

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

The Parent Teacher Association of The Neighborhood School General Meeting

Date: Thursday, January 17, 2019

Type: Monthly General Meeting

Time: 8:35 a.m.

Notice Provided in Advance: Yes

Location: TNS PTA Room

Meeting called to order at 8:38.

Agenda:

1. Approval of previous minutes
 - Minutes approved.
2. Principal updates
 - Narrative reports
 - This month, teachers are spending time after school and on weekends carefully thinking about our children and writing detailed narrative reports to be shared with families.
 - Dyanthe recently researched online how other school do assessment and reporting to families and was newly amazed at how little info is conveyed in traditional approaches, in contrast to TNS.
 - Rodent/roach update
 - Custodial staff has been working on this over weekends, tackling 3-4 rooms at a time. Mainly, they've been moving furniture away from walls and closing holes, to keep rodents out. It's a slow process, but they're committed.
 - Another walkthrough is scheduled with a local official (Harvey Epstein) and the person our head custodian (Roy) reports to (Charley).
 - Open house for prospective families, 6-7 pm, Thurs night
 - In an attempt to outreach to families who can't make morning tours, we're holding our first evening open house for prospective families.
 - Morning tours have been lacking in diversity of prospective families. The hope is that an evening tour might change that.
 - Format will be somewhat different than past tours, with a powerpoint presentation and discussion with principal. Unlike morning tours, current students won't be present.
3. Enrichment updates
 - Summary: TNS has offered a number of "microprograms" recently. These programs have been a success based on responses from students and teachers, but they involve extra cost. The PTA would like families to consider whether such programs should be continued next year and in the future.
 - BioBus

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- Emily, our Science teacher, reported on the BioBus experience. She gave it 2 thumbs up.
 - [BioBus](#) was created by research scientist who wanted to find a way to give underserved kids, and particularly girls, the opportunity to get excited about science. They repurpose old school buses into science labs, with equipment inside and solar power on top. All handmade.
 - 2nd through 5th grade classes each had 45 minutes in the bus over the course of 2 days. Most classes went with teachers. Emily accompanied some.
 - Bus divided into two areas, with microscopes in each area. Each class was split in half, by grade. For example, for a 2/3 class, 2nd graders in one area, 3rd graders in the other. Switched halfway through.
 - BioBus teachers did a great job making it meaningful and hands-on. Kids looked a micro-animal with naked eye and then through microscope. Teachers asked great questions to spur kids thought and discussion, for example: How do you know it's alive? What do you think they eat? Kids used whiteboards on walls to draw and write observations. BioBus teachers also did a great job of connection the experience to topics our students have been thinking about in Science, in transitioning from plants to electricity. Made connection to solar panels on bus.
 - Discounted Cost: \$882 due to Emily attending PD. This was paid for by the PTA (with a generous donation from a TNS family). It was a reduced rate because Emily attended an associated professional development event. For next year, without such a discount, this would cost approx. \$2000 for a two day visit. This is something for families to consider for when the budget is presented in June.
 - After school option: At the professional development event, Emily learned that BioBus also offers an afterschool option. TNS could connect with this to find out more.
- Farm trip
 - Reviewed what this trip is about and how wonderful it was for students who went last year.
 - Discussed the document sent home explaining the trip, why we support it, and what it costs. Some parents weren't clear on how to pay/respond to the document. PTA clarified that the document as it states was just informative. The document was thought of and created by the PTA to communicate some useful information for the families ahead of the more informative meetings in February. An email was provided for any questions. Another permission/payment document will be sent home from classes at a later time closer to the trip date.
 - Farm Cost: \$25,000, flat fee not including bus. New Bus company was found a reduced rate of \$7200 for the 6 trips. If all 2/3 students were to attend, cost would break down to almost \$400/child. However, PTA is paying a flat rate for

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all 2/3 students regardless of who attends. However all students will be able to attend, regardless of ability to pay full cost. Families should pay what they can. Families that can pay more will help cover cost for others. PTA will still need to cover for students who also don't attend.

- Fundraisers will be help on the next movie night (Friday, Feb 8) and the week following. Valentine cards kids can write to each other. Similar to postal service project. There will be a bake sale for the Farm Trip as well.
- Wellness in the Schools event
 - This program partners with public schools to supplement fitness and nutrition education, support healthy lunch menus and tastings, and provide recess support with extra games.
 - They recently hosted a complimentary cooking class/lab at TNS and STAR. All grades learned about beans, the importance of them and how to use it to make hummus. Each class participated in making hummus and all had an opportunity to try their hummus with cucumbers. Very hands-on. Was well received by students.
 - The full nutrition(cooking labs, kitchen support) and fitness (recess coaching) program is 3 years - 5 days/week the first year, 3 days/week the second year, and 1 day/week the third year.
 - Cost for the 3-year program: \$82,000.
 - WITS may also be able to offer a la carte option as well which would be a combination of nutrition and fitness programs for a shorter duration of time for approx \$2500. TBD.
- Earth Day/ECO event
 - This event started 5 years ago, involving both TNS and STAR. Held in the courtyard, with recycling games and activities with partner non-profits (yoga, climbing wall, etc.).
 - This year, we've decided to make this an combined Eco/gardening/wellness event on Thur, May 9th, given the overlapping themes regarding taking care of the environment and yourselves through health and nutrition, and to encourage students and families to linked these areas. Combining Eco-Wellness-Garden makes it a more holistic event. It makes sense and it will give kids a more comprehensive understanding of how environment, food, and their actions make a difference. The alternative lunch, garden to cafe, garden, physical activity, health, recycling, composting, etc. it's all related.
 - Lots of planning needed here. Will schedule planning sessions soon. If interested, reach out to Nazmin, Karen, or Jenny.
 - Reminder that this is not a fundraising event. It's open to the broader community.

