

Holmes PTO Exec Board Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2026

1. Principal Updates

- a. Ribbon cutting will take place on October 8th as ceremonial opening of the school. A few 5th graders will give tours of the building, and town officials will attend. Still a few punch list items to be done, but the major work is done.
- b. Parent Teacher conferences – dismissal is at 11:30 and will serve breakfast for lunch since “lunch” will start at 9:30am. Conferences will still be 20 min segments.
- c. Parent Square – still working on getting used to the new communication system. Can no longer text parents with the new platform. Aspen Go to be used for absences, but still email teacher, office, and nurse for any absences to ensure children are accounted for. Paula encouraged parents to call main office for assistance and with any feedback.
- d. Arrival protocols have changed slightly to try to alleviate the traffic on Hoyt Street and to continue to keep children safe. Dismissal pickup protocols remain the same.
- e. Reduction of screen usage in school is based on research that has found students are not learning as much with screen usage. Schools are being much more selective on where they use screens during class time. Going back to a lot of the practices that were in place before screens were encouraged. District wants to make sure that kids know how to use technology and that they were comfortable using technology, and now we are implementing less screen time. Paula explained how Brain Breaks with Danny Go and Go Noodle are used, and that videos are still used in music to help demonstrate.
- f. Dr. Dadd has agreed to come and do a presentation for parents on how to say no to children.
- g. Feedback from several parents in attendance was that they did not like students in younger grades using IXL and having homework in second grade.
- h. Front of school bike rack is no longer in use to eliminate congestion of bike riders at dismissal time. Would love to come up with an idea on how to make the bike rack more beautiful for now!

2. PTO Updates and Introductions

3. CDSP Updates

- a. Parent Square – goal was to have a central communication hub to share news and updates from DPS. Parent/Teacher conferences in 2026-2027 were based on parent feedback and adjusted to help accommodate parents and their schedules. Parents are encouraged to sign up for evening meetings as this was a specific request. Sign up for conferences will be done through Parent Square for

consistency across all schools. The new district communications director is working on how-to videos for all of the new apps.

- b. Reviewed tax exemption allotment, budget and cap per student for each school.

4. Co-Chair Update

- a. Reminder to have families update student information in Membership Toolkit for this school year.
- b. Suggestion to send out a newsletter to parents with information on new Parent Square and Aspen Go apps and how to use them – can pull information from Paula’s recent communication to parents.
- c. Playground update – starting a fundraising campaign as \$400,000 is needed for one new playground and 50% deposit is required to order the equipment. Campaign will be launched on a Monday with amounts that equal to certain parts of the equipment, sponsorships levels will vary starting at \$500. The plan is to have fundraising initiatives throughout the year. Current PTO funds have \$70,000 that can go towards the playground. Donors will be recognized with signage on the playground. This campaign does not replace the Direct Appeal. Will have posters at school events to encourage donations. The campaign is not being run by the Fundraising Committee.
- d. Bingo Reminder – encouraged sign ups
- e. Book Fair will take place November 11-13

5. Treasurer Update

- a. Text Kathryn or Danielle for any important needs, storefront setups, etc. Trying to move away from cash as much as possible – electronic payments are much easier to track.

6. DEI Update

- a. Back to school bulletin boards and Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur boards were created
- b. A foodie dinner will take place this fall
- c. Cookies and Cocktails for the holidays will take place in December
- d. Heritage Night will be on February 4
- e. Holi event – May 14, rain date of May 21. Partner with Green Team for supplies.

7. Fundraising

- a. Discussion to do a winter fundraiser, something like ice skating
- b. Darien Sport Shop cannot do fall shopping card event - will try to work with them for the spring
- c. Bareburger give back night may take place in October
- d. Direct Appeal to start in November
- e. Committee has started working on spring event
- f. Fundraising and Social Committees to work together event/initiatives as to not overlap

8. Enrichment

- a. Flamenco dancers to come in September in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month
- b. Spring – Earth Dome in April, Irish dancers
- c. Author visit in February
- d. Grade level programs are underway

9. Special Education

- a. Working on implementing Best Buddies program at the elementary level (currently in place at DHS), focusing on friendship, community and kindness. Working on tentative meeting schedule to send out to parents.
- b. For students that receive services there are new trackers for service hours that have been implemented this year and communication has gone out to parents to track services received and missed.