

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

Meeting Minutes: Brooke McHugh

PTA News and Events:

J. Mongroo welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself as Middle School PTA Director for the current year and next school year. She shared her email, middleschool@gcpta.org should anyone want to reach her.

- **Membership:** Please join PTA (www.gardencitypta.org) and SEPTA (<https://gcsepta.new.memberhub.store/store>) Membership helps us support your children through senior year.
- **Photography:** We just completed 2 successful photo days. 7 parent volunteers helped both days run smoothly.
- **Legislation:** First meeting will be held in October.
- **Health & Safety:** Pass the Flash campaign is the current focus. If anyone would like a lawn sign or magnet, email the PTA, middleschool@gcpta.org. Fire Safety will be the next focus of the committee.
- **Reflections:** Donna Krauss, HS representative, shared the topic this year: 'Show Your Voice.' Please encourage your student to participate. There is a marked drop off of submissions after elementary school despite the talent in the middle and high schools. Deadline to submit is November 1st.
- **Sportswear:** Sale is underway! Deadline is October 1st to order. Upcoming Cash and Carry at Stratford and Locust schools.
- **Curriculum:** Committee works across schools with the district to implement priority areas. Currently focusing on educating students and parents about Erin's Law - a state law focused on the prevention of childhood sexual abuse, School Spaces - how schools can best utilize school areas, and Math and Writing curriculum - how schools can best help parents support students.
- **Open board positions:** Nominating Committee - members are responsible for selecting people to serve you on the board. Time commitment - 3 meetings/year.
- **Zeynep Vitale, PTA President,** shared the current schedule of presenters for this year: a three part series with Laura Campbell who will discuss anxiety and the teenage brain - October 19th at the All Schools PTA meeting, December 4th via Zoom, and January 25th at the Parent University; Dr. Dewey, an addiction specialist, will have an evening presentation on November 2nd for both parents and students; David Flood will discuss social emotional learning on November 21st and November 22nd. Reach out to Ms. Vitale if you have recommendations for additional speakers. There will be an all schools PTA meeting on October 19th at the Middle School, 7:30pm. The 6th grade welcome back party will be held On September 30th and the 7th grade party will be held on October 14th. Sign Up Geniuses will be emailed out soon.

SEPTA Updates:

- **K. Butt, MS SEPTA Director** introduced herself and encouraged parents to join SEPTA. She highlighted the Best Buddies program, which helps students learn valuable social skills to help them interact appropriately with peers. Two events planned are Zumba on Election Day and Theater Games on Veteran's Day. The activities are free to SEPTA members, a fee for non-members. All students are invited to attend. The first general meeting will be held Thursday, September 22nd at Stratford.

Middle School Updates: Mr. M. Samuelson, Principal

- School opening went smoothly. Thank you to the PTA for the balloon sculptures on the first day of school. The Beautification Committee, consisting of about 30 students, created post-it-notes for every locker - each student received a positive message for their first day! PTA/SEPTA School Supplies program was a success.
- Making Connections: We welcome back returning staff members - Ms. Gallino, Ms. Roth-Ramos, Ms. Rugen; we also welcome new staff members - Ms. Berardi, Ms. Ribeiro, and Ms. Young.
- Getting to know team: Administration encourages parents to reach out.
- Developing Communication Structures: Mr. Samuelson will send a summary email out each Friday afternoon detailing important events. E-blasts with time sensitive information will come out mid-week, if needed.
- Meeting Our Students: Staff is visible throughout the building. A new format for BTSN encouraged self exploration.
- Teaching and Learning: Building team teachers are able to track trends and are available to meet in person or remotely - parents are encouraged to reach out to the team with any concerns.
- Supporting Character Development: Guidance and PTA supporting programs assist students with making positive choices. Thanks to parents and staff, the new cell phone policy is a success. With few exceptions, students are not using their phones during the day. In case of an emergency, students can always be reached by contacting the main office.
- Strong Teaching Techniques: Using the following methods - Socratic Seminar, Student Dialogue, SSEP, Reader's Workshop, Exploratory and Genius Hour (period 9, 4 day rotation of Math or English enrichment and Genius Hour - students are encouraged to explore and area of passion, become positive academic members of the community, and explore google product interface.)
- PaySchools Central: Ms. Intinoli gave a slide presentation about the cafeteria program and walked the audience through the PaySchools platform. The presentation and a FAQ will be posted on the district website. Please reach out to Ms. Intinoli should you have any questions. D. DeCapua stressed that while the Free Lunch for All program has ended, if your family qualifies for free or reduced lunch, that is a separate program. Please reach out if you need an application.

