WHITTIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PTA

Downers Grove, IL
GENERAL MEETING via Zoom

Meeting Date: **Tuesday, Sept 20, 2022**

Roll Call/Attendance: Maggie Kurcz, Susan Ourada, Carol Avila, Britta Waszak, Sarah Swanson, Mr. Krugman, Jessica Butts, Natalie Parrillo, Arway (Emily) Tan, Cindy Maquet, Addie Pampalone, Jennifer McDonald, Carolyn Muh, Jessica Nastal, Susan Lorenc, Meghan Landers, Holly Small, Stacey Lane, Julie Orozco, Nicole Joy, Amanda Champlin, Liz Stimes, Kari Fredrich, Lori Achilles, Anne Boswell, Christine Paulik, Michelle Ricca, Miranda Moses, Lindsay Monco, Sarah Forillo, Barb Allen, Colleen Dziedzic, Natalie Kleehammer, Elizabeth Berger, Caitlyn Bouton, Kara Jilek, Heather Frank, Meg (?), Jim Hoff, Mandi Torello, Di Ander, Shamra Fallon, Melissa Rausch, Jennifer Schoonover, Kelly Parrish **(45 Members)**
4 Guests: Dr. Russell (DG 58 Superintendent), Mr. Miller & Mrs. Smitley (4th grade) and Mrs. Gergits (Reading Specialist)

Meeting Call to Order by Presiding Officer: Maggie Kurcz at **7:05pm**

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Whittier PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Our mission requires that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) be central to our work and used in our day-to-day decisions and actions.
The Whittier PTA strives to create a kind, responsive culture where all feel welcome.

Exec Board Introduction: Intros from the 2022-2023 Board

2022-2023 Goals & End of Year Survey Results

- **Results 2021-22 Family End-of-Year Survey -** feedback from families was used to inform PTA goals
  - 29 respondents
  - Email is preferred communication (flyers 2nd, FB 3rd)
  - Membership expressed interest in a more dynamic newsletter (done!)
  - Respondents indicated they would like to have more dynamic/interactive meetings
  - PTA was rated 3.9 out of 5 for being welcoming
    - Note: not all feel welcome and heard in the PTA (Yet) - the goals address this
- **Outlined Goals for the 2022-2023 PTA:**
  - Re-engagement
    - Increase awareness/knowledge of the PTA and Membership
    - Embody "You Belong in PTA" (National PTA Campaign)
  - Social/fun
    - Encourage a sense of community, gather! (we have been so isolated)
    - Find creative ways to add playfulness and fun to our work (with students and adults!)
  - Improved Communications
    - Streamline communication, ecommerce, etc through Memberhub
    - Revamp our website - done!
  - Documentation
    - Document roles, responsibilities, events, etc. (utilize a Google Workspace for volunteers)
    - Set future volunteers up for success!

Approval of the Minutes: The 5/17/22 minutes were approved (and later seconded)

Guest Speakers:
Dr. Russell, DG58 Superintendent to speak about the District 58 2022 Referendum (HERE). *(A survey was sent to Whittier families in an effort to gather questions/comments about the referendum prior to this meeting, these were presented.)*

- Open houses at the middle schools – O'Neill 10/13 and Herrick 10/17 - families can view the facilities
- Dr Russell shared and reviewed the facts contained in THIS flyer.
- Questions from membership:
    - Timing: Construction likely would not start until Summer 2023 – A/C units on an 18-month backlog, DG58 has to pay fair wages, and bid packages need to be put together
    - Will likely make summers as long as possible for construction purposes, so may end the school year earlier (around Memorial Day) in 2023, 2024 and 2025. Families will get advanced notice.
    - Seek to align school calendars with District 99
    - A question about the uptick in fights/misbehavior at Herrick – Dr. Russell is aware, and this has been and is being addressed; not more than other middle schools
    - Redistricting – Elementary boundaries will have to be looked at, task force said they will do so after the referendum is passed; goal is to ensure equity in square footage per student
    - If the referendum is passed, the district will immediately go to strategic planning
    - Note other budget changes will likely be made if the referendum is passed, e.g., potentially a full day kindergarten will be offered, since the district won't need to set aside large amounts for maintenance patches / projects
    - If the referendum does not pass, none of these projects will be done, but the district will re-evaluate its options
- 4th Grade Teachers: Mr. Miller and Mrs. Smitley - gave exciting Math, Science and Social Studies updates from 4th grade!
- Mrs. Gergits: Gave updates on her work as Whittier's Reading Specialist, as well as an update on Weeds & Seed Club. This will be the last year for the school garden - the tree nearby is shading the area and plants are not able to thrive. The garden boxes are up for grabs! Contact Mrs. Gergits if interested.