4. Events updates

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- Holiday Fair
 - Exceptional event. Lots of fun, well attended, well organized. Met our budgetary goal. Raised \$6,600.
- Auction update
 - The Auction committee is currently soliciting donations from businesses, organizing the day, figuring out catering, and finding an auctioneer.
 - The committee meets every Friday morning after drop-off. Attend if you're interested in helping. Committee is especially looking for people to help get donations from businesses, afterschool camps, clothing shops, etc.
 - This is an event open to the broader community. Please invite neighbors, old friends, anyone. The more the better, to make this a successful event. School will also reach out to prospective and alumni families.
 - Childcare will be provided but only for TNS students.
- Bricia Restaurant Night
 - Restaurant nights are new this year. Monthly, at a different local restaurant owned by TNS families and others, with part of the profits going to TNS PTA.
 - In Jan, the restaurant event was at Bricia, an Italian restaurant owned by a TNS family. It was a successful night, raising \$243. This restaurant might also be involved in catering the Auction event.
 - The next restaurant night is scheduled for Wed, Feb 27, at Boticarios, a Mexican restaurant in the neighborhood. Same day older grades will be leaving for Camp Ashokan.
- Movie Night
 - The first movie night was wildly successful and fun.
 - The next movie night is scheduled for Friday, Feb, and will have a Valentine's Day theme. Movie: Incredibles 2.
- 5. Committee updates
 - Eco
 - Next meeting is morning of Friday, Jan 18.
 - Diversity
 - Next potluck is next Thursday.
 - Rhythm and Rice event, which started last year, will happen again this year on Wed, May 22. Last year included lots of art, music, dance, and other activities sharing the diversity of our community. This year, we'll add a Rhythm and Rice cookbook. A call for recipes will go out soon. Contact Nikki Miller for more information.
 - Diversity committee is also looking for partner nonprofits to hold a workshop around race and gender. Looking for an alternative to "Border Crosser", who we partnered with last year. If you have ideas, reach out to Nikki.
 - Advocacy

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- Partnering with the school administration, this committee has been planning sessions about assessment at TNS.
- There will be 4 sessions, including visits from former TNS students (current middle schoolers) talking about how their experiences at TNS prepared them for middle school. Sessions will also look at what assessment looks like at other schools, and what the testing day experience is for TNS kids who take the test and those who don't.
- Grants
 - The Grants committee is working on a grant for the Farm Trip. Draft is in progress. Deadline is Feb 1.
 - Otherwise, the committee continues to look for other grant opportunities for STEM and wellness activities. They're also continuing work on a questionnaire to teachers to help identify needs and interests that Grants can support in the coming year(s). Should be finalized by next Tuesday. Dyanthe will distribute to grade blocks and subject teachers.
 - The committee is aiming to pick up speed over the next few months.
- 6. Treasurer's report - <http://tnsny.org/posts/files/185>
- 7. Other business
 - Website update
 - Converting the website to Wordpress has been a long-standing project. Matt Gold has mostly been driving this himself and created a new draft site.
 - Recently, a small group has joined Matt, providing him feedback on the draft site and working with him to improving its info architecture and to make the design feel more TNS-aligned. They have a deadline of mid-Jan to move this forward.
 - Community day
 - SLT discussed this. Coming up with plan of what community needs. Find out from teachers and parents. If you have ideas, they're thinking about it now.
 - Community day historically lived with SLT. Day when families come in and help beautify and/or upgrade a classroom or area in the school. Other times it was divided into half work, half learning. SLT thinking about how and when to do this.
 - Evening PTA meetings
 - Question was asked about the previous PTA General Meeting, which met in the evening. Turnout was significantly lower than mornings, but it was December. We'll hold one more evening meeting in the Spring and assess.
 - Regardless of the timing of these meetings, PTA works hard to make sure minutes convey the topics and discussions at these meetings so all can be informed and get involved.
 - Give a coat / get a coat

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- This was organized by Elinor Tatum and was successful, with lots of coats given and gotten. General interest in doing this again next year, right before Thanksgiving. Another parent suggested a Halloween costume donation as well.
- Question was asked about doing this for the Farm and Camp Trip (for snow suits, etc.). Dyanthe mentioned that teachers will organize this for their classrooms and make sure each child is prepared.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30.