

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

The Parent Teacher Association of The Neighborhood School General Meeting

Date: Thursday, February 28, 2019

Time: 8:35 a.m.

Location: TNS PTA Room

Type: Monthly General Meeting

Notice Provided in Advance: Yes

Meeting called to order at 8:35am.

Agenda:

1. Approval of previous minutes
 - Approved.
2. President updates
 - Introduced the two main topics for the meeting: School lunch and library funding.
3. Wellness/School food
 - Background:
 - Switched to the Alternative lunch menu last year. This was a TNS and STAR collaborative decision, and there was years of effort behind this. Adopted mid-year and always expected to need time to guide this to success, compared to a school that transitions to this menu in conjunction with a formal program (chef in school, regular tastings, etc.).
 - The alternative lunch menu is on a regular, 3-week rotation, with certain staples every week that overlap with the standard (pizza or Fridays, burgers on Tuesdays). For independent comparison:
 1. March Alternative lunch menu:
http://www.schoolfoodnyc.org/public/PDF_Handler.ashx?t=m&id=5267&name=Pre-K+-+8+Alternative+Lunch+Menu
 2. March Standard lunch menu:
http://www.schoolfoodnyc.org/public/PDF_Handler.ashx?t=m&id=5263&name=Pre-K+-+8+Lunch+Menu
 - Report from teacher: Dara (K/1 teacher)
 - Dara spoke about how kids are eating alternative lunches. She mentioned that other teachers share her perspective.
 - Grey and unappealing appearance often turns kids off. Unfamiliar names and ingredients as well.
 - Hot lunches get ordered (pizza and burgers). Most others not ordered consistently. Kids order substitutes instead. Lots of hummus and pretzels ordered in Dara's classroom, with kids often just eating the pretzels.
 - Kids sometimes mention food they miss from last year: Popcorn chicken, chicken nuggets, mozzarella sticks.

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- Report from kitchen staff: Romena (food services manager)
 - Met with Dyanthe a few weeks ago to review progress.
 - Shared TNS and STAR lunch details.
 1. TNS:
 - a. Average daily attendance from Sept - Feb: 283
 - b. Lunches served:
 - i. Sept: 119
 - ii. Oct: 119
 - iii. Nov: 119
 - iv. Dec: 116
 - v. Jan: 125
 - vi. Feb: 110
 2. STAR:
 - a. Average daily attendance from Sept - Feb: 215
 - b. Lunches served:
 - i. Sept: 183
 - ii. Oct: 180
 - iii. Nov: 176
 - iv. Dec: 172
 - v. Jan: 166
 - vi. Feb: 155
 - Concern that lunches ordered are not getting served (food waste). Examples:
 1. Spinach & Mozzarella Quesadilla: 206 portions ordered, 186 served. Also offered tuna as alternative.
 2. Burgers: 230 portions ordered, 215 served.
 - Romena also works at PS20. They adopted alternative lunch but in conjunction with a funded Wellness in the Schools (WITS) program. Multi-year, with a chef present daily through the first year, kids getting food/cooking education and samples before ordering. Gradually reduced presence in years 2 and 3.
- Parent discussion: What can parents do to encourage more adoption?
 - Fund the Wellness in the Schools (WITS) program to get more education and taste testing in the classrooms, like at PS20.
 1. Grants are an obvious thought here. Grants committee could use more support/writers.
 - Make menus more visible/accessible to families. Posting more on walls. Making sure families know where to find them online. Encouraging families to look at menu with kids.
 - Create visual menus. May especially help with younger grades, but older kids also may be misunderstanding ingredients (zuc. Potentially lots of unfamiliar ingredients. Names not very helpful either (e.g., Chickpea tagine).

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- Look into getting more classes to eat in cafeteria to ensure fresher/hotter and more attractive lunches. It was mentioned that the unattractive appearance of some lunches is likely due to transporting them from kitchen to classrooms.
- More parent involvement in classrooms, for both food education and taste testing. When possible, more connection to our garden. Garden-related activities in classrooms early in this process were successful: Making hummus from chickpeas; salad with kale from the garden, etc.
- Influence on menu. The menu is on a standard, 3-week rotation defined by the DOE. We have no direct ability to influence or change the menu or schedule, but there was discussion about parent organizing to make an impact at a higher level.
 1. Note: Was mentioned that parents who use the DOE lunch app can submit feedback on lunches directly.
- Library funding (9:00 - 9:15)
 - See full background here: http://tnsny.org/user_files/download/7659
 - TNS and STAR initially agreed to split Cheryl's salary.
 - This year: STAR didn't allocate the budget. DOE stepped in and is paying other half this year.
 - Next year: STAR will not allocate budget for library again next year. DOE not willing to continuing paying half.
 - Cheryl is tenured, so DOE is obliged to provide full-time work. This means that either Cheryl will remain at TNS half-time and work at another school half-time, or Cheryl will be moved to another school full-time.
 - Grants committee is looking into options. However, for staff salary, grants must go to school, not PTA, which limits our options.
 - Broad consensus that library is an amazing resources, crucial to TNS kids' development and experience, as well as to families. More thought and effort needed here.
- 4. Treasurer's report: http://tnsny.org/user_files/download/7658
 - Currently have a large deficit due to farm and camp expenses. Please submit farm trip money, buy raffle tickets, attend auction and invite many friends to attend as well.
 - Movie nights bring in good money. Some parents would like to do more of those, but there's significant effort involved, and Michelle didn't get enough help last time.
- 5. Committee updates (submitted via email, not discussed in person)
 - Eco committee
 - Updates will be sent to the listserve soon.
 - Earth Day Fair is on May 9 and teachers will be invited to participate.
 - Grants committee
 - Continued grants search: library, farm trip, cooking arts.
 - Submitted grants: Farm Trip - Entergy & the Cliff Bar Family Foundation.

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- Drafted questionnaire for grade blocks/subject teachers.
- Need more committee members.
- Looking for official missions statements for TNS and PTA.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35am..