

Danbury City-Wide Parent-Teacher Organization
Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 7, 2016
6:30 PM
Administrative Center, 63 Beaver Brook Road

Attendance: Lynne Lukasik (C-W Co-President/DHS), Rich Matzinger (C-W Co-President/DHS), Janet Hamilton (C-W Treasurer/DHS), Rachel Chaleski (C-W Secretary/AIS), Scott Keating (Great Plain), Paul Salvatore (Great Plain), Sharon Amalfitano (Shelter Rock), Tim Seibert (King Street), Amy Sturdevant (Pembroke), Mary Ann Strattnner (Broadview), Victoria Ceylan (Stadley Rough), Kathy Snow (WMSA), Terry Budlong, Dr. Sal Pascarella (Superintendent),

Call to Order

- ✓ Meeting was called to order by Lynne Lukasik and began at 6:38pm.

Welcome/Introductions

- ✓ Lynne welcomed everyone. Introductions were made at this time.

Approval of Minutes

- ✓ Paul made a motion to approve the September minutes. Janet seconded. All were in favor.

Treasurer's Report

- ✓ There was no activity since the September meeting. The balance remains at \$751.38.
- ✓ A notice regarding this year's \$25 dues was sent today. Janet has already received a few payments. With each year, the distribution list and response from schools has improved.
- ✓ Amy made a motion to accept the Treasury Report; seconded by Rich.

Superintendent's Report

- ✓ After a long process, the modules for Shelter Rock were finally approved. Production has already begun, so the four additional classrooms should be installed in December. Space will then be reallocated within the school.
- ✓ Discussion began last year about the Versatran App, a system that manages student transportation. It is currently being piloted at one school. Parents can access the app on their phone to receive messages regarding the location of busses. A question was asked about situations where students switch busses. Dr. Sal said that there will be some idiosyncrasies to work out and clients that already use the system say that the program will adapt with usage. He is hoping that this will be instituted for all schools in December.
- ✓ Work on next year's budget is underway. In the past few years, the district attempted a differentiated budget. There are some schools that are larger than others and their staffing needs are not the same, specifically concerning nursing and clerical help. This year, the district will look more closely at making those distinctions in the budget process.
- ✓ The construction at the high school continues to move along well. Dr. Sal gave a brief update on a new foundation, front entrances and design of the theater in the round that

will seat 300 persons. The addition will provide a venue for community presentations and activities. The architect will be presenting to the Board of Education sometime in the next few months.

- ✓ Our enrollment continues to grow by about $2\frac{1}{2}$ % per year. Two additional modules were ordered for Shelter Rock and more will be added to a few other buildings. The district is working with a designer to possibly incorporate multi-complexes. This may allow consolidation of some programs (e.g., the Early Childhood Center), which would provide some space within the schools. The problem is finding the space to put them.
- ✓ There is currently a study underway, which should finish soon to aide in the budget process.
- ✓ A question was asked about the estimated completion of the high school freshmen wing. Dr. Sal informed the members that it should be completed by the spring of 2018, so that it will be in use by the fall of 2018.
- ✓ A question about exposing a school (especially at the elementary level) with no nursing staff was also posed. Dr. Sal reassured members that would not happen, but time may be shifted where multiple nurses are on staff.
- ✓ The 2017-18 Calendar has been posted on the district's website.

Guest Speaker: Terry Budlong, Director of Prevention Services, MCCA, Inc.

- ✓ MCCA, Inc. is a treatment facility in Danbury for substance abuse and gambling and works closely with the local substance abuse prevention council, Stand Together Make a Difference (STMAD), a group of volunteers who represent various sectors in our community. Their objective is to reduce underage drinking and drug use. Terry gave an overview of the outcomes of a survey done at the high school. Terry spoke about why kids use drugs, gave an overview of development assets, talked about survey results and next steps. Kids turn to drugs or alcohol to feel better, whether they are sad or stressed. The adolescent brain is affected by outside substances more than any other brain and can cause short- and long-term damage as it is still developing. Adolescents need only consume half as much as an adult to suffer the negative consequences of a substance. This is researched based and supported by facts. In the long term, substance abuse increases depression, social problems, suicidal thoughts and addiction.
- ✓ We, as parents and community members, can help our children by understanding developmental assets, building blocks for healthy development. Terry provided a handout in English and Spanish that lists 40 Development Assets categorized by External and Internal Assets. Research has shown that the more of these a child has, the less they will engage in risky behaviors. These assets are scientifically based on experiences, opportunities, character traits, relationships and skills. They are measured by a comprehensive student survey given at the high school every three years. The Search Institute provides this survey globally and is now available online. The number of developmental assets for DHS students has increased in 2016 from 2010. Students with more assets record less substance abuse and vice-versa. This is a community effort, including the school system, Board of Education, and law-enforcement, but parents are still the most influential in a child's life. Terry stressed the need for parents to talk with their

children. Youth perception is based on parental attitudes. Many kids are experimenting even though we are seeing a downward trend of substance abuse. Danbury shows low levels compared to state and national statistics.

