**MINUTES**

**MS 54 GENERAL PTA MEETING: 9/21/16**

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 June PTA meeting. Approved.
* PTA Executive Board Members were introduced.
* Update on 108th Street Project:
* Proposed project would demolish three parking structures and create a supportive

housing complex directly across the street from the school’s main entrance.

* The PA Co-Presidents have attended meetings to gain information about this

project and have expressed concerns regarding environmental hazards that may affect the welfare of our students.

* Request was made for volunteers to join a task force regarding this issue.
* Vote on motion to approve paying for changes to school library hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays

from 3:15 pm-4:30 pm and Mondays/Wednesdays/Fridays from 8:00 am-8:40 am. Approved.

* Request was made for the following volunteers:

- Nominating Committee Chair to run elections for PTA positions. E-mail PTA if interested.

- 6th Grade Rep to join the PTA Executive Board. Act as liaison between teachers and class and assist Board with outreach. Email the PTA if interested. Vote will be held during October PTA meeting.

- Community Affairs Liaison to attend meetings on community issues that affect MS54 and report to PTA on these issues. Email PTA if interested.

- 108th Street Construction Project Ad Hoc Task Force Committee to attend meetings and express school concerns regarding potential environmental hazards due to proposed construction. E-mail PTA if interested.

* Board Vacancies:

- Executive Board recommended Rose Ann Watson Antsy for Co-Fundraising VP. Nominations were requested from the floor, but no further nominations were made. Vote on Motion to elect Rose Ann Watson Antsy as co-fundraising VP. Approved.

- Executive Board recommended Elissa Ruback for Co-Recording Secretary. Nominations were requested from the floor, but no further nominations were made. Vote on Motion to elect Elissa Ruback as co-recording secretary. Approved.

**Ilene Altschul, Superintendent of District 3:**

Update on Middle School admissions changes:

-Appreciated the letter she received from MS54 PTA. Wants to hear feedback from parents. Her office wants to create equity of access to all students in our district. While they do not have a strategic plan in place for 2017 admissions, they plan to continue this discussion and put a plan in place in the future.

- Her office is working with guidance counselors and parent coordinators in elementary schools to aid in the middle school admissions process. They have made the middle school tour dates easier for parents to access. Parents may reach out to her office with any questions or concerns.

**Principal’s Report:**

* Parents should contact teachers first, if they have any questions or concerns. Then they may reach out to Anne Pejovich or to her.
* Requests that the PTA approve a change of date for Fall Parent-Teacher Conferences. Proposed change is to move conferences from 10/27/16 to the week of 11/13/16 in order to give teachers more time to get to know the students. Vote on motion to approve the date change. Approved.
* Early Academy began yesterday. It takes place on Tuesday and Thursday mornings before school. Teachers have a specific schedule for Early Academy this year, so students should ask teachers individually to clarify.
* The Afterschool program begins on 9/27/16.
* The administration encourages students to deal with matters on their own, that parents may have handled in elementary school (i.e. an issue with metrocards).

**Treasury:**

* Update:

- The PTA is financially sound and has over $300,000 in the bank.

- We closed the year with a net of $121,088.32.

- The Annual Appeal brought in $220,561.73

- Fundraising brought in over $65,227.36

- The Auction brought in $208,838.36

* Amendments to budget:

- Proposal was made to add an additional $10,000 to the School Supplies Budget line to pay for desks and science tables for a new classroom. Vote on motion to approve the amendment to the budget. Approved. N.B. Two parents expressed opposition based on their feeling that the DOE should supply desks and science tables for the classroom.

- Proposal was made to add $5,000 to the budget in order to hire a part-time bookkeeper. Vote on motion to approve the amendment to the budget. Approved. Executive Board will continue to discuss pros and cons of hiring someone for this position.

- Vote on motion to approve 2016-17 budget, as amended. Approved. N.B. Two parents expressed opposition based on their feeling that the DOE should provide funds for the new classroom.

