**MINUTES**

**MS 54 GENERAL PTA MEETING: 10/13/16**

The meeting was called to order and presided over by co-presidents Jerome Kramer and Katie Miller.

Quorum was achieved.

**Co-Presidents’ Report:**

* Vote on motion to approve minutes from the September PTA meeting. Approved.
* Update on 108th Street Project:
* West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing (WSFSSH ) is planning a construction project that would demolish three parking lots across the street from the school, in order to erect a supportive housing facility.
* The school has concerns about the environmental impacts of this project.
* There is also opposition from a neighborhood group about loss of parking spaces.
* The PTA Executive Board has been attending meetings about the project and voicing concerns about air quality, noise quality, construction safety etc.
* There will be a panel of representatives discussing this project at the 11/10/16 PTA meeting. Those invited include representatives from WSFSHH, Save Manhattan Valley, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer’s office and Councilman Mark Levine’s office.
* Prior to construction, the developers must issue an environmental assessment statement (EAS). If that statement reveals damaging environmental effects that cannot be mitigated, an environmental impact study (EIS) is required. That study will determine what protective measures must be put in place.
* Parent question: How can I be a part of the process if I cannot make the 11/10 meeting?

Answer: There is a parent 108 Construction Project Task Force that you get in touch with or join.

* Parent recommendation: Create a fact sheet about the project.
* Parent question: Are the blueprints for the project online?

Answer: Community Board 7 has the most up to date plan.

* A parent journalist offered to attend community meetings about the project.
* Community Liaison needed:
* The PTA needs someone to attend community meetings and report back to the school. Parent Ilgin Yorulmaz agreed to take on this position. N.B. This parent is the same one who volunteered to attend community meetings about the project.
* Parent question: Does the school have a Green Committee which could assist with the construction project concerns?

Answer: No, it would be best to join the 108 Construction Project Task Force. There may be opportunities to work with the architect team (one of whom is a MS54 parent) about greening the project.

**Principal’s Report:**

* Progress Reports:

* Progress Reports will be online tomorrow (10/14/16) so parents can see their child’s progress up to this point.
* Parents should print the report because they will only have access to it until Wednesday (10/19/16).
* Parents should encourage their child to reach out to teachers on their own if they have a concern.

- Parent question: Why is Jupiter online taken off-line after a few days? Answer: The school does not want parents to monitor their child’s grade each day and because teachers cannot provide a realistic update daily.

- Parent question: Why are the grades put online during the semester?

Answer: So parents are not surprised by what is going on with their child. It’s a check-in for parents.

- Parent question: Do the kids know the grades are online? Do they talk about it?

Answer: Yes, they know, and they will bring it up to you because they will have heard about it in school.

* Election Simulation:
* The school election simulation is proceeding well.
* 11 students are running for President.
* The Primaries were held today. Next Tuesday is the end of the Primaries and the Convention is next Thursday. Volunteers are needed to help. Parents may contact Dr. Elster to volunteer.

PTA Co-President read thank you letters from teachers Ms. Misthal and Ms. McNulty thanking the PTA for Amazon gift cards that were used to purchase classroom supplies and curriculum enhancements.

**Treasury:**

* Budget update:

- As of 10/1/16, the PTA has a balance in the bank of $353,477.85, which is on track with last year’s budget.

- The PTA has received generous private grants.

- The Jets fundraiser is going well and has brought in $2,475 so far.

- Fairway Card contributions have been low so far.

- The Amazon link has brought in $673.17 this year, so please continue to use it.

- Our net income so far is negative (-$106,144.30) because we have not had the Auction or other fundraisers yet.

- Parent question: Can you use Instacart for Fairway?

Answer: No, you have to show actual card to the cashier.

- Parent question: Why is the net income negative?  
Answer: We overestimate our expenses and underestimate our income. The PTA also has money in reserve.

**Fundraising:**

* Annual Appeal:
* The Annual Appeal is on track with last year.
* Parents were asked to encourage fellow parents to contribute.
* The Jets Fundraiser:
* The Jets game will take place on 11/13/16.
* 59 tickets and several parking passes were sold so far.
* There are 12 on-field experiences to be sold as well.
* Information about the event is on the school website.
* Broadway Night:

- Broadway Night will take place on 11/7/16.

