

Downey PTO Meeting



10.10.2017

7:00PM-9:00PM

Library – Downey School

Type of meeting

Downey PTO – Open Meeting

Attendees

Todd Nicholson, Sarah Young-Hong, Liz Gauthier, Jen Killilea, Anne McMurray, Beth Murphy, Sue Saliba, Maureen Sullivan, Hillary Mosca, Harshini Muttiah, Lorri Warren, Nayla Daly, Tammy McGowan, Meg Kara, Liz Mullen, Pascal Haddad, Tara Billini, Jen Shea, Sudha Sarma

Deb Gallagher (Principal), Carol Lewis (School Committee)

Downey Parents – Brenda Bruno, Jessica Imbornone, Christine Fulton, Pam Schnatterly, Paula Timofeev, Roula Bakis, Jared Jones, Darcey Petres, Evie Kleniatis

1. School Committee Member - Deb Gallagher - introductions

Discussion: School Committee purpose and representation

Deb Gallagher – introduction of Carol Lewis (School Committee Member). Josepha Jowdy is actually the Downey Representative from the School Committee. Ms. Lewis was sitting in for Ms. Jowdy

Carol Lewis described the function of the School Committee and encouraged attendance at the meeting being held the next day (Wednesday, October 11th). There are 5 elected members of the committee. Ms. Lewis is the chair (rotating). Represent all of us in the town, but Downey has a specific liaison. Meet once a month in the Little Theater at the Westwood High School. Agenda is always published. Encourage participation to discuss class size and school building project. Allison Borchers did a study on class size and presented to the school committee. More on the study in tomorrow's meeting.

- What are the traditional class size? 18-22 (KG). Grades 3-5 (24). Only guidelines.
- Deb Gallagher – reviewing information through summer on student registration.
- Keep open dialogue with other town committees

2. Welcome and Introduction of PTO Committees – Todd Nicholson

Discussion: Presentation of each of the committees and request for sign-up

- Welcome to participants
- Overview of the committees (handout)

Action Items:

3. Gala Update (Nayla Daly and Ann McMurray)

Discussion: Update on Gala planning

- Theme: "It's a Small World". Venue = Blue Hills Country Club. Date: March 10th.
- Need help on the committee – please talk to Nayla or Ann about joining. Especially need assistance with silent auction and sponsorships.
- Have a good process set up. Silent auction and sponsorships were highly successful last year.
- Todd mentioned that we hoped to reduce the small fundraisers and do more community-based events.

Action Items: Find more volunteers for this committee to help with silent auction and sponsorships.

4. Holiday Shopping Event (Todd Nicholson)

Discussion: Annual event in December

- Typically run by parent volunteer – Julie Mulvey.
- The event is sponsored by the PTO and 5th grade students assist as "elves".
- Sign-Up Genius – to be coming out for volunteers for each table and ticket booth.

Action Items: None

5. Multicultural Committee (Sudha Sarma)

Discussion New committee to organize

- Sudha provided a background and mission/goals for the committee.
- Idea to have a multicultural night with participation from the Downey families/community. Inclusive of all.
- Celebrate the various cultural heritages of the kids
- Need to select a date if there's interest

Action Items: Decide a date multicultural night. Will depend on the timing of the school play and other events.

6. Treasurer Update (Maureen Sullivan)

Discussion: Fiscal Budget for 2017

- Maureen discussed the 2017 Budget (handout) – major expenses, sources of revenues.
- Book Fair closed and made \$1,500
- PTO Dues collected to date discussed – represents just 55% of all the families at Downey. Didn't get to collect as many dues at the picnic due to the rain out/weather.
- Discussion involved how to notify new families recently moved. PTO does not have access to all the email or home addresses yet. Mailing packets in the summer did not reach all of the new families, as a result. Deb Gallagher mentioned sending a notice to the kindergarten families and others.
- Expenses to date – towards Enrichment Programs (Potato Hill Poetry, Butterfly Lady, Mindfulness Meditation, and a Storyteller). In the works, a program with the Discovery Museum for all grades.
- PTO Directory – being set up and will be delivered in October.

Action Items: 1. Deb Gallagher will send a messenger link to the entire email address list to ensure all new families are included.

7. Box Tops (Cynthia Knox)

Discussion: Update

Due October 18th.

Action Items: None

8. Downey Play (Sarah Young-Hong)

Discussion: Update on status

- Sarah discussed that the play status is on hold until we can find a new director of the play. Once we hire a director, we can select a date in the spring to hold the play.
- Have candidates to interview – Mrs. Starsiak is one of the candidates.
- Goal is to include all grades – keep it as in prior years, for Kindergarten through 5th grade.

Action Items:

9. Grant Writing (Todd/Beth Murphy)

Discussion: Ideas for grants and process

- Beth had suggestions about writing grants to the Westwood Education Foundation. Deadline for submission is this Friday (October 13th).
- Beth sat on the board last year and is familiar with the application process.
- Suggestions to pursue this for the "outdoor classroom".
- Discussed the need to formalize plans and submit a formal application for a grant with details (project plans); discussed that it's a good opportunity to raise the funds through the grant writing process.

