

the NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL

The Parent Teacher Association of The Neighborhood School General Meeting

Date: Thursday, September 19, 2019

Time: 8:30 am

Location: TNS PTA Room

Type: Monthly General Meeting

Notice Provided in Advance: Yes

Meeting called to order at 8:40 am.

a. Attendee Introductions

All in attendance introduced themselves.

b. What is the PTA and what does it do?

There are two key roles for the PTA: 1.) community building and 2.) fundraising to support programming for our kids.

- **Building Community:** We host great events that bring us together! They are lots of fun. Examples include the Halloween party (soon!), Rhythm and Rice, movie nights. We need helping hands for committees and events -- we all need to work together to make these events successful.
- **Raising money to help the school:** We are operating in a context of structural inequalities of funding as schools don't get enough from the city or state. We need to raise money in order to provide the programming we want for our kids. Our fundraising priorities for this year are:
 - Fund a large budget
 - Increase direct donations from families
 - Increase corporate donations
 - Reduce event fundraising fatigue
 - Spread the organizational duties by engaging more parents

We want PTA meetings to be participatory and we aim for equitable participation. People should raise their hand if they want to talk we will keep the time allocated for each agenda items in mind.

c. PTA Executive Team

PTA Executive Team members present introduced themselves. People can find us and talk to us!

- PTA Co-Presidents - Akeela Azcuy & Matt Gold - ptapresident@tnsny.org
- PTA VPs of Events and Fundraising - Matthieu Cornillon & Olly Keane - ptaevents@tnsny.org

- PTA Co-Treasurers - Theresa Marchetta & Lisa Scott - ptatreasurer@tnsny.org
- PTA Co-Secretaries - David Stadler (not present) & Elissa Berger - ptasecretary@tnsny.org
- PTA Parent Engagement Liaison - Joy Gabriel & Amy Sodaro - ptaparentengagement@tnsny.org

d. Principal's Report

We have some classrooms that have one teacher and some that have two. If your child is in a classroom with two teachers, get to know both of them -- they both work closely with your kids. And there have been some changes. For instance, Jane and Chelsea now teach together. Dyanthe is happy to talk more about this.

Curriculum night is coming up -- Sept. 26. 5pm-6pm for preK, K, and 1; 6pm-7pm for grades 2-5. In the library, parents can hear from Teddy (PE), Emily (Science) Mara (Spanish) and Cheryl (Librarian). There is also a mix and mingle for parents in the garden (or lobby depending on weather).

Dyanthe will be sending a letter to all families to announce changes happening in Sing. It will move to the last Friday of the month, unless there's a conflict. Some Sings will only be for kids and teachers, and some will include parents. Instead of the auditorium, Sing will take place outside if at all possible. [See letter posted on website, http://tnsny.org/posts/view_news/6711.]

e. Library update

Lisa is leading the library committee this year. She encourages everyone to check out the beautiful space and reminds parents that we can check out books too. The library is shared between TNS and STAR Academy and it is a great community space, with opportunities for both schools and to strengthen the connection between the schools. The library will have either early hours or late afternoon hours for families one day a week (still to be determined by Cheryl, the librarian, and once set will be shared in newsletter and posted at the library). The first period and last period of every school day is open to 3-5th graders to check out books. If you want to volunteer to support the library, let Lisa know. We have work to do to make sure we have the resources to keep supporting the library the way we can this year.

Two library events coming up:

- Oct .16th (World Food Day) -- Cookbook sale in the Garden; Part of the proceeds will go towards reducing food insecurity.
- Oct. 18th -- Author visit: Kyle Lukoff, who writes about transgender children, will share a book with the K-1 classes.

f. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of Budget

Our approach is to try to continue to fund all the great programming at TNS, even though it has gotten more expensive this year to do that. It means we all have to work together.

- Treasurer's report is always posted to the website under PTA and available for review. [See reports at <http://tnsny.org/posts/files/185>.] We can see from the Sept. 19 report, we have a decent amount of cash on hand but also have some big outstanding payments. We've already put a deposit down for the Farm School. We also got firm commitments for grants: Watershed

Grant (to support Ashokan trip), and a grant for Studio in the School (that grant only renewed at half the amount as we got last year, so we are compensating with additional fundraising). We also got some donations over the summer.

