

St Peter's School Parents Association Meeting
Friday, November 21, 2014

1. Welcome! Announcements:

- Annual giving is under way—if you give to any non-profits before the end of the calendar year, please consider giving to St. Peter's.
- Next book club— a return to the classics with *Huck Finn*. Meeting is on Jan 22, 2015.
- *SPS Family Fun Night at 76ers*—Jan 30. There is a link in the weekly newsletter to sign up. \$25/ticket.

2. Jess Cronin-Connolly, Kindergarten Teacher and Director of Community Life (j.cronin-connolly@st-peters-school.org)

Martin Luther King Day of Service – Monday, January 19, 2015: In School

Day

- This is a day of service rather than a day off of school to provide further education and enrichment for SPS students and families. Last year's activities were with coordinated with Episcopal Community Services (ECS). St. Peter's is continuing to build that partnership and creating new ones this year.
- We're in the beginning stages of planning. All students participate for a full day (not PK and Preschool—they do their regular 1/2 days and lunch bunch).
- There will be a collection for cleaning supplies, painting supplies, etc. The students will go to different locations throughout city to clean up parks, volunteer at shelters, nursing homes, etc.
- What will happen day of: day will begin with guest speakers talking about the importance of community service, non profits, and missions abroad that will address the MLK message of working together for the greater good. After the speakers there will be a service project and then lunch (on or off site). After lunch, there will be an assembly at Old Pine. One student from each project will speak about the work their respective groups performed that day. There will also be reflective component to the assembly. Parents will be invited to the afternoon assembly.
- Jess is making sure projects are age appropriate. For example: US students will work directly with ECS. ECD will make cards and sort items for baskets of supplies.
- The entire day will be focused, so there will be no down time. If students are not working on a specific project, they will collect supplies, etc.
- A very special thank you Mollie Suddath, who helped SPS build the program with ECS last year.

- Jess is still looking for organizations and speakers if parents have any connections or suggestions.

3. Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day, Tuesday November 25, 2014

- Schedule of program is the same as last year with dismissal at noon. The schedule is in the newsletter.

Parents are welcome but seats are limited during the concert and we ask that parents offer to stand to allow all grandparents to be seated.

Parent question: Do all grades stick to the schedule? Yes. But teachers are keeping things open in the classroom so that projects that can be picked up on at any time as grandparents visit multiple students in different classrooms. Parents can accompany guests here to make sure that they find their proper classroom.

- Coffee and snacks for the reception will be catered so parents do not need to do anything.

4. Karin Morse, Director of Development, (kmorse@st-peters-school.org)

Holiday Sale Updates, December 4th – 7th, 2014

Wreath Decorating Thurs, Dec 4th

Volunteer Opportunities Dec 5th – 7th

- Grateful for those who have already signed up to volunteer. Note: If you can't fulfill the slot that you signed up for, please try to get a replacement.

- Volunteering for the holiday sales events is a great opportunity for St. Peter's and the community. Many families learn about the school through the sale.

- All proceeds go towards financial aid.

- There are still volunteer slots available for Friday afternoon and during the Saturday Santa breakfast. We are also still in need of a clean up crew (Saturday at 6pm)! Please sign up on the board in the lobby. All light and fun activities!

- This year's sale is only trees, wreaths, and greens. SPS spirit ware will be for sale throughout the season inside school via the Development office.

- The St. Peter's merchandise pop up shop will be before and after the holiday sale and will feature wine glasses/tumblers and other merchandise. All St. Peter's items are always available in the development office.

- There will be a pop up shop of SPS spirit ware during Grandparents' and Special Friends' day. The 50-50 raffle for the auction can be purchased as well.

- Suggestions for St. Peter's merchandise and clothing: add online sales at some point with a link in the weekly newsletter and from the website. Request to include adult sizes.

5. Molly Hughes Lavino, mfhughes1@me.com

Turning Points for Children Holiday Toy Drive

- Turning Points has two holiday programs. An adopt-a-family program, and a Toy Shop. St. Peter's will be collecting toys for the annual toy shop, at which families who take part in Turning Points programs, are able to come in and choose toys and gifts for their family members.

