fundraiser kicks off October 1st. Funds will support Chromebooks, the school store, Rory's Trolley, field day, and field trips. Students will receive an assembly kickoff and bring home a letter with instructions.
  - Anti-Bullying Spirit Week runs October 19th–23rd. School counselor Ms. Chandler will deliver interactive anti-bullying lessons in classrooms. A kindness wall will be displayed in the school.
  - Fall Coat Drive runs October 5th–16th, collecting gently used or new coats, hats, gloves, and scarves. The class donating the most items wins a prize. Distribution will be at Patriots Technology Gymnasium on October 24th in partnership with Bees Essential.

    - Principal Lewis: Early dismissal on Friday, October 2nd — students dismissed at 11:30 AM; enrichment (STARS) dismissed at 1:00 PM; scholars dismissed at 3:00 PM.
- **Conclusion**
    - Parents should watch ClassDojo and the school website for Read-a-Thon details and Spirit Week dress-down guidelines.
    - Coat donation boxes are in classrooms.

PTO Budget Update

The PTO provided a brief financial snapshot.

- **Details**
    - Jennifer Epps: Starting balance in July was approximately $16,000. Current balance at the end of August was approximately $11,500.
    - The merch/swag shop (magnets, T-shirts, hoodies) is performing well, with hoodies being particularly popular.
- **Conclusion**
    - Additional fundraisers are planned throughout the year to support the school's needs.

PTO Membership and Board Vacancies

The PTO highlighted membership needs and two open board positions.

- **Details**
    - Jennifer Epps: The PTO lost two board members since the start of the school year — the VP of Communications and the Community Engagement member.
    - Parents with a background or interest in communications or community engagement were encouraged to email the PTO or indicate interest on the sign-in form.
    - Jennifer Epps: Grade-level GroupMe chats exist for all grade levels. Parents not yet in their grade-level chat should email PTO@CMITSouthES.org with the subject line "GroupMe," including the scholar's name, grade, and parent name.

- **Conclusion**
  - Two board positions are open and need to be filled.
  - All parents are encouraged to join their grade-level GroupMe chat for peer collaboration.

Technology and Apps Virtual Session

Due to time constraints, the planned walkthrough of school apps and websites was postponed.

- **Details**
  - Jennifer Epps: The PTO had planned to walk parents through ClassDojo, GroupMe, Clever, ParentVue, StudentVue, Canvas, and other platforms but want to respect the communities time.
  - A dedicated virtual session will be scheduled within the next two weeks, before the end of October, to cover these tools.
- **Conclusion**
  - The PTO will share meeting minutes on ClassDojo.
  - A virtual tech walkthrough session will be announced and held before the end of October.

"Leveling Up with Principal Lewis" Principal Chats

Principal Lewis announced the second annual series of small-group parent meetings.

- **Details**
  - Principal Lewis: Meetings are held by grade band — K–1 on November 4th, 2nd–3rd on November 5th, and 4th–5th on November 6th.
  - A parent asked whether future sessions could be held at different times or virtually, as the 8:30–9:30 AM window is difficult for working parents.
  - Principal Lewis: Expressed preference for in-person sessions for a more personal experience but indicated openness to exploring different time slots.

    - A parent suggested including a pre-submission form for questions from those unable to attend — Principal Lewis confirmed this is already part of the process; a survey is sent in advance and all questions and answers are shared in a post-meeting slide deck.
- **Conclusion**
    - Sign-up information will be sent out ahead of each session.
    - Alternative times and formats will be considered for future chats.

Safety and Dismissal Reminders

Principal Lewis reviewed car line, arrival, and dismissal procedures.

- **Details**
    - Principal Lewis: Exit car begins at 7:25 AM; students enter at 7:35 AM; gate closes at 8:00 AM. Late arrivals after 8:06 AM require a parent to sign the child in at the front.
    - Principal Lewis: Dismissal gate opens at 12:30 PM; dismissal begins at 2:30 PM. KVS numbers must be entered in the Google Form. Car riders must be picked up by 2:55 PM. All students are released at 2:45 PM regardless of KBS status.
    - Principal Lewis: Parents must not walk up to the back parking lot to retrieve students, call children to cars from the left lane, or stop at the ramp during morning drop-off.
    - Principal Lewis: Morning Enrichment drop-off is at Door 3 and closes at 7:30 AM.
    - Principal Lewis: Early pickup cutoff is 1:30 PM. Parents must notify the teacher and front office in advance.
    - Principal Lewis: Speeding in the parking lot is strictly prohibited.
- **Conclusion**
    - Parents are asked to follow all established procedures to ensure student safety and traffic flow.

Challenges

- Significant technical difficulties delayed the start of the meeting, disrupting the planned agenda.
- The PTO lost two board members (VP of Communications and Community Engagement) since the school year began, leaving gaps in leadership capacity.
- Only 56 of 110 invited students have confirmed enrollment in Power Hour tutoring, leaving a large number of students without confirmed support.
- Parking remains an ongoing challenge at the school, with no immediate structural solution available.
- After-school clubs may not be able to run if sufficient parent volunteer leaders are not recruited.
- The planned parent tech walkthrough session had to be postponed due to time constraints.
- Virtual options for "Leveling Up with Principal Lewis" is being considered.

Action Items

- **PTO**
  - Upload the meeting minutes for parents who could not attend or need to review.
  - Schedule and announce a virtual tech walkthrough session covering ClassDojo, Canvas, ParentVue, StudentVue, Clever, GroupMe, etc within the next two weeks, before end of October.
  - Recruit replacements for the two vacant board positions: VP of Communications and Community Engagement member.
  - Add parents to grade-level GroupMe chats upon request — parents should email PTO@CMITSouthES.org with subject line "GroupMe," scholar's name, grade, and parent name.
- **Ms. Reese**
  - Repost the volunteer approval process (including fingerprinting instructions) on ClassDojo for parents wishing to volunteer for clubs or field trips.
- **Ms. Pinkard**
  - Post information about after-school club volunteer opportunities on ClassDojo.

- Contact families of TAG-identified students (66 students) regarding scheduling, in coordination with Ms. Matthews. (Starting October 13th)

- **Ms. Matthews**
  - Follow up with the remaining invited Power Hour students who have not yet confirmed enrollment.
  - Contact families of TAG-identified students regarding scheduling, in coordination with Ms. Pinkard.
- **Ms. Caple-Price**
  - Finalize Saturday Academy enrollment based on testing data and confirm or adjust the October 11th start date.
- **Mr. Holloway**
  - Distribute Zoom links for the virtual STEM Fair Parent University session scheduled for October 12th.
- **Principal Lewis**
  - Send out sign-up information and details for "Leveling Up with Principal Lewis" sessions (November 4th for K–1, November 5th for 2nd–3rd, November 6th for 4th–5th).
  - Explore alternative time slots and possible virtual options for future principal chat sessions.
- **All Parents**
  - Sign in via QR code (in-room) to ensure scholars receive their dress-down pass for Friday.
  - Virtual attendees, make sure to sign in via the link in the chat.
  - Complete the county volunteer approval process (fingerprinting) well in advance of any planned volunteering or field trip chaperoning.
  - Submit the Student Absent Notification Google Form when a child will be absent.
  - Label all children's belongings with their name and check the Lost and Found (located in the cafeteria) for missing items.
  - Bring gently used or new coats, hats, gloves, and scarves to school between October 5th–16th for the Fall Coat Drive.

- Participate in the Read-a-Thon fundraiser beginning October 1st; watch for the kickoff letter coming home with students.