- ✓ Flyers were distributed for a presentation titled "Danbury's Youth Matters." The panel discussion includes a parent, a high school student, a high school resource officer and a Danbury police officer. It is being held on Monday, December 5, at 6:30 at the Danbury Police Dept. Community Room. The event is open to the public.
- ✓ Terry is available to do other presentations hosted by any PTO, school, church, or other community group. It is especially important to reach kids at a younger age. Research shows that kids are exposed to substances as young as 13 years old.

City-Wide PTO Facebook Page and Website

- ✓ A Facebook page was set up for the purpose of sharing meetings and events. Please find us at <https://www.facebook.com/DanburyCityWidePTO>. It is not open to incoming messages or posts.
- ✓ Rachel will work on acquiring a website to also post meetings, events, bylaws, etc. Suggestions for other information to be included were PTO officers, e-mail addresses, PTO happenings, Treasury Best Practices, etc.

Debrief "Meet the Candidates Night"

- ✓ Meet the Candidates Event that was held on October 18th went well and was well attended. All of the candidates, except for one, were present. There were about 137 attendees. Janet offered a district look-up. Overall, it was agreed that it was a worth-while event that more people should take advantage of.

PTO Treasury Best Practices

- ✓ Janet is working to provide all PTO's with sample procedures in order to protect accounts and officers. If any PTO treasurer would like assistance, please contact Janet or anyone on the City-Wide PTO. Rich gave an example of how to organize bookkeeping. If a PTO is a registered 501c3 non-profit organization, they must file an annual tax return. Failure to do so will result in revocation of the status and the PTO would have to re-apply.

CT Ballet Assembly Programs

- ✓ Brett Raphael offers assembly programs for schools. He will present at the January City-Wide meeting. Lynn will provide information via e-mail. The assemblies are geared towards younger kids.

"Danbury's Youth Matter" - 12/5, 6:30pm, Danbury Police Dept.

- ✓ It was agreed that there will be no December City-Wide PTO Meeting. Please join us for "Danbury's Youth Matter," a presentation with panel discussion on student attitudes and behaviors hosted by Terry Budlong, Director of Prevention Services, MCCA, Inc. Flyers were provided. Lynn will provide a digital copy.

Updates from School Representatives

- ✓ The PTO reorganized at the Westside Middle School Academy. The Student Council is holding a dance next Friday. The PTO may hold a fundraiser where they sell bricks for the front walkway to celebrate the first graduating class.
- ✓ Great Plain held their first PTO meeting at the beginning of October. Since then they have organized several fundraisers (pies, wrapping paper, Krispy Kreme, poinsettias, Chick-fil-A, a silent auction and book fair). There are about 6 - 8 parents who join the PTO executive board at meetings. Meetings have been scheduled around other school meetings, so that parents might attend both. The majority of the funds raised goes toward school day trips and other student functions. The 5th grade raises funds through 3 - 4 fundraisers to cover the cost of their NY trip, which includes a boat ride, dinner and show.
- ✓ Shelter Rock recently held a fundraiser at Bounce. It was very well received by families and easy to coordinate with the owner. It raised about \$550. The PTO generally focuses on the easily-coordinated, community-building fundraisers. Last year, they held one at Buffalo Wild Wings and have done hockey nights in the past. They will also have a 5 & Below fundraiser. Closer to the holidays, they will do gift wrapping at Barnes & Noble, while collecting donations. They also sell pies, cookie dough and Butter Braids. This year, the school received a new interim principal and she has been received well by families. There was a Halloween safety presentation done by the police department. PTO meetings were offered after school, since many parents pick up their children. Several more parents came to the meeting as a result. Children were welcome to come to the meeting and were offered snacks and a craft. National Honor Society students will assist with the bookfair and bake sale.
- ✓ King Street had over 400 people attend their Welcome Back Picnic. It is a break-even event, where kids saw police, fire, and military vehicles. They continue to hold a wrapping fundraiser, although sales have declined over the years. This year it raised about \$7-8k. They also sell Yankee Candles, which raises about \$5k. A wine tasting event at Max Wine & Spirits was held. Tickets were \$20 per person. Attendees were offered food and also received a 15% discount on purchases. They will hold a Titans hockey event after the holidays and an Apex Fun Run in March. In the past, the PTO has paid for various technology (iPads, smart boards) for the school, as well as subsidized field trips. They have reallocated most of the funds to cover the costs of assemblies and teacher grants. The principal has requested a new school sign, which must be approved by the district. Meetings were offered at both times of the day with a call-in option. Historically, the PTO carries funds over to the next school year.
- ✓ Janet spoke about an event for DHS students at Escape 101, which went well and was a great team building activity.
- ✓ AIS successfully completed the Apex Fun Run in September, which ran for two weeks. It raised enough funds that this will be the only fundraiser for the school year. Last year, several AIS parents took part in the Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI). It is a free 20-week course, which includes family dinner and children's program. Rachel and Vicky both graduated in last year's class and said it was a valuable experience. Flyers and brochures were provided for each of the members to share with the PTO's.