About Turning Points: Turning Points is responsible for managing a system of care of Philadelphia that includes child abuse and neglect prevention services, foster care, and adoption services. Their mission is to support families in raising safe, healthy, educated, and strong children by partnering with their caregivers, to help them develop and strengthen protective qualities, and by offering them the tools, skills, and resources they need to ensure their children's optimal development. They help parents and foster parents be the best parents they can be, when faced with the most difficult and challenging life circumstances.

<http://www.turningpointsforchildren.org/>

- Last year was first year St. Peter's worked with Turning Points. The organization was chosen because it is specific to Philadelphia and they have a sizeable network.

Parent question: Will there be a flyer to send home with kids to inform parents? This will be worked on.

Parent question: Can we reinstate a former St. Peter's program in which there was a tree (or non denominational equivalent—perhaps a winter tree branch on which to hang snow flakes) on which to hang ornaments that state gift needs or gifts donated? All agreed to this. Molly will compile a list of needs for specific ages, so, for example, one ornament will say “gift for an 8 year old boy.” This is a way to communicate and engage the students in the program. Once the gift is purchased, the matching ornament goes on the tree. This will be especially beneficial for ECD so that they understand why they are giving. Molly, Claire, and Amy will help coordinate.

- No wrapped gifts, please. This is about the families—they need to be able to come choose the gifts for their children once they are collected by Turning Points. We are supplying the gifts for them to choose (not giving the gifts).

6. Jenna McNeill and Claire DiNardo, claire@arionda.net

ECD Pajama and Book Drive

Note: dates are tentative

- Collection Items: New and lightly used Pajamas and Books for children of all ages

- Collection Recipients: Official List TBD but we are targeting: Drueding Center in the old Kensington neighborhood. (A transitional shelter for women and children, many of whom are

victims of domestic violence), the Camden Neighborhood Center, and St. Barnabus Mission of ECS.

- Drop off Large Collection boxes to the ECD classrooms: 12/2/14
- Drive Start Date: 12/3/14
- Drive End Date: 12/16/14
- ECD Classes PJ Dress Day: TBD (some time the week of 12/15/14)
- Card Making activity: TBD (based on teacher's class schedules)
- First Communication to PS, PK and K parents: email 11/24/14
- Second Communication to PS, PK and K parents: email and red bag flyer 12/2/14
- First Reminder to PS, PK and K parents: e-mail 12/8/14
- Final reminder to PS, PK and K parents: email 12/15/14.
- ECD Class Parent Primary Point of Contact: PS – Meghan Thorell, PK - Claire DiNardo, K: Juhi Saigal-Shah
- There will be no party this year so that the focus is solely on the drive. Teachers will include the drive as part of the curriculum. Pajama day will further engage the student.

Parent question: Are the pajamas just for the children or should we donate adult/parent pajamas too? TBD.

- Books are accepted as well, but pajamas are preferred.

7. Diana Urbanchuk, Teacher Appreciation Chair, (diana@urbanchuk.com)

Thanksgiving Notes to Teachers

Holiday Gifts for Homeroom, Advisory and Special Subject Teachers

- The teacher appreciation lunch needs to be in the Spring this year because of some calendar changes.

- In the meantime, all are encouraged to send note of thanks to students' teachers for Thanksgiving. There is no need to spend money. This is to recognize teachers during the Thanksgiving holiday. Diana can be contacted directly for creative ideas.

-Planning for holiday staff/faculty gifts: Diana has compiled gifting recommendations by division. Class Parents- if you have any questions regarding these instructions, please feel free to reach out to Diana, Kate, or Amy.

2014-2015 HOLIDAY AND END OF YEAR TEACHER GIFTS RECOMMENDATIONS

St. Peter's School families traditionally join together to provide holiday and end-of-the-year gifts to the teachers, administrators and directors of the school. The Parent's Association hopes these recommendations will help guide Class Parents and families in their generous gift giving.