- Discussion of proposed budget. [See proposed budget online at <http://tnsny.org/posts/file/6710>.] This year's budget is bigger than last year's budget. Most of our direct parent contributions come in before January 1. In order to be on track, we need to raise about \$27K by January 1. We are not adding any new fundraising events, but we are estimating that we do really well at the ones we have. We have some money in the budget to test the new water fountains (the DOE tests them for lead, but there is an interest in having an independent tester).
- If you have questions about the proposed budget, email PTATreasurer@tnsny.org. Parents can set up additional times to meet and can find PTA Exec Board members in the lobby to ask questions about it. We will vote on the proposed budget in October.
- The budget only works if we get significant parent contributions. Imagine TNS without the PTA. We'd have wonderful teachers, staff, and community, but we'd have no garden, no community events, educational events, camp trips in the Spring would be severely threatened, early grade classes wouldn't have Teaching Assistants, we wouldn't be contributing to teachers' professional development or classroom supplies, we wouldn't have health education for the 5th graders so they can learn about their changing bodies, we wouldn't have dance, we wouldn't have art. And if someone could waive a magic wand and deliver all of that to you, what would you pay for that? The total cost is about \$650 for the year, \$55/month. For some, that's not possible -- whatever families can contribute is great -- time, money, rallying others to the cause. If \$55/month is possible for you, consider digging deeper and giving more. As part of our commitment to progressive education, we appreciate each other for the unique individuals we are, and we recognize different circumstances, we help each other. So please give as much as you can. [See donation page at <http://tnsny.org/docs/contribute>.]
- If we don't hit target numbers by December, we have to reevaluate whether we can afford all the programming -- some of the things raised as possible cuts include the Star health program that teaches 5th graders about their bodies, Ballet, and the Farm trip. We don't want to cut any of it and we remain hopeful. But we need all of us to work together to make it work.
- Questions and comments from the floor:
 - Can we have surplus? Nothing prevents it. If we hit our goals earlier in the year, maybe we could pull back on fundraising events or we could build a cushion.
 - Is \$650 the ask over all types of parent contributions? Yes, although much easier to raise money through direct donations because it takes a lot of work to raise money in other ways.
 - Thomas (STAR Academy PTA President) is working with Lisa about a possible joint fundraiser for the library to build a cushion.
 - Reminder no family is turned away from an event because of inability to pay. People can talk to Noemi, who can keep info confidential.
 - Where do we make payments? On the TNS website, there's a link to the PTA and from there, you can click on "donate/contribute." You can also write a check to "The

Neighborhood School PTA” and drop it in the lock box in the office. [See donation page at <http://tnsny.org/docs/contribute>]

- Can you give automatic recurring monthly payments? Yes! Online at the link above.
- Can we do something to encourage extended family -- grandparents in particular -- to give? Yes! PTA will be sharing information about how to give and, for example, could ask grandparents to give in the holiday season. We can share ideas.

g. Upcoming events

- Mix and Mingle during Curriculum Night
- Bake sale during Sing -- Tatiana leading committee.
- Picture day -- need volunteers! Need a co-lead.
- Community day -- work together to improve the space!
- Halloween Party -- Silent disco and lots of fun. Mark has everything covered but could use help reaching out to the community (this isn't just for TNS students!)
- Start thinking about donations for the auction in the spring.
- And we are soliciting new ideas, including exploring increasing event sponsorships and corporate donations, and creating an alumni group. Let Olly and Matthieu know if you have other ideas or want to help.
- Climate March, 9/20, TNS contingent (details discussed as part of new business)

i. Committee Updates

Need authorization to accept Watershed grant to be used for the purposes intended:

Proposed Resolution: PTA Co-Presidents of The Neighborhood School PTA are hereby authorized and directed to sign a contract with the Catskill Watershed Corporation for an educational grant in the amount of \$9500 for a project titled, “Where Does Our Water Come From” and to ensure that the activities and program funded by said grant are carried out in accordance with requirements.

Motion to pass resolution. Motion seconded. Motion passes and the resolution is adopted.

j. New Business

- What about a costume exchange or donation before Halloween? Great idea! Joy will follow up.
- Climate March: If parents are interested in signing out their kids early and joining a TNS contingent to march, let teachers and Dyanthe know in writing; pick up kids at 11, meet in the garden at 1130. (4th and 5th graders will be going to Topkins in the morning but will be back around 930). There's also sign-making and post card writing after school and tomorrow morning. Parents must accompany their children. TNS contingent isn't an official part of the march -- it is just a group of parents who are interested in attending with their kids traveling together.
- On listserv communications: unless it is urgent, please send announcements to Joy and Amy for the weekly newsletter (ptaparentengagement@tnsny.org). We are trying to reduce listserv traffic. And please read the newsletter. Lots of important info!

- Also, join the private Facebook group for parents. Live streaming the PTA meeting! There's a link on every newsletter to the Facebook page.
- Thomas, STAR Academy PTA president, invites people to STAR PTA meetings. Sept. 24, 830 in cafeteria.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40am.