

Parents Association Meeting Minutes

10/2/15

1. Attendee introductions

2. Introductions of officers and event chairs:

Officers

Jennie Kerson Pritzker, Co-President

Daisy Fried, Co-President

Jenna McNeill, Vice-President, ECD

Jodi Lokoff, Vice-President, Lower School

Gage Johnston, Vice-President, Upper School

Gigi Lamm, Secretary

Event Chairs

Harvest Festival Chair: Suzanne O'Brien

Teacher Appreciation Chairs: Claire DiNardo and Mollie Suddath

Holiday Festival Chair: Sibyl Lindsay

Auction Co-Chairs: Ann Louise Markham & TBA (We are looking for another co-chair if anyone is interested!)

3. Opening Remarks

- We—all parents—are the parents association. Meetings are for disseminating and sharing information but also a place where we can address all questions, concerns, and any topics you'd like.
- There is a request for information and comments at the end of the agenda. Please feel free to hand it in to Daisy or Jenny or email it to parentsassociation@st-peters-school.org

4. Introduction of Courtney Morsberger, Advancement Associate, and Dena Hillison, Communications and Special Events Coordinator

- The advancement and communications office is now in the basement.
- Dena works on all communications and events including the weekly newsletters, the Harvest and Holiday festivals, the auction, etc.
- Courtney works on all development initiatives including the annual fund, capital campaign, major gifts, etc.

5. Harvest Festival info.

- Harvest Festival will take place on October 16 following Color Day.
- There will be a build up to the Friday event throughout "spirit week" (themed, non-uniform days).
- After color announcements and activities, all classes will return to their rooms and then go to the lot for the festival, which will include games, activities, music, and food. Bryan Kerr will emcee, Mr. Silver's band will play, and highlights include the pie eating contest and the annual bake-off (prizes include a \$100 Williams Sonoma gift certificate, dinner at Townsend, and other great items!). There will be a coat & bag check.

- About 20 parent volunteers are needed for games and other tables. There will be a volunteer sign up board in reception.
- There will be advanced and day of ticket sales for all games and activities. Ticket revenue goes towards the expenses of the festival.
- Harvest festival is for the entire neighborhood and community—not just SPS families.

6. Guest Speakers:

Shawn Kelly, Headmaster

- What is school culture? At its base/core it is a feeling. It is how we interact with each other, what our expectations are. It is how we communicate with one another and all parties play an equal role in all aspects of school culture: students, faculty, staff and parents.
- Everything is curriculum: academic, athletic, and social activities; facilities, etc. All of us need to take care of everything about the school so that is a “drama-free zone” for the students who need to focus all of their attention on what they need to learn in order to exist in our complex world, to focus on skills that are most productive.
- Students are participating in solution-based learning—through all communication and curriculum, we help our children deal with issues that come up in life, in and out of school, whether they are social or academic. We teach them how to process their struggles.
- Good communication is how to foster solution-based learning—through parents at home and teachers at school. And it is important to remember that students behave differently in each location. Parents and teachers need to work together and communicate with one another for students to have successful experiences.
- “Disappointment is not sustainable.” One of the goals at SPS is to teach that students should not live a life of disappointment. They need to learn to be advocates for themselves and to do everything in their power to have positive experiences at SPS and ongoing throughout their lives.
- If there are issues, please talk to your child’s teacher first. Open communication is key, but it is most efficient to move up the hierarchy. If you approach Mr. Kelly with the issue initially, it undermines the teachers’ role. 95% of issues get resolved at the teacher/parent level.
- Resolutions to any issues should be one of the following: SPS recognizes its error, parent gains a better understanding of what occurred and/or what needs to occur to move forward, or all parties agree to disagree with at least an understanding between all parties.
- Schools are becoming a place where conversation is not happening and certain topics are not allowed and there is no room for addressing certain questions and issues. What we are doing at SPS should always allow for discourse, whether parties agree or disagree. Mr. Kelly always open discussing any matters and believes in an open door policy.

Will Nord, Admissions and Special Programs Coordinator

- Spent last 12 years at Gladwyne Montessori school
- At SPS he has two roles: admissions and athletics
- There will be an open house October 24. Since August, admissions has given one tour a day. 80% of visiting families know someone here—parents play large role in success of school. It is important for us all to get the word out and tell SPS story.

