Garden City PTA

Middle School PTA Meeting

January 12, 2023

In Person and Zoom

**Call to Order:** 9:15 AM by MS PTA Director, Jigisha Motwani Mongroo

**Quorum:** Met

**Handouts:** Meeting agenda emailed to everyone prior to meeting; hard copy available at entrance to PTA meeting

**PTA News and Events:**

J. Mongroo welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself as Middle School PTA Director. She explained that the meeting was also being viewed via zoom.

Committee Updates:

* PTA President: Zeynep Vitale, reminded everyone that tonight, 1/12, at 7 pm Laura Campbell would be presenting ‘The Power of Raising Confident Children’ via Zoom. Parent University will be held on 1/25, in person at the GCHS; the registration email will be going out later today. The PTA dinner will be held on 3/29 at the GC Hotel.
* Photography: Yearbooks are available to students in grades 6-8. All students will be represented in the yearbook, though 8th graders will be the focus.

*Question: Is there a way to limit the number of emails that the yearbook company sends out?*

Unfortunately, no.

* Reflections: Entries that moved up to the County level are currently in the judging phase.
* Nominating Committee: Seeking members - email [executivevp@gardencitypta.org](mailto:executivevp@gardencitypta.org) if interested.
* Curriculum Committee: in the process of scheduling the next meeting, please contact Trina Coviello with any agenda items you would like to add. The new bell schedule has been successful. The writing curriculum update was given at the last BOE meeting.
* PTA Dinner: The theme this year is ‘Making a Difference’. The event will be held on 3/29 at the GC Hotel. The committee is looking for raffle basket donations (approximately $250 value) and raffle items (approximately $500 value). The committee will also be accepting optional $10/family grade level donations to go towards a grade level basket.

**SEPTA Updates:**

* K. Butt, MS SEPTA Director introduced herself and encouraged parents to join SEPTA. She reminded everyone that there will be a virtual meeting on 2/8 at 10 am. She encouraged parents to use the SEPTA website, [gcsepta.org](http://gcsepta.org), as a resource.

**Middle School Updates: Mr. M. Samuelson, Principal**

* Victories:
  + Social Media Think-tank Updates - cell phone policy has made a marked difference. Parents are encouraged to reinforce at home the importance of not using cell phones while in the school building. Parents were reminded that parents and students may always reach each other in an emergency by using the main office phones.
  + Genius Hour - kickoff was approximately 1 month ago. All 6th graders take an Exploratory class where they are encouraged to create a passion project.
  + Library Update - staff are excited to reopen the space. There have been delays due to materials availability.
  + Learning Common Space - room on 2nd floor is close to completion as well. All classes will have an opportunity to visit this new space during the school year.
  + New bell schedule - smooth transition. Students seem to appreciate a little more transition time.
  + Game Night was a success! Fun was had by all - thanks to the PTA for funding.
* Maintaining Strong Connections:
  + New semester, some new classes - administration is looking to encourage students, parents, and staff to maintain and strengthen bonds. January faculty meeting focused on staff connecting with students
* CBT: Computer Based Testing
  + NYS exams, grades 3-8 moving towards computer based. This year the MS will be piloting a no stakes demo in 7th grade Math and ELA classes in January. This demo will not be about student performance - it will solely be for staff to make sure computers are working.
  + NWEA - students will take this English assessment this month and Math next month.

*Question: How will school monitor inappropriate game playing on student Chromebooks during the state exams?*

Testing is through a kiosk application, so students will not be able to access games while testing. They can not exit the kiosk app or access any other material on the Chromebook until the exam is completed.

* New Clubs and Communications
  + Two new clubs - the Chess club and GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) are now meeting routinely and the Musical is up and running.
  + Winter intramurals have begun and there is no longer a sign up

*Question: My child was not sure about attending intramural, but would like to now - can he just show up or have teams already been formed?*

Normally, students can join clubs mid year (with the exception of the musical), but with these intramural programs, parents are encouraged to reach out to Mr. Tullo so he can maintain a safe student to staff ratio.

* + Club schedule and Cafeteria menu is available on the website, updated monthly.
* Coming Up
  + GC Cares-a-thon - great opportunity for students to earn community service by either volunteering at a table or participating in activities and collections. Students manning tables can potentially earn up to 3 hours of community service, while students attending can earn up to 2 community service hours by visiting 8-9 tables. There is currently a wait list for the event - please note only students currently at the MS may attend. If anyone registered to bring children not students of the MS, please adjust your sign up.

*Question: How is outside community service documented?*

A document was sent via Parent Square in October that can be used to log hours. Document can be found by searching in Parent Square.

* + Benchmarks - there is no formal midterm session to avoid shutting down the educational process for testing. Rather, some classes will have cumulative assessments - ‘Benchmarks.’ Cluster teachers will coordinate with each other so as not to overwhelm students.
  + Winter II Sports deadline 1/17=
  + 8th grade party will be held Friday, 4/21. Staff and PTA are planning a fun event!
* **SchoolTool tutorial** - M. Davola & L McGuire presented an informational powerpoint on how to use SchoolTool through the app and on the desktop. This presentation is available on the district website. Parents can view grades and schedules for students in grades 6-12. They can also access contact information for teachers and counselors. Parents may also access assessment scores by clicking on the ‘E’ (desktop only, may need to enable pop up blockers). There seems to be a lag time for password reset - staff is looking into this, but for now, requests should take about 30 minutes. Call IT office with any questions.

*Question: Can you see past grades?*

Yes.

*Do students have their own account?*

No.

*I used to receive notifications when grades were posted, but now I do not. How do I get them again?*

The app was updated, so perhaps notifications were reset. Suggested to check notification status or call IT department if more assistance is needed.

* S**tudent Square App Intro for 8th grade parents** - similar to ParentSquare, the district is transitioning to StudentSquare for staff to student (grades 9-12) communications. Reminder emails went out in the Fall for students to join. Teachers are able to directly message students. Counselors have access as well.

*Question: Is this replacing the Remind app?*

Yes.

* The district is moving to a new website , which will be streamlined and more user friendly.
* **Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP)**
* Dr. E Cascio, Science Curriculum Coordinator, detailed this exciting K-12 interdisciplinary program that is in it’s second year. Over 60 group projects were submitted to our local committee who then voted for one project to be sent to Washington, DC and then Space. K-12 classes are involved in the project as well - they are working on patches that will be sent to space. There is also a t-shirt design contest - students vote on which t-shirt design they like best.

**Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 AM