Action Items: Tabled.

10. Outdoor Classroom Project

Discussion: Status

- Ms. Gallagher discussed briefly the idea of the project. Can tie the learning plans in the classroom to the "outdoor classroom"
- Joanne Stanton has worked on a similar project at her school. She's written an application for sponsorship to Lowes for the project. Typically, a long duration. If you apply in July, it takes until January to find out about approvals.

Action Items: Deb Gallagher and the committee are to discuss ideas with a representative at Hanlon.

11. Hospitality Committee (Sue Saliba)

Discussion: This committee's role and responsibilities

- Organize various events for the teachers and support staff - such as on Curriculum Night
- Next – organize for parent-teacher conferences. Typically PTO has sponsored dinner on the first conference week.

Action Items: Plan for teacher-parent conferences and hosting dinner/meal for teachers (November 8th)

12. Halloween Party (Lorri Warren)

Discussion: Update

- All set up and ready to go. BUT, Lori needs assistance with managing the “gym” during the event. She needs a liaison to be available for the bouncy house set up at 4PM, to set up the games, and to make sure the volunteers are at the bouncy house during the event.
- Lori is not available that day and is requesting help.
- The cafeteria (crafts, face painting, cookie decorating) all set with volunteers and organizers/coordinators.
- Todd discussed the Sign Up Genius – and would like volunteers to sign up. Will continue to look for help to run the gym.
- Group discussion on attendance at the event. Decided that the attendance should be limited to Downey students only (with the exception of toddlers/babies/younger siblings).

Action Items: NEED A VOLUNTEER TO MANAGE THE GYM AREA THE DAY OF THE EVENT.

13. Other Events

Discussion: Upcoming events in the year

- **MOVIE NIGHT** - Liz Gauthier will co-chair event
- **“BOWLING WITH THE BOYS”** – Will be a Saturday evening event, February 10th. Marketing this as “date night” with an important female figure in his life (can be anyone...mom, sister, aunt, grandma) TO be held at the Norwood Bowling center.
- **5th Grade Events** – At the Halloween Party, the 5th graders have traditionally organized a Haunted House. Not connected to the PTO and fully run by the 5th grade parents/students.

Action Items:

14. Open Questions /Forum

Discussion – Mini Courses

For Deb Gallagher (Principal)

- What is the plan for “mini-courses”? How come Downey does not provide mini-courses for students as they do at other Westwood elementary schools?
- Ms. Gallagher stated that Downey has held mini courses in the past, sponsored by the PTO and run by parents. Takes a lot of time and effort by the parent volunteers to coordinate and run. She also mentioned that there’s a balance needed with attendance and student interest.
- Todd mentioned that the PTO has sent out information and requests to the Downey teachers to see if there’s any interest in running a course, but did not get much of a response. Tara Billini (Teacher Rep) stated that she received feedback that the teachers wanted more specifics.
- Group Discussion – big demand for half-day Wednesdays. Also discussed that consideration should be given to those students who go to Extended Day and who would miss the opportunity to take a mini-course at Downey. Should there be a way to take a course at Hanlon? Should there be transportation to/from Enrichment?
- Need a coordinator to look into offering the courses, the demand for such, and running the program. Liz Gauthier volunteered to reach out and research options.
- Group discussed that we need to find out the successful programs at other schools and use those same courses at Downey.
- One parent, Rachel Macy, mentioned that prior classes included – drama, scrapbooking, the Downey newspaper, and art. It usually ran for about 6-8 weeks.

Teacher Reps – Jen Shea and Tara Billini

- Teachers are busy with parent conferences
- Flowers delivered by the PTO in the beginning of the year were well received.

Action Items: Liz Gauthier to conduct research on mini-courses at other schools.

15. 5th Grade Events (Deb Gallagher)

- Mrs. Gallagher discussed the history of 5th Grade events since she has been at Downey.
- She provided a list of events that occur in the spring for all 5th graders. That time of year gets really busy. Ends up a stress on parents about attending many of the school events.
- Deb met with her 5th grade team of teachers and mapped out all of the events (i.e. Book Buddies, Perseverance Project, Moving Up ceremony, spirit day, etc). Events start in April and go through June (with the majority in June).
- Each year the student gifts, social events, and end of year ceremonies get bigger and bigger.
- There’s been confusion between fundraising by the PTO and for the 5th Grade Events Only.
- Last year, Deb tried to manage the process with the parent volunteers to control the level of activities. In her opinion, the end of the year events should be mainly sponsored by the school/teachers/principal.
- Met with the PTO Executive Board. Agreed that the PTO will sponsor the Grade 5 Events with a certain budget each year. Budget may vary year by year, depending on the number of children in that grade.
- Will try to make this traditions- based...keeping the same traditions each year. This past year, the class “gift” to the school was a rock garden – with paintings/sayings on each rock from each student.
- Another idea is to have a social hour/picnic at Downey instead of a social outing (in the past, it’s been a pool party or Launch). That way, start a tradition...will be right after school and could involve teachers.
- Deb will send out a Sign Up Genius for the 5th Grade Parents to volunteer.

Next Meeting: November 14