

PTO Minutes for Montessori School of Iowa City 2/16/2010

The meeting began at 7pm, in the lunch area. Attendees included: Principal Gordon Cook; PTO Co-Presidents Lucy Wibbenmeyer and Samantha Norris; PTO Secretary Robin Clark-Bennett; teacher Denelle Thomas; Board member and parent Kate Dale; and PTO members Lanna Carroll and Amy Keber.

I. Old Business

A. International Festival:

- The event was very successful, and a tradition worth continuing in future years. However, some parents raised concerns about the baskets for the silent auctions. It was a lot of work for room parents to prepare them and persuade other parents to contribute to them. Room parents had also become the default coordinators for each country's food and craft, which made the basket collection and preparation more difficult. In the end, the baskets may not have raised enough money to make them worth the difficulty.
- Denelle noted that one year in the past, all the students studied the same artist, maybe Jackson Pollock, and each class contributed to a mural that was sold in a live auction at the international festival, outside by the playground. There was also a silent auction with baskets inside, that year. Denelle will ask the teachers for an opinion.
- Lucy said one parent mentioned the idea of donating gently-used or never used items for the auction, rather than buying items for the baskets. Kate said the school asked parents to donate to a rummage sale in past years, though Lucy said the rummage sale was a lot of work for little return.
- Amy suggested that if the food is a success, maybe some parents would make two batches – one to taste, and one to sell. Others agreed that, particularly in the case of baked goods and deserts that could be well-received. Denelle added that for teachers, it would be easier to involve children in preparing art and/or baked goods.
- Lucy suggested that for next year, there should be assigned coordinators, not the room parents. Denelle will ask teachers if they might be willing to be coordinators for each country/continent booth.
- There was some discussion about how to also make the event more educational, since few children stopped to look at the tri-fold information about each country/continent. Dr. Cook suggested we could leave the tri-folds up for 1-2 weeks after the International Festival, maybe with some examples of their respective crafts. Amy suggested the idea of having the children do a scavenger hunt related to the countries.

B. 2010-2011 Room Parents and PTO Activities

- Lanna suggested that it might be useful to recruit people this spring to be next year's room parents. The room parents would then be able to help welcome new parents to the classroom, and recruit parents at the beginning of the year for the various PTO events throughout the year. Dr. Cook reported that many of the room assignments are nearly completed for the fall, so it would be possible to recruit from among parents who are planning to attend in the fall, and would provide continuity. Kate suggested we ask the teachers to recruit a parent (or co-room parents) they feel would be good candidates. Robin wondered if we have a job description for room parents; Lucy says she has a written description, although it varies depending on the teacher.
- Lanna also wondered if the PTO has a booklet that describes all the PTO activities for the year. Robin agreed that would be a very useful addition to the sign-up sheets, and could provide more descriptions of the events. Lucy will work on this

C. Barnes and Nobles gift wrapping fund raiser

- Not recommended for the future. Only earned about \$90 – it would have been better in the afternoon, but probably not worth doing in the future.

- However, if the school signs up in the fall for a school coupon code, they can designate a day in which parents can buy books at Barnes and Nobles and have a certain % of proceeds given to the school. It would be good to get that date early, and put it on the PTO calendar.

II. Administrator Search

- Dr. Cook has been asked and has agreed to continue to serve as the school's director for the next year, and possibly longer. Kate reported that the Board will not resume the search for a new director until Dr. Cook indicates plans to leave. The Board estimates that the search should begin the fall prior to the school year in which a new director would begin his/her duties.
- There is a Montessori organization, AMS, which could be helpful to join. It would be a good network through which to advertise for a director, when the time comes. Membership in the organization also provides other benefits to Montessori schools, such as training and support. There is, however, a membership fee that is significant – a certain amount per student, possibly \$2000 for this school? Robin felt that if it would benefit the children's education, and we could articulate that to parents, that raising the funds to join would not be a problem. Kate will let the Board know that the PTO is interested in finding out more about the benefits of AMS membership. Dr. Cook will get the PTO more information on this organization so we can discuss the merits of membership at our next meeting.