**Community Affairs:**

* Kim Watkins, First Vice President and Zoning Chair, CEC, District 3, was introduced and explained that the CEC is comprised of parents elected by the PTA at elementary and middle schools in District 3. She said parents may reach out to her with any questions.
* Jesse Mojica, Executive Director of Parent Leadership for the Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE), was introduced and explained that he works with Parent Coordinators regarding conferences offered to parents, and manages the CEC election process. He can be reached with any concerns at: [jmojica@schools.nyc.org](mailto:jmojica@schools.nyc.org)

**Fundraising:**

* The Annual Appeal has reached 25% of our goal so far. All parents should have received the Annual Appeal letter over the summer or in their child’s backpack at the start of school. The suggested donation is $1,000 per child, but any amount is appreciated.
* The Auction will be held on 5/13/17 at Rodeph Shalom. A request was made for parent volunteers. The first Auction Committee meeting will be held on 9/29/16 at 8:45 at the school.
* Fairway Community Partners: If parents use their MS54 Fairway cards, 3% of what is spent gets donated to the school. Last year, the cards raised approximately $9,000 for the school. New families will receive cards shortly.
* 2016/2017 Fundraising Calendar was voted on and approved:

1. Annual Appeal
2. Auction- 5/13/17- Rodeph Shalom
3. Fairway Community Partners
4. Broadway Night- 11/9/16
5. Magazine/Gift Wrap- school year
6. Pie Sale- 11/2016
7. Amazon, bake sales, Box Tops- throughout the year
8. School Supplies Fundraiser
9. Jets Experience Fundraiser- have 70 tickets to sell and discounted parking passes. Have already sold 37 tickets.
10. Rock Night
11. Miscellaneous online or in-person ticket or item lotteries

The Tutor Fair to take place 1/2017, was added to the fundraising agenda prior to the vote.

**Teacher Panel to discuss Supporting Study Skills at home:**

Mr. Fagen, Music

Ms. McEvoy, 6th Grade Science

Ms. Misthal, 6th Grade Humanities

Ms. Samay, French and 7th Grade Math

Mr. Wilson, 6th and 8th Grade Math

Teachers:

- Parents should check student’s planner each night through the Fall. This is particularly helpful for long-term assignments.

- Math: Part of studying is doing some each night. Students may look up the steps to solve a problem online.

Parent/Teacher Q&A:

Q: Is there a 6th Grade math textbook?

A: For 6th Grade, a workbook is used, but they have textbooks that are used in the classroom as well, and they may be borrowed and brought home.

Q: Is it okay if a student scribbled out an assignment in the planner saying that the teacher hasn’t covered the material yet?

A: Generally, students are assigned homework assignments to be completed by the next day. Once in a while, teachers may tell the students not to complete an assigned homework, as they did not have time to cover the topic in class. Teachers want the kids to be responsible for themselves. If a child is not completing homework or using his/her planner properly, the teacher will contact the parent.

Q: Can students use the internet or other resources for Humanities homework?

A: It is best to ask your student’s Humanities teacher directly. Teachers tend to suggest certain websites to utilize.

Q: What is the best way to be informed of curriculum ahead of time?

A: Reach out to the teachers. Students also brought home syllabi letters from each teacher at the beginning of school.

Q: I feel disconnected from supervising my child’s work, should I be doing more?

A: That is part of what Middle School has to be, in order to prepare for high school. Teachers will communicate if there is any concern with the student’s work.

Q: What is the best way to get in touch with teachers?

A: E-mail. Also, the online grading system is available halfway through each quarter. You can e-mail the teacher then if you have any concerns.

Q: How do conferences work? Do parents meet with all the teachers?

A: There are online sign-ups. Conferences last for five minutes. If you need more time, you can set up another meeting time. There is also a walk-in time for conferences for teachers you could not sign-up for online if the spots filled too quickly.

Q: Are the conferences student-led?

A: No. They are a time for parents and teachers to meet.

Dr. Elster: There was a city-wide initiative to have student-led conferences, but the SLT voted against it, since the conferences are so short on time.

Q: Do you recommend parents meet with a specific teacher?

A: If teachers see a concern, they will reach out at any point.

Q: What should students do if they have questions about homework?  
A: We suggest that students ask their friends first, and then e-mail the teacher if necessary, but he/she may not receive a response that night. Students should ask their teachers how to manage homework questions. Student should have one or two homework buddies and get their phone numbers and e-mail addresses.

Q: Do you recommend particular websites for researching homework?

A: Teachers discuss reputable websites with their classes.