ECD & LOWER SCHOOL

CLASS GIFTS

- *We recommend that the Class Parents coordinate gifts as a class, although it is not compulsory for any family to contribute.*
- *Please be sure to gift the Teacher, Assistants/Assistant Teachers and the Divisional Directors from any money collected from families.*
- *There is no need to provide gifts to other teachers within the same grade.*
- *Divisional Directors:*
 - *Preschool - Grade 2: K. Seltzer*
 - *Grade 2 - Grade 5: M. Evans.*
- *All students' names should be included on the card, regardless of the family's choice to contribute.*
- *All Class parents within a division are welcome to work together to provide a single or coordinated gift to the Divisional Director.*
- *Personalized gifts created by the children and coordinated by Class Parents outside of classroom hours are always appreciated.*
- *Collected class money does not need to be utilized for Special Subject teachers in lieu of the school wide collection box.*

UPPER SCHOOL

ADVISOR GIFTS

- *Class Parents in 5th/6th Grades should combine their gift money to be divided between the four advisors equally. (M. Evans, M. Gibfried, B. Patel, S. Rekstad)*
- *Class Parents in 7th/8th Grades should combine their gift money to be divided between the four advisors equally. (Brewer, R. Foster, K. Hadden, Parker)*
- *It is not compulsory for any family to contribute to the group gift.*
- *Personalized gifts and cards created by the children and coordinated by Class Parents outside of classroom hours are always appreciated.*
- *All students' names should be included on the card, regardless of the family's choice to contribute.*
- *Collected class money does not need to be utilized for Special Subject teachers in lieu of the school wide collection box.*

ALL SCHOOL

SPECIAL SUBJECT TEACHERS, FACILITIES, ADMINISTRATION

- *School-wide collection box will be provided at reception desk for these individuals.*
- *Families should be encouraged to contribute via the designated box in reception.*

9. Catherine Signorello, Auction Chairwoman 2015, csignorello23@msn.com,
Passport to Paris Spring Auction March 29, 2015

- Nadine and Catherine are co-chairs.
- There is now a Save-the-Date card with corporate sponsors to date. There are options for sponsorship available at various levels. Ask Catherine or Nadine if interested. Cards will be in reception and will be updated as needed.
- Now is the time to collect auction items. Class parents should disseminate info re: items for donation. Class parents, please contact Catherine if you have any questions regarding item donation.
- There is a need for bottles of wine, \$20 or above. Three families are pulling together the cases for the auction. Please help those families—if you have a bottle of wine to donate, please let Catherine know.
- We are looking for matching sponsor for the 50-50 raffle total. This can be an individual or a company.
- Please talk up buying a raffle ticket. They will begin selling the auction raffle tickets this week at Grandparents and Special Friends day. The price is \$25 per ticket and 5 for \$100.
- If anyone banks with TD Bank, we'd love to have them as a community sponsor!

8. James Lavino, Chair of Strategic Plan Traditions Committee, jameslavino@comcast.net,
Strategic Plan Goal Specific to Traditions
Updates and Discussions

- James is an alumnus (Class of 1987) and current trustee.
- 4 out of 7 traditions committee members were present at the meeting.
- Recap of strategic plan: 18 months ago began work with outside consultant. Formed committee of 10 members—3 faculty, 3 parents, 3 board members, and Shawn Kelly. Data was gathered (focus groups—faculty, students, parents, and alumni interviews). There was a weekend-long strategic plan conference attended by 75 people. All constituents worked to distill the gathered data. There were numerous meetings to create, draft, and revise the plan. The new plan consists of 10 goals to be executed over the next 5 years. We are now in the implementation phase and a new set of sub-committees have been formed, i.e. Endowment, Communications, Faculty & Retention, Traditions.
- The Traditions committee is discussing and planning, but not implementing anything new this year. Traditions include school service, declamation, May Day, Harvest Festival.
- Definition of traditions: it's important to remember that many things (ex: red book bags for

ECD) are part of the school's traditions; they're not just events. They are what make our community and brand us.

Parent comment: Traditions are often the things that students look forward to, like the book bags, buddies system, ushering at declamation, day after graduation for rising students. They can be quiet things but they are unique to St. Peter's and a significant part of the students' lives here.