- Will is consulting re: athletics and looking at the entire SPS program in order to reevaluate it—how can the athletic experience be enhanced? This year a cross-country team was added for 5-8th grade and they are already competing which will be an ongoing and developing goal, as well as adding more athletic choices. The number of students does not allow for large teams but we can consider sports like ultimate frisbee, parkour, tennis, wrestling, crew, etc.
- Please contact Will with any ideas and suggestions. The goal is to make sure new sports are a good fit for SPS and suits the school’s mission. This will be a process to see what works and for which grades.
- To note: these will be afterschool programs, but not part of afterschool enrichment.

7. Questions and Comments

- Is there a way to give to new parents information on what special days look like—where they should stand, what time to arrive, how the day will unfold, etc. There are always questions regarding the expectations of students and parents for each event.
 - An FAQ was started last year—perhaps this can be built upon.
 - It may be best for information regarding special days to be distributed time sensitively prior to each day. Can class parents assist with this?
- Should SPS reinstate host families for new families? Is there an ambassador program currently in place?

8. Miscellaneous

- Teacher Appreciation Program

Teacher/Support Staff Welcome Packages: 9/8/15

Provided for the teachers and support staff members welcoming them back to school and letting them know how much we value their time preparing for the arrival of our children. Each package contained: A bottle of water (with a sticker saying: “Thank you for quenching our thirst for knowledge.”), a pack of Extra gum (with a sticker saying “Thank you for always going the extra mile.”) and a bag of almonds (in keeping with our new staff wellness program). All bags were decorated by two of the students and tagged - “From the SPS Parents”

Random Acts of Appreciation: Throughout the School Year

Will be provided by the TAP team throughout the year to remind the teachers and staff that we recognize their efforts and appreciate all they do for our children. These Acts will be delivered to the staff on scheduled specific dates (not to be disclosed because we want them to be surprised by them!) and will be themed surrounding the season/school activities/school calendar. On average, these Acts will occur on a once/month basis except during months such as May when the National Teacher Appreciation efforts are underway.

Holiday and Year End Gifts: December & June

TAP team will support all Holiday and Year End gift initiatives as defined by the Guidelines issued by the Parents Association officers and will support all Class Parent projects including providing the special subject teacher gift boxes for the lobby and managing the distribution of these funds with the administration.

Teacher Appreciation Luncheon: 1/25/16

This event needs to be structured a little differently than in prior years because, unlike past years, there are no In-Service or Development Days that can be used for this initiative due to the loss of school days for events such as the Papal Visit to Philadelphia. As a result, through consultation with school staff, the sit down luncheon will be replaced with a buffet style luncheon allowing staff to enjoy the home made goodies throughout the day when their schedules permit. For participating parents, the event will essentially be the same from a signup, contribution & delivery perspective with the exception of the fact that the buffet will be set up on the lower level of the school instead of in the theater since school will be in-session that day.

Teacher Appreciation Week Activities: May 2-6 2016

Buffet Breakfast: Tuesday 5/3/16 (National Teacher Appreciation Day) 7:30 – 9:00 AM. This initiative will be similar to what was provided for the staff and teachers in 2014 - a buffet table of danish, bagels, juice, yogurt bars, and other yummy treats from Cake and the Beanstalk.

Notes of Recognition and Appreciation: An email request for one liner recognition and shout outs for the lobby monitor and blank note cards will be distributed to the parents and students on April 18th for receipt back by April 29th providing adequate time for distribution to the staff/teachers and for display on the lobby monitor during the entire week of May 2-6. Additionally, the TAP team will support all Class Parent projects and gift giving initiatives that occur during this week of appreciation.

Upcoming Events

Color Day, Friday Oct. 16 2:30 p.m.

Harvest Festival, Friday Oct. 16, after Color Day

Dates of future Parents Association meetings (all Fridays, 8:30-9:30 a.m. in the library):

November 13, 2015

January 15, 2016

February 26, 2016

April 8, 2016

May 20, 2016

Please let us know what topics you would like to see addressed at future Parents' Association meetings. You can e-mail us at parentsassociation@st-peters-school.org, stop us when you see us, or drop a note at the front desk for delivery to the Parents Association mailbox. Thanks for letting us know what's on your mind!