Treasurer's Report - Carol Avila
- SY 2021 - 2022 Audit Report
    - A motion was put forth to by Michelle Ricca (Audit Committee Member) to vote to approve the 2021-22 audit report - motion seconded, voted and passed
- Current Financials as of 8/31/22 were presented (attached to the end of these minutes)

Secretary's Report - Cindy Maquet
- Newsletter goes out weekly (can submit items through website or text/email Maggie or Cindy)
- Room Parent Liaisons (review of roles and expectations) - all have been selected
- Classroom Halloween Parties- **Monday, Oct 31st**
    - The only in-school classroom party of the year will be 1:00-1:45pm (2pm early dismissal)
    - 4 volunteers max per classroom
    - Time for craft/snack/game/book (at discretion of room parent)
    - Parade will be same day (Mon, Oct 31) at 12:30-1:00pm (parents/guardians/families encouraged to attend - will be outdoors in the pavement of upper playground)

Co-Vice President's Report - Britta Waszak and Sarah Swanson
- Kindergarten Playdate - well attended and successful
- Incoming Kindergarten (New Whittier Families) Signs - received lots of positive feedback

Co-Presidents Report - Susan Ourada and Maggie Kurcz Wiescinski
- Memberhub Updates
    - New system for membership and Whittier Weekly newsletter - working well!
    - Membership numbers thus far - 163 memberships thus far, a new record!
    - Need 30 more families - to have 80% of Whittier families represented in the PTA

    - It was noted - to be able to vote in a meeting, you must be a member!
- PTA website: The website was re-vamped before the start of school!
- Committee Chair Social - was well-attended and received positive feedback
- Open Committees - Young Rembrandts and Author Fest. - Need volunteer by end of the week for YR
- Marketing/Promotion Guidelines - since the start of the school year, the PTA has received several requests to recruit/promote for outside organizations. Guidelines are needed to be consistent and fair. DG58 already has a process to market such opportunities.
    - New guidelines (see linked above) are in compliance with DG58 process and state that the PTA Facebook page, Whittier Weekly Newsletter and PTA webpage are meant for promoting events and activities related to the PTA, Whittier Elementary School and District 58
    - Note: So Whittier Families do not miss out on these exciting opportunities within our community, the Whittier PTA will include a link to the district E-flyer in its weekly newsletter (Whittier Weekly).
    - Susan Ourada made a motion to approve the PTA Marketing and Promotion Guidelines, it was seconded, voted, motion passed.

Principal's Report

- Whittier Spirit Wear is coming!
- Assessment packets will be coming home with students this week, which will include fall MAP scores; AIMS Web testing for some, IAR scores will be coming home for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders.
- Teacher Wish Lists - last year's total $2,900, this year $2763.03
    - A motion was made to approve the teacher wish lists, let sit for 30-days for a vote at our Oct 25th meeting. Motion, seconded, approved.
- Gaga Ball Pit Platform: PTA families built the pit a few years ago, now the school is in need of volunteers to build a platform around the pit, as that area becomes very muddy in inclement weather. There is money available in the Outdoor Improvement Fund for this work - just need some volunteers!

Committee Reports

- **Family Fun/Back-to-School Bash** - Meghan Landers -
    - Bash was new this year (used funds left over from parts of the end of the school year event that were canceled due to weather). Lots of positive feedback.
    - Family Fun - first restaurant fundraiser was this evening, hoping to have ~1/month.
    - Question was raised about daddy/daughter or father/son dance - discussion began, presiding officer made a point of order to table discussion to New Business - topic was not on the agenda.
- **Hot Chocolate Fun Run** - Britta Waszak
    - 10/21@ 4:15pm, race starts at 4:45pm - note this is a day off for school.
- **Hot Chocolate Fun Run Experiences** - Julie Orozco
    - Experiences are now live!
    - Credit card only this year, BUT NO FEES!
- **Reflections** - Christine Paulik and Jenn McDonald
    - Theme this year is Show Your Voice, more info coming in newsletters
- **Green Team**
    - The butterfly garden on Whittier's property is still in planning
    - A landscaping vendor fell through so Kelly Freely is working hard to secure another
- **Walking Club** - Susan Lorenc
    - Will begin the first week of October and run for 3-weeks
    - Sign-up Genious posted for parent/guardian volunteers (see link above)
- **Variety Show** - Melissa Rausch
    - Will be held on March 4th

Unfinished Business - None

New Business

- Resumed discussion about inclusive naming of PTA events
  - Questions were raised about precedence set by other schools whose naming conventions include gender-specific (son/daughter) and/or relationship-specific (mom/dad) titles - flyers were presented from Kingsley, Indian Trails, and Pierce Downer PTA events
  - Several individuals spoke to their positive personal experiences/memories with gender-specific and/or relationship-specific events in the past
  - Several individuals spoke on the history of these events; potential for fundraising and concerns that engagement might be lower with a "family" event
  - Concerns mentioned around other PTA events/activities (such as a fun run for those with disabilities and fun lunch for those with food allergies); also 6th grade is the only grade without a specific "Fall Experience" - the question was raised as to where inclusion efforts end.
    - It was noted that the fun run has many other activities - DJ, pre-race activities, etc - running is not required to participate in this family event
  - Mr. Krugman noted that the process to change to more inclusive naming was in motion prior to COVID; keeping us aligned with District and National PTA guidelines.
  - Noting time, the presiding officer moved to have the discussion resume at our October 25th meeting with possible representation from District 58 and National/State PTA - motion was seconded. The item will be placed on the Oct 25th agenda - all members who wish to engage in conversation will have a chance to prepare for respectful discussion and debate.
  - It was also noted that a special meeting could be called by the presiding officer - this was declined, as the Oct 25th meeting was already on membership's calendars

- Vote Yes DG58
  - Barb Allen made a motion to vote on PTA membership's support of the DG58 Referendum - seconded, voted and approved.
  - As voted, the Whittier PTA supports the DG 58 Referendum
  - The PTA cannot actively promote this on school property (cannot hand out literature or have signs on the physical school property).
  - You can on public or private property adjacent to the school, just not on school grounds.

Announcements

- Next Meeting: **Tuesday, Oct 25th at 7:00pm**

Time Adjourned: **9:30pm**