Parent question: Parents appreciated the historical perspective given this year on the tradition of Morris Dancing and where it came from. Can the Morris Sword dancing be same day as Harvest Festival? It's hard for working parents to attend everything. This is the sort of thing the committee will address. It will ask why we are doing things. Where did the traditions come from? Do the students know why they're doing them?

Parent question: What happened to "Souling" event the day after Halloween? Did scheduling change because Nov 1 was a Saturday? Is it on hold but not eliminated? This is the kind of thing the committee will evaluate.

Parent question: Is it possible to add information about schedules and traditions to the Weekly Newsletter? And if something is on the calendar can there be a blurb about it? Or can information be on the board in reception? For example, what is the Hanukkah play? Who participates? Who attends? Amy chairs the communications committee and they are working on how best to convey this kind of information to all constituents.

Parent question: What happens at school service? The religious aspect of the service and the school is unclear.

Jess C. response: There are 10-15 minutes for a guest speaker, usually a community member or religious leader. Then Shawn Kelly speaks. Subjects are open-ended. There is a small prayer component. Hymns are sung.

Discussion: Are we or aren't we a religious school? Clarity is needed here. What is the message for parents and students? How is the school perceived?

Parent comment: We need to offer options. We all have distinct feelings about religion. We should encourage options and education. We don't have to accept all religions as truth but we should honor our own and others' beliefs.

Discussion re: Bible verse assembly: Bible verse is different than Hanukkah play. The email, which gave the option for students not to participate in the Bible verse assembly was discussed. It reminded us that communication should be between parents and teachers, and not only students and teachers. The question was raised whether the opt-out clause for individual events undermines learning?

Parent question—Do all religions get the same attention? If we commit to being multi-denominational, how would the curriculum reflect that? We want our children to learn and respect all other religions, regardless of what they will participate in at home or in future. These are basic morality issues. All religions should be represented and all have equal weight.

Parent question: Is it true that each student will no longer be recognized individually at graduation? Students have been looking forward to it during their time at St. Peter's. If this is untrue can we dispel the rumor?

Jess C. response: Each student will still be recognized, but maybe by individual teachers who knew them in their time here. With new advisory model, there may be new opportunities for how to do this and how to make it more special for each graduate. Graduates could look forward to finding out which member of the faculty has offered to speak for them and honor them at graduation.

Parent question: Are we looking at how students prepare for events/traditions? What amount of class time is used? The traditions committee is ideal for this and can discuss how to fold preparations into curriculum so that, for example, students are not leaving school work to practice the 8th grade play. How do we make everything part of one big tapestry? How do we concentrate on whole school curriculum? The committee will look at major traditions, but not the grade-specific curricular traditions. And the committee will ask where do these traditions come from? Are they still relevant or merely left over and in need of reconsideration? The committee is working with Matt Evans, Academic Dean, to ensure that the right amount of time is devoted to prepare for each event.

- The evaluation of traditions is an ongoing process meant to be inclusive. James will return to the PA in Feb or March to present preliminary recommendations so parents can weigh in once more. This needs to be a community program, not just a committee initiative.

9. AfterSchool Childcare Program Discussion

Bryan Kerr, ASCP Director bkerr@st-peters-school.org

- Bryan is now in charge of all after school programs (after care and enrichment classes). Bryan could not attend this month's meeting, but will present at a future meeting.

- Bryan is interested in parent feedback as he begins to formulate the enrichment class offerings for the Spring. What do you feel ASCP currently accomplishes for your child?

What would you like it to ideally provide?

What changes would you like to see to increase your usage of ASCP?

If you want to share your answers to these questions, or if there are any changes you'd like to see for next semester, please email the PA (parentsassociation@st-peters-school.org) and Amy and Kate will collate feedback for Bryan.

Parent question: Can there be an online sign up? This will be decided by Bryan.

Enjoy the many upcoming events and vacations! Our next meeting will be **Friday, January 30th, 2015.**

Please email the Parents Association at parentsassociation@st-peters-school.org with any questions or suggestions for upcoming agendas.