- Tickets are available on the school website.

- Parents will be able to buy raffle tickets for house seats to Hamilton.

- There is a talented line-up set to perform at the event.

* Auction:
* The Auction will be held on 5/13/16.
* The theme is Spring Gala.
* Many volunteers are needed. E-mail auction@ms54.org to volunteer.
* The next Auction Committee meeting will take place on 11/28/16 at 8:40 am.

- To donate items or services, go to the school website and look for the donation form on the Auction page.

- Parents will receive an e-mail shortly with an online auction selling 4 tickets to the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade.

**6th Grade Rep Election:**

- Patricia Saydah nominated herself for 6th Grade Rep. Further nominations were requested from the floor, but none were made. Vote on Motion to elect Patricia Saydah as 6th Grade Rep. Approved.

**Guest Speaker:**

* **Ms. Pinsen, 6th Grade Humanities Teacher, on the adolescent brain and how to best to support your children’s learning at this stage of their development**.

- Ms. Pinsen thanked the PTA for funds given to the teachers to enhance their classrooms.

- Ms. Pinsen explained that she went back to school this summer to take a course on adolescent brain development and stated that what she learned has impacted what she does in the classroom.

* Powerpoint presentation on brain development:

- New research studies have been conducted about the brain’s functioning in 11-13 year olds.

- The child’s frontal lobe that regulates executive functioning is not developing quickly at this age.

- The back of the brain, which controls language development, is shooting ahead. Children this age use sarcasm, idioms and analogies, and are very proud of it.

- The frontal lobe does not mature until 20 years old, therefore, many of their behaviors are not intentional.

- The pre-teen brain is not developed, so their judgment is flawed. There is a lot of white noise in their heads.

- They cannot internalize the concept of long-term consequences and do not learn from their mistakes.

- They need help with time management.

- They experience hyper mood and are excessively reactive to things.

- They are beginning to recognize that they are not alone in the world as humans. They are leaving the egocentric stage. It is a great time to introduce global studies, documentaries etc.

- Their peers have the greatest influence on them. Girls, in particular, will do anything to feel like they belong.

- “Mean Girls” often cross the line into dangerous territory. Adults need to help their children process what they are doing to protect themselves, as opposed to telling the child to stay away from a particular person.

- They can master 20 new words/day, which is why they memorize songs so quickly. Reading enhances this vocabulary acquisition. Parents should speak to their child like an adult using adult vocabulary. Even if the child does not use the advanced vocabulary at home, he/she will at school.

* Tips for parents:
* Sleep is directly correlated to impulse control. Children this age want to

stay up late and sleep late. Parents need to set the time constraints and should prevent usage of electronics before bed.

- The child’s topics matter. They have to feel that they are being heard.

- Expand their world with athletics, charity work, global awareness etc.

- Journaling- Children should be encouraged to write freely with joy, particularly before they reach high school and will have to follow strict writing mechanics.

- Play word games- board games, online, car games, rap etc.

- Children at this stage are staring to realize that they are somebody more than just your child. Parents need to guide them with their values but ask their opinion on matters.

- Parents should help children organize by sitting with them once/week with their school planner and a calendar (curricular activities etc.). The week should be planned out to ensure they have appropriate time to do their schoolwork.

- Most kids are dehydrated. They should be drinking throughout the day and eating healthy snacks.

- Parents should recognize that there is a difference between children “talking back” and expressing what they think is illogical. It is natural for them to exercise logic. Parents often misconstrue this as being argumentative.

- Temple University conducted a study where a brainscan was done with teenagers who were participating in a virtual driving activity where they came to a yellow light. The findings showed that when the child was by him/herself, he/she stopped at the light. But, when the child saw an image of peers around him/her, he/she went through the yellow light. This illuminates that teenagers act recklessly when in the presence of other teenagers, even ones they do not know. Parents should voice concern if they do not like whom their child is hanging out with.

* The MS54 library contains books on many of the issues that our children struggle with. Parents should encourage their children to read books about what they are going through, so they can experience the struggle through the safety of a character.
* Chronic headaches and stomachaches are a result of stress, so parents should be on the lookout for these symptoms.