- ✓ The DHS PTO has a goal to spend half its funds by the end of the calendar year and the remaining by the end of the school year. The goal is to not have funds carry over to the next school year. A survey was offered to students and teachers on ways to spend the funds raised by the Buick Test Drive fundraiser. The PTO is considering a water refill station and/or charging stations. There have been two meetings so far, one was a college planning informational session. They will hold fundraisers during Parent Teacher conferences. The next meeting will have an informational piece on Internet Safety.
- ✓ Dr. Sal confirmed that the DHS commencement ceremony will take place at the high school this spring. There will be some time changes in the schedule.
- ✓ Fundraising at Pembroke has declined. The PTO held a Spooktacular event around Halloween. They will hold a bake sale and donations collection on Election Day. In the past, the PTO has purchased 20 Chrome Books per year for the school. They are usually purchased towards the end of the school year, but the principal has requested that these be purchased sooner. They hope to hold a spring auction that offers activities with the teachers. Teacher involvement has also declined.
- ✓ The families at Broadview Middle School are happy with the new principal. The PTO is working to reestablish itself and working on obtaining insurance and 501c3 status. They currently have temporary insurance. A wrapping paper fundraiser was held in the fall. Mary Ann expressed that families are inundated with fundraisers from the various individual groups. The Student Council sponsored the first social/dance. Fundraisers that included mums and cookie sales were done to raise money for the theater production. Other fundraisers go to support the chorus trips. The PTO is looking to engage more parents.
- ✓ Stadley Rough PTO calls upon the DHS Key Club for babysitting at events and meetings. The contact is Carol Glintenkamp, who can be reached by e-mail. Students are required 4 hours per month of community service. Through fall fundraisers and a silent auction, they have saved funds each year. Last year, the PTO purchased a 6-bay swing set. They are currently saving money to invest in the kindergarten playground. Vicky also works at Hayestown, where a new playground set was installed through various sponsors. Stadley Rough PTO will purchase new stage curtains and ask teachers for wish lists. There is a core group of parents that keep the PTO active. Vicky is looking to make changes to the silent auction by possibly doing a live teacher auction.

Other Discussion

- ✓ It was asked if other PTO's carry insurance. Several of the PTO's use insurance offered by PTO Today. PTO's are not required to carry insurance, although they would be at risk of liability and lawsuits. Insurance protects its officers against embezzlement, theft, injury, property damage, etc. It was suggested as a best practice to have insurance.
- ✓ Dr. Sal pointed out the new graphic displayed at the administrative center that outlines new goals to align the district for what is happening for student learning, teacher professional learning and organizational learning at each elementary, middle and high school levels. There is a major focus around literacy and trying to close gaps in phonics education. Every principal has an improvement plan based on the district goals.

- ✓ Vicky mentioned that Danbury Youth Soccer provides equipment for the after school programs at the middle schools and unified sports program. She asked how they might be able to put up signs for registration at the schools. Dr. Sal said that they would need to contact Dr. Glass.
- ✓ Dr. Sal also mentioned that the district is still working on recovering the money lost by high school students and chaperones who had paid to travel overseas on a school trip. A lawyer was hired. The travel insurance that was purchased did not cover the cost because the trip was cancelled before it happened. About \$125k - \$130k is owed by the travel agent who has declared bankruptcy. Any questions should be directed to Dr. Sal or Dr. Glass.

Next Meetings (All meetings are open to the public)

- ✓ Board of Education Meetings: November 9 & 22
- ✓ "Danbury's Youth Matter": December 5 at 6:30pm at Danbury PD
- ✓ City-Wide PTO: January 9, 2016 at 6:30pm

Adjournment

- ✓ The meeting adjourned at 8:28pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Rachel Chaleski
City-Wide PTO Secretary