III. Chili Supper

- The charity that will receive the funds we raise is Pennies for Peace. Elementary students are reading a version of a book about the charity, and there is a picture book for younger children on the table in the lobby.
- Judy has ordered paper bowls, and we should have enough placemats, napkins, spoons. There will be vegetarian and meat chili. Denelle reported that the teachers are getting their ingredients this week.
- Roasters – Lanna has a roaster, as well as Sam and Dr. Cook. Although she was not present, attendees said Cindy K has a roaster.
- Tables to serve the chili will be in the front hallway, staffed by 2 parents each hour. Entertainment will be in the lunch area. Kids will do the dragon dance in the multi-purpose room, and older kids will perform their parking lot skit there, as well. The Lego League robot will be on display in the elementary classroom. Tables to eat will be in the hallway. We will need washable blankets on the floor in the lunch area, so families can sit and listen to the music.
- Should we provide / sell other food in addition to the chili and one pan of macaroni and cheese? Sam will pick up a couple of vegetable platters (as well as the macaroni and cheese that Hy-Vee is donating). Amy will buy saltines, will look for a roaster for the school to keep, will look for a desert to sell such as animal crackers, and will bring dry beans for the voting.
- Amy will bring a power strip.
- Robin will pick up the rolls at Panera.
- Lucy will buy a ribbon for the prize-winning chili and pick up the orange drink from McDonalds
- Lucy prepared the signs for the silent raffle, and will post them tomorrow, and send an email to parents encouraging them to buy raffle and door tickets in advance. People would need to write their names on the raffle tickets, and put them in the packet for the prize that interests them.
- We will need to set up at 3:30pm on Sunday.

IV. Book Fair March 2

- The book fair must be set up on Monday afternoon, be staffed all day Tuesday (about 8am-5pm, in one-hour shifts) and be taken down on Wednesday.

- Amy agreed to help tally the earnings, which can be difficult since some transactions are cash, and some are credit, and volunteers tend to record income differently. So far, only 5 parents signed up for shifts.
- There are still many shifts to cover. Gordon said the school sells a lot of books through the catalogs, and that they hold the on-site sale as a service, since parents always are interested in buying books.
- Kate hoped there would be more books for older children this year, and Gordon confirmed that Scholastic had agreed to send books for older children.

V. Spring Fling – May 15th

- Flower catalog fundraiser – it looks pretty easy. Give Judy the order and money, the company sends the products directly to each family who placed an order. We will hand them out next week. It takes about 6 weeks to receive the order.
- Interactive water system must be ordered. Dr. Cook will be provided with the company name and order it.
- Sam has found free patterns for the stone labyrinth. The one parents voted on turned out to only include the pattern, not the stones, for a high price. Sam asked for volunteers who could translate the patterns from paper to the appropriate size on the playground. Lucy has talked to the quarry, which has smooth stones available.
- The quarry also has boulders on sale. Dr. Cook is not certain what height initiates the need for a soft surface, per DHS licensure requirements, but will find out. Kate expressed concerns about the kinds of games that would be played on a boulder, and the risk of injury. Lucy felt a boulder would be a good addition, not more dangerous than existing equipment.
- We can get free mulch from the city landfill for the trail.
- The sandbox would either need to have sand scooped back into the box, or have additional wood built around it to contain the sand better. Tenelle had offered to do it, just needed the nails and other equipment – Denelle will see if she is still willing to work on this.

VI. Lobby

- The art teachers were interested in the idea of working with the children to create mosaics for the lobby and lunch area.
- Are there other ways to make the lobby more inviting? A sofa? Does anyone know an interior designer who could work on this? Robin suggested that maybe Monica Correa would consider this, or have suggestions of someone else. Kate suggested that we could have a computerized screen display in the lobby that shows pictures of kids, interspersed with important announcements – North Liberty public library has something like this – it costs about \$80. Amy and other parents expressed a preference for a simple white board in the lobby with announcements on it, rather than technology. Amy agreed to see if anyone in the community college could recommend an interior designer. Robin raised a concern that we should try to keep the design true to the Montessori identity of the school. Lucy suggested we talk to Kirsten about this, as well as other teachers.

VII. Other discussion

- Lucy raised the idea of a Bike to School day, or a Trivia Night.
- We tentatively scheduled the next meeting for March 23 at which time we will discuss Teacher's Appreciation week and questions raised during this meeting.
- The final PTO meeting will be April 6 which will also be the date that new officers are elected for the following year.
- Kate noted that March 9th is the next Board meeting.

The meeting concluded at 9:00pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Robin Clark-Bennett on February 16, 2010