Questions regarding PaySchool Central and the Cafeteria program:

- *How does app know which school my child attends?*
The app is pre-programmed - students are attached to a school.
- *Is there food available for kids with allergies?*
There is an allergy binder that students can look at. They can go to the day of the week they are interested in and see what foods will be available. The Middle School is an all nut free facility. Tiffany, the cook, can answer any student questions.
- *Can you add money to your student's account without setting to auto replenish?*
Yes, you must select 'auto-replenish' to enable that function.
- *Do you still accept cash or check?*
Yes, a student can give cash or check at the register to put towards their account, which will avoid the transaction fee incurred when adding money to the account online.
- *Is everything offered in the cafeteria available as a pre-order?*
No, only the more popular items are available pre-order. There is a refrigerated to-go case that has pre-made sandwiches as well as a 5 week cycle hot menu.
- *Can you order more than one meal on the app?*
No, through the app, you can only order one meal, but you can have as many meals as you want.
- *How do students access their account in the cafeteria?*

Students enter their 6 digit student ID number in the keypad at the register.

- *Can students have extra time to eat lunch if they need?*

No, school staff have found that they do not need extra time to eat lunch.

Parent Square Slideshow: Mr. M. Davila and Ms. L. Maguire, Technology Staff Developers

- The slide show presented today, as well as the slideshow presented in previously held webinars, will be posted on the district website under the 'Parents' drop down menu under 'Resources for Online Learning'. Please reach out to Mr. Davila or Ms. Maguire should you have any questions regarding ParentSquare.

Questions regarding ParentSquare

- *If you missed the email sent over the summer with the invite to join ParentSquare, how can you join now?*

The technology team will send another email invite out in the next few weeks.

- *Should students download ParentSquare?*

No, there is a student version, called StudentSquare, that they should download. High School students will still receive emails from teachers if they do not download the StudentSquare app.

Guidance Counselor Presentation: Mr. V Tumminello, Ms. M. Ingoglia, Ms. K. Whitson

- Mr. Tumminello, 6th grade counselor, introduced himself and welcomed new parents. Encouraged parents to email him to arrange a phone conference if necessary.
- Ms. Ingoglia, 7th grade counselor, stressed to parents that the 7th grade curriculum shifts more responsibility to the student. She asked parents to encourage their students to become advocates for themselves. She advised parents may see lower grades or increased anxiety and stressed that the Middle School is a safe place for them to figure out their learning style. Homework Club is open to all students and is held Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, 3:30 - 4:30 in rooms 101 and 119. Pickup will be at the main entrance. The program is geared towards students who may not understand a concept, or need help with a project or homework. This is in addition to extra help offered by classroom teachers. Clubs and activities are up and running. Descriptions, times and days held are listed on the district website. There is no formal sign in, students should just show up.
- Ms. Whitson, 8th grade counselor advised that this is a big year for 8th graders. Academics have ramped up as they prepare for high school. The classes they take this year will determine the level of classes they will be placed in in high school. She encouraged self-advocacy as another way to prepare for high school.
- Unity Day will be held on October 19th. Students are encouraged to wear orange to show they are united against bullying.

Guidance Questions/Comments:

- *When can students meet with their Guidance Counselor?*

Counselors are in the hallways in the morning and in the cafeteria at lunch. Students can also visit the counseling office during HomeBase, or can leave a message with the Guidance secretary if their counselor is not available.

Student Spaceflight Experiments Program (SSEP)

- Dr. E Cascio, Science Curriculum Coordinator, detailed this exciting K-12 interdisciplinary program that the district first participated in last year. 7th grade students worked in groups to develop a microgravity experiment with one project selected to be sent to the International Space Station for

astronauts to perform. There was a t-shirt design contest sponsored by the PTA. The winning design was printed on t-shirts that were distributed to all 7th graders and staff members. Art classes in grades K-12 designed patches to be worn by astronauts in space, and an essay contest for students in grades 6-12 were also part of the program. A trip to the Cradle of Aviation and announcement of the winning experiment completed the program. Dr. Cascio shared that current 7th grade students have already begun working on their space projects while K-12 students will begin working on their patch designs soon. An Air Space Engineering class has been opened in the high school to further support students interested in this field.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 AM