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MINUTES

January 23, 2023

The January meeting of the Randolph Heights PTA was called to order at 6:12 pm by the president.

Welcome and Introduction

President Katie Russell welcomed all attendees. The following members of the PTA executive board were present:

Katie Russell, president
Julie Orman, vice-president
Phil Wacker, treasurer
Autumn Hubbell, secretary
Beth Tierney, teacher, third grade

Winter and Spring Events

The PTA is getting ready to plan or help support the following winter and spring events. More information to follow.

- Teacher Appreciation Week: May 8-12
- Family Picnic: June 7
- 5th Grade Graduation: June 8
- Kindergarten Celebration: June 9
- Talent Show: TBD

Read a thon

Read-a-thon information will go home in this week's Friday folders. The Read-a-thon runs the month of February and encourages students to set personal goals for reaching a number of minutes read each week. It is also a fundraiser that supports the purchase of new books for the school.

Principal's Update

- *National African American Involvement Day* is February 13, info coming in next week, potential program with speaker. More information to come.

- Teachers have a *Professional Development* day on Friday, and Grace Raymond with the District's Gifted and Talented Program will be facilitating a training on the use of Depth and Complexity Books. This was an effort started in 2020, but the shift to virtual school made it challenging and it was paused. The training derives from the book "Gifted Guild's Guide to Depth and Complexity" by Byrd and Van Gemert
- We're in the midst of *School Choice* season. February 3rd is the priority application deadline. Tours are going well. There have been 40 tours during the school day. The open house was lightly attended with about 30 families, but it was a snowy day, so weather may have played a factor. The encouraging piece was that most of those families hadn't toured yet, so they were new families (in addition to the 40 who had attended tours). Tours across the district were down overall. Notifications will arrive in March. Randolph Heights has taken in quite a few families during the school year. We are full in all but one grade. Encouraging for next year, may be able to get rid of 2/3 split.

Question: How are kids doing academically (scores before and after pandemic)?

It does vary, biggest gap is in 2nd and 3rd grades, which is to be expected (experiencing K or 1st grade year online). The longer we go, the more the gap is shrinking. Kids are getting back into routine (for older grades).

Intervention happens in the classroom. Reading groups. Literacy or Math, working with students 1:1. Students with more need receive more support in classroom. Other supports for Behavior, Mental, or Academic needs are available.

Treasurer's Report

Started the school year with large bank account due to fewer field trips and other events during the pandemic.

Dragon Dash brought in \$32,500 and we are spending that down on expenditures like ST Math, the gaga pit, movie night, fall festival, Accelerated Reader and the music residency, among others.

More information and a detailed report can be found on the PTA website.

Middle School Forum

We invited the three principals Hidden River, Highland, and Global Arts to be on a panel and share their perspectives on middle schools. These are the schools where the most Randolph Heights students matriculate to. In attendance today, we have Teresa Vibar and John Andrastek.

Teresa Vibar, Hidden River
John Andrastek, Highland

Question: How do you describe middle school? The students at that age?

TV: Crazy, chaotic, wanting to push boundaries, feeling like they know everything, but wanted to be treated children is a nice combination.

JA: Miss the hugs on the bus, there is a perception that being at a principal at a secondary school is challenging, but elementary is also challenging as a principal.

There is something important about the middle school model (versus junior high). It is a second most important time in brain development (after toddler years). Have expectations and yet understand behaviors. Every grade level has 2 teams (3-4 core content areas, science, social studies, math). IB program. Students scored 1-8.

Question: Can you explain more about the IB (International Baccalaureate) program?

TV: Both schools are IB, which prioritizes inquiry based learning and global perspective. Developing curriculum based on district curriculum and state standards, but build off their own experiences, and knowledge. It's not about teacher delivery, it's about posing questions, critical thinking skills and self-management.

Question: Teams, are kids together based on their elementary school?

TV: Hidden River, needs construction badly. Keep grades together as much as possible. 6th graders immersed with each other much of the time (but electives all over the building). Construction will keep kids together by grades, but not able to have teams. Grade level is their team level.

But, kids do respond to new kids, and broadening their horizon. Learning how to interact with other kids, building communication skills is also important.

JA: We do have two teams (Spanish immersion, 40% students and Neighborhood teams).

Question: Specific to Hidden River, how will kids get impacted by construction coming up in 2024-2025?

Next year is the last year (LEAP/Wilson will be new interim building, with updates) students will be in the current building.

No pushback from current families or staff. Principal is very excited. If the school hadn't found an interim location, there would be 5 years with portables to try and get construction completed. Instead, they'll be able to quickly gut and renovate. Adding geothermal heating. Student survey will include kids in the design and engineering process. Hopefully back in the building by winter break.

Question: Please share more about your Cell Phone Policy?

JA: Highland enacted a No cell phone policy before pandemic. Lots of folks believed it wouldn't work. Felt like a pilot. Concern about power struggle, creating distress and pressure. Actually, it has been positive. They don't allow earbuds either. Kids will find a workaround. Don't get into a power struggle if they do have it, just ask to put away, have conversation. May take phone, may take phone to office. Parent has to pick it up.

TV: Cell phones are more of a hindrance outside of school. Texting and snapchat and then that escalates and comes to school the next day. Students are allowed to have music and phones out between classes. We're asking when phones in class, they are away. Reach out to parents to touch base about issues. Some teachers don't struggle with it. Parents are calling kids during the day. Not easy to address/monitor.

Question: How do the bigger students do with the younger ones?

Navigate things well. Not a lot of intentional bullying of older to younger kids (doesn't happen like on TV) both answered. Has to get reported if bullying.

Question: Can you talk about clubs at your schools?

JA: Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Black Student Alliance, Student Environmental Activists, People Unified (directly linked to special Olympics), Familia Latinx, Flipside (?) Dungeons and Dragons (student generated, Lego League, Knowledge Bowl, disc golf)

T: Flipside (Play), School Newsletter, standard ones and then surveys students, Drum Line, what students are interested, we seek to provide, staff member needed to supervise, and coordinate with prep time, affinity groups. All clubs will remain in place during construction.

Question: Can you talk about teachers?

TV: Really looking for teachers that understand middle schoolers, and like the developmental age. Changed the interview questions, why teach and why teach middle school (instead of focused on content knowledge solely).

Question: How does lunch work? During lunch, do grades intermix?

JA: Share lunch room with High School, but don't eat at same time.

Wrap-up:

Katie thanked members for attending and for their feedback and ideas. Next meeting will Monday, February 27th at 6pm in hybrid format.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.