



www.rhs-pta.org
contact@rhs-pta.org
Facebook @RHSPTA

MINUTES

October 26, 2021 – Virtual Format

The October meeting of the Randolph Heights PTA was called to order at 7:00 pm by the president.

Welcome and Introduction

President Kristin Fischer Rosel welcomed all attendees. The following members of the PTA executive board were present:

Kristin Fischer Rosel, president
Katie Stromberg, treasurer
Autumn Hubbell, secretary
Tim Williams, principal
Beth Tierney, third grade teacher

Principal's Update

Principal Williams provided an update to the PTA.

Covid Update

Covid numbers are up from last year. A total of 5 cases last year. This year, 24 cases. Delta variant has changed things. A decent portion of the cases are coming from community spread. A total of 3 classes have been quarantined. The decision to quarantine a class is a joint decision by Principal Williams, school nurse Teresa Eide, and school district's covid team. There isn't a specific number. Part of the decision is whether it is determined that there is community spread. If there is, typically the classroom is quarantined. Students are following covid protocols. The hardest part is breakfast and lunch. That may be where community spread is happening.

The news today is that the FDA recommended emergency authorization of vaccines for 5-11 year olds. The CDC will review and give approval next week. That may mean that elementary aged children will have access to vaccination shots within next few weeks, pending how vaccination roll out occurs.

Question about whether the vaccination of students would change protocols in place. That remains unclear at this point. The district will probably gauge how covid cases are going, looking for downward trends, and overall vaccination rates within their student population before changing any protocols.

Question about vaccine requirement for students at district level. The understanding is that the district probably can't while vaccinations for 5-11 year olds remain under emergency authorization.

Question about Binax rapid tests – or general testing at schools. Earlier conversation was centered around parent approval and how to navigate that question. Nothing has changed. The district did send out an email about parent access to rapid tests. Principal Williams will follow up regarding this. Randolph Heights has received vault testing for staff or volunteers, but rapid tests have not yet been received.

Question about volunteers. Parents are allowed to volunteer if vaccinated. There is form that needs to be completed with proof of vaccination or opting into weekly testing. Randolph Heights has opened up to some volunteering opportunities but being thoughtful and prudent about when and where due to ongoing concerns about covid numbers. There is still a fifteen-minute limit for volunteers within classrooms, so volunteer opportunities away from classes or in library are available. Will add form and link to website for interested volunteers.

Bussing Update

Bussing has been much improved. There was some merging of routes which has helped. Only issue is controlling traffic on Hamline with parent drop off and walking lines. That's a controllable issue, so things are going well.

Eagle Bluff and Camp St. Croix

In lieu of the traditional trip to Eagle Bluff (for fifth grades for 2 nights/3 days), Principal Williams has been working with Camp St. Croix instead (looking at a 2 day trip just during the day). There would be opportunities for team building and a high ropes course, with environmental education on the second day. Looking at spring dates. More affordable than Eagle Bluff, could be \$60-70 student. There wouldn't be quite the same experience but could be a good substitute for this year. More to come.

Picture Day

Picture day is now Wednesday, December 1st. LifeTouch experienced a staffing shortage in advance of the original date. We'll also have yearbooks again, Ms. Eisele is collecting pictures of events now.

Digital Learning Day – Tuesday, November 2, Election Day

The district decided that due to covid and the fact that many schools are polling or voting centers, and the preference to avoid bringing outside community members inside schools with students present, that election day would be a digital learning day. Information has been slow coming due to memo of understanding that needed to be in place between the SPFE (the teachers' union) and the District. It is a digital learning day – students are expected to have 2 hours of synchronous learning. At Randolph Heights, there are two blocks for synchronous learning, 9:30-10:30am and 1-2pm. A large number of students will be at Discovery Club – and this was helpful in helping DC staff coordinate the synchronous learning times. All specialists will also push out asynchronous virtual lessons. There will also be office time. This will be a good practice run for snow days, which may be a thing of the past.

Question about attendance and whether teachers or students are taking attendance. That remains a question. More to come as district communicates. Principal Williams provided email with information and codes for access to lessons.

Second Grade Request

Mr. Keith and the second grade team, Mr. Keller-Long and Ms. Weniger, presented a request for financial support.

