

Holmes PTO Executive Board Meeting Minutes September 29, 2023

➤ Principal Update

- Back to School picnic has been cancelled due to rain. We are in the process of rescheduling for a date in October and the event will have an earlier start time at 4 pm.
- Construction update: rebidding process for all of the trade subs is currently underway. The bids received in June weren't very competitive and costs were high. We are undergoing the rebidding process to secure more realistic costs and reputable workers. Two more classrooms were added to the overall construction plans for Holmes. Questions were asked about increased population from the new residential developments and how Holmes would be able to accommodate any increase in students.
- SBAC scores were sent home to parents. Holmes scored very well overall on language arts, math and science. This was a result of the school staff zeroing in on priority standards and are making sure that students are understanding concepts. Small group work is credited to helping students receive such good scores. Questions were asked about the difference between SCBAC and OLSAT testing – OSLAT is used to screen 5th graders for math acceleration for 6th grade.
- Paula was pleased to share that there was very little teacher turnover and it has been a very positive start to the school year. Holmes welcomed the return of Mrs. Epifano in Kindergarten and Mr. Gottshall as the new music teacher (previously was a student teacher at Ox Ridge last year). Students are really connecting with Mr. Gotshall. Mr. Mongardi joined the staff as the new Spanish teacher after teaching Kindergarten in Ridgefield last year. Miss Rosso left to teach in her home state of MA.

➤ Co-chair Update

- This year's Co-Chairs are Cameron Sokolik and Kathy Jabara. Caitlin Cahill has transitioned off of the Holmes PTO Exec Board.
- The Back to School picnic will be rescheduled due to rain. PTO is looking at Friday, October 27 as the new date.
- The school year calendar is limiting and October is a busy month with two fundraisers including the Walk-a-thon and 5th Grade Bingo Night. This year the Walk-a-thon features pledge pages for each student that can be customized and sent out to family and friends. The PTO has been asked to help get the word out to encourage support both events. The website team is working on a survey to determine how parents obtain info and school/PTO news, and what their most read source of information is.
 - New this year: the Walk-a-thon will feature a bubble machine and a move station in addition to walking. Pledge pages/donations will be open for a week after the event.
- Co-chairs have asked the PTO for any and all ideas to refresh fundraising efforts

- Evaluating best practices in communication for incoming Kindergarten parents and families who are new to Holmes. Discussion included distributing info on events and how to get involved at Holmes and where to find specific information/news. Solution was to distribute at Kindergarten playdate, Back to School Night, etc.
- To encourage more participation at Coffee with Principals, it was discussed that more detailed information should be sent out describing what the event covers and that it's an open forum to ask questions.

➤ Vice Chair Update

- This year's Vice Chairs are Courtney Hrycay and Catherine Palazola.
- Room Parent meetings took place last week and information on Room Parent duties as been distributed. Goal is to have communications coming from Room Parents once a week.

➤ Treasurer Update

- Courtney Hrycay has transitioned out of the Co-Treasurer role and has been replaced by Danielle Gallagher.
- Budgets were sent to committees in the spring and committees should reach out if they didn't receive their budget or have any questions.
- Event updates: Back to School Picnic has made \$4,000 and the Walk-a-thon is currently at \$1600. Donations for the Walk-a-thon will remain open until October 13. Due to having reschedule the Back to School Picnic, refunds will be given to families if needed, but donations have been encouraged.
- Upcoming events include Mom's Night Out (ticket sales currently at \$1600) and Bingo Night (29 tickets sold to date).
- Outfitters fall sale was very successful check will come in October.

➤ Enrichment Update

- Whale Mobile will visit Holmes on November 1st for first through fifth grades.
- There will be an author visit on Tuesday, April 9th with Dan Santat. The Enrichment Chairs are asking for his books to be included at the Book Fair in October and available for class read-alouds.
- Exploring having Bash the Trash come to Holmes in April around Earth Day.
- Coordinating a visit from Dance China to take place in January to coincide with Chinese New Year. Other Darien elementary schools are also working to have Dance China visit during this time.
- The Committee is reaching out to grade leads to coordinate grade specific enrichment activities.
- Additional considerations for enrichment opportunities this year include Magic of Science and Christmas/Kwanzaa/Hanukkah holiday show.
- The district is working on an Initiative to bring in a Blues band to all elementary schools for grades 3-5 in May (may potentially include all grades).

- There is room in the Enrichment budget to add more programs for the 2023-2024 school year.

➤ DEI Update

- Committee is working to organize a Lunar New Year feast which will take place outside of school.
- DEI Committee will have a booth at the Book Fair that will include a map activity with a US map and world map for students and parents to identify where they are and where they would like to travel to. The map will then become a bulletin board that shows the school community's involvement.
- Heritage Night will take place on January 18 at Holmes and will require lots of parent/student involvement. Families will be encouraged to sign up for a booth and bring in activities, info, etc. to showcase their heritage or celebrations that are meaningful to them.
- The annual Cookie Exchange will take place around the holidays.
- Additional initiatives for this year include Kindness Week and Movie Night (scheduled for May 16).

➤ Fundraising Update

- Mariana Kniffin and Marirose are committee members who are organizing community events and will work closely with social committee to so as to not overlap events.
- A main focus at the moment is securing a venue and date for the Spring fundraiser. Options being explored include The Villages/The Wheel or The Loading Dock. The committee is working on proposals, site visits and pricing, and want to make this event enticing for many parents to attend. Date considerations are April 5 and April 26.
- The committee is crowdsourcing ideas for ways to enhance the charitable aspect of the event in addition to a silent auction, raffle items, etc.