The background information is that the district is revamping its math curriculum. The district currently utilizes ST Math, which Randolph Heights teachers have access to. The district currently provides ST Math for the top 14 schools (based on usage) in the district, although it may also provide it to schools that request it as well.

The second grade team shared that there is currently a gap in existing curriculum, filled in various ways. The second grade team has found an app that could address this gap - IXL. It allows for differentiation among lessons for students, and real time feedback. This is not the entire curriculum, but a part of it, and complimentary to ST Math.

Ms. Weninger shared that IXL supports standards, student-led choices, and kids respond well to it. Teachers can send lessons that support each student's needs, whether they need additional support or more challenges. Students can move through it at their own pace.

Mr. Keller-Long shared that it's set up like a super worksheet, it will adjust to give an easier question if a student gets one question wrong, and it helps explain why questions are wrong to help them as they are going. There is an annual fee for the app (around \$20/student) that would be just under \$1500 for the entire second grade. The fee is by class.

The second grade team was seeking PTA financial support for the purchase of this app for their second grade classes.

The PTA members broadened the conversation with questions about potential school wide interest, the sustainability of the app's funding, as it is an annual cost, and access and equity across grades.

Question was raised about funding curricula through the PTA. Principal Williams shared that there is a preference to fund curricula through the school's budget, at this time there are not the funds.

Questions about PTA funding for future years, as it is an annual cost, and how sustainable the purchase will be. Question about school wide interest. Principal Williams shared that as he understands it, it is a matter of teacher preference as to whether ST Math is preferred versus IXL. At this time, the second grade team is the team requesting this purchase. Suggestion made to consider the enrichment budget that each grade receives, and whether that could be used toward this purchase.

Lesley Lavery moved to empower the executive board to move quickly on a decision for second grade, as it's been a month since their request, and second grade parents contributed to fun run thinking this would be the purchase. The motion was seconded. Several parents present expressed support for the purchase of the app.

The executive board will consider the issues above and move quickly towards a decision.

Dragon Dash Update

Laura Pinsonneault, the Dragon Dash coordinator, provided an update. To recap, Randolph Heights moved away from contracting with APEX for fun run fundraisers, instead coordinating the fun run and fundraiser in house.

The structure of the fun run was therefore able to provide more community building goals and thoughtful incentives that related to school spirit and community. Students could participate even if not able to fund raise.

The utilization of FundHub to coordinate the intake of donations was a positive experience from the coordination perspective. Parents also provided positive feedback regarding their experience.

The overall lift from the PTA and volunteers seemed similar to the lift even when contracting with APEX. Teachers also felt that it was a much better experience and less work than APEX. Community building activities were preferred, and prizes were higher quality and appreciated.

Thanks to volunteers. The fun run day itself was rather tight. A few notes for improvement about logistics, but overall, the day went very well. Thanks to Laura's coordination.

Katie Stromberg provided a financial update related to the fun run. FundHub charges 8-15% depending on whether parents pay additional processing fees as they donate. So far, the fee for FundHub is hovering around \$3,000, close to \$2,000 was spent on incentives and prizes. In regard to how this year compared to past years and APEX fundraising amounts, Katie provided the following information. The first amount is the amount Randolph Heights received (the parenthetical amount is the overall amount raised). The difference is the amount paid to APEX.

APEX:

2015-16: \$20,474 (37,676)

2016-17: \$19,603 (37,587)

2017-18: \$17,723 (33,984)

2018-19: \$22,747 (43,547)

2019-20: \$25,636 (48,172)

The overall funds raised this year, 2021-22, are hovering around \$30,000. Even after expenses are removed, this year exceeds any prior year utilizing APEX. More updates to come as the fundraiser goes until October 28th.

Spirit Display

In lieu of the fall festival, which will not be held due to the pandemic, the PTA is creating a spirit display in the front of the school. Setup will be Wednesday, October 27th at 4:30pm, and the display will be set out beginning Thursday, October 28th through the weekend. The girl scouts have volunteered to create festive decorations and there will be a selfie or photobooth with Randy. There will be fun signs to celebrate school spirit and the fall season.

Discussion: Parent Connections

Parents shared their highlights from the school year so far.

Wrap-up:

Kristin thanked members for attending and for their feedback and ideas. Next meeting will Tuesday, December 14th at 7pm in Zoom format.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.