

North Star PTA Meeting

Date/Time: October 10, 2106 7:00pm

Location: North Star Elementary Multi-Purpose Room

Attendance: Attendance sheet in PTA office file

Agenda

Introduction and welcome

Guest Speakers

PTA board member updates

Principal's message

Question and Answer Session

Meeting Adjourned

Board Member Presentations

President

Ann Pollock

Ann called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

We had a wonderful Spirit Fest and would like to thank Carolyn Saints, Tanya Haley, and Jen Palacio for providing fun fitness and dance routines for all of the children. Moon bounce winners will be announced tomorrow.

There is a sign-up genius wish list for the outdoor classroom on nspta.com if anyone would like to contribute something to support the use of the classroom.

We apologize for the missing spirit wear. The vendor will be sending the missing items soon.

The fall family dance party will take place on October 27th from 6pm-8pm. Costumes are optional and a glow stick will be handed out to each child that attends. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

A motion to approve the September 12, 2106 minutes was made by Kristin Freebery. The motion was seconded by Kristen Roebke and the minutes were approved.

The family directory is now active on the website. Please check that your details are correct and let us know if there are updates or changes needed.

Volunteers are needed in the library and a sign-up genius can be found on the website.

Treasurer

Melissa Gannon

We have collected \$2500 in membership dues, on target with the budget. We raised \$8500 during Spirit Fest, short of the \$12000 goal.

A suggestion was made to make an addition to the flyer next time, letting everyone know that if each student contributes 'x' number of dollars, we can reach our goal.

Guest Speakers

Jason Bastianelli, H.B. du Pont Middle School Principal

H.B. du Pont is the number one feeder to the Charter School of Wilmington. The school sent 52 students last year, making up over 20 percent of the current freshman class of 250. It is one of the best middle schools in the state. Students are engaged, having fun, and the teachers are amazing. Children thrive at the school. In the current 6th grade class, 89 students are from North Star. There are 271 sixth graders, 262 seventh graders, and 281 eighth graders. The only students that are not from red clay are those with siblings already attending or those who are children of teachers. There is a long waiting list for to choice into the school. This is Mr. Bastianelli's sixth year at HB and his first year as principal.

There are three levels each of Math and ELA (80 minutes each per day), as well as Honors Social Studies and Honors Science. Science and social studies are each taught for half of the school year. There is an activity block at the end of each day. Teachers choose a topic that they are passionate about and students rank their top 5 choices out of about 80 options. Students could have a different activity each day of the week. There are two exploratories each day and physical education/health is mandatory. The school uses block scheduling.

HB du Pont offers many after school activities and sports. The school has field hockey, girls' lacrosse, wrestling, and basketball champions. There are many other activities offered, such as ceramics club, math league, science Olympiad.

There will be an open house on Thursday November 3rd. There will be different 30 minute presentations to choose from. Tours are offered every Tuesday at 9am and Mr. Bastianelli can take you to see whatever you are interested in seeing.

A parent asked if any foreign languages are offered. There is an after school Spanish program two days per week.

A parent asked how long Mr. Bastianelli intended to stay at HB and he said he does not have any plans to leave. Donna Stack said that the average tenure is four years.

Principal's Message

Last week started grade level morning meeting yoga taught by Kara Patti. It was an amazing sight to see 125 5-year-olds focused and centered first thing in the morning. The goal is to teach the children mindfulness, and that they may bring that confidence and sense of calm to the rest of their day. The program will be offered to the other grades in the upcoming weeks.

The theme for this school year is 'Find your superpower'. Superpowers are things we do all the time without thinking about them. Students are making nominations for heroes to honor this year, ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Students wrote letters to Bill May, the hero

that we chose to honor last year, and firefighters who are recovering after the big Wilmington fire.

Questions

Donna Stack said she would be happy to answer questions about H.B. du Pont middle school. She said it is a great school and they had a wonderful experience.

Some parents wanted to discuss the new homework policy. A parent asked how many opinions were gathered from parents prior to making the change. It was also asked if there are resources available for parents who would like to offer their children additional opportunities for learning and practice.

Mrs. Thomas said that the staff was split 50/50 in their opinions on the new policy. Intended to survey, but did not due to illness in family. The Homework Myth was read by the entire teaching staff and discussed at length. Yardsticks, another book by developmental experts, was read and discussed.

Mrs. Thomas wanted to go over some points about new homework policy. Homework should be assigned with purpose, on an individual basis. Alternative homework can be assigned, such as the use of blogs in 3rd-5th grades. Students can write letter to someone at home about their week. Sentence starters can be given. Parents can write back over the weekend. Teachers are going to communicate more about what students are learning.

A parent commented that he appreciates the ideas, but he has not seen them implemented yet. Suggestions have not come to fruition. Another parent commented that they like the daily opportunity to see problems that their children might be encountering in their learning. It was asked if the library could be opened during after school hours.

Mrs. Thomas said that it would not be possible to open the library after school. She suggested contacting teachers for online resources that could provide additional learning opportunities. My-on is available for the entire school.

Some parents feel that students not getting enough during the day. Another parent suggested asking the child's teacher for additional work.

A parent said that communication is not consistent. She receives far more information from one of her children's teachers than she does from the other.

One parent was concerned about children not learning time management without homework, but another parent pointed out that there are many other ways for a child to develop this skill. A major benefit to the new homework policy is that it provides more time to spend as a family.

A parent requested that the school to supply a list of resources additional learning opportunities.

A parent asked how progress or success be measured. Will you ask for feedback? Mrs. Thomas said that if the new policy does not appear to be working, it could change in the future.

Mrs. Thomas said she was hesitant to offer a list of resources without parents first speaking to their children's teachers about specific concerns. She wants to emphasize the need for children to rest their minds at the end of each day.

A parent suggested having a curriculum open house halfway through the year or a chance to see classrooms in action.

The new policy is a North Star policy, but district is aware of it. Other schools have implemented similar policies.

A parent asked if students are pulled out for certain subjects to provide additional learning opportunities. Mrs. Thomas mentioned Enrichment and TAG, a program offered in 3rd-5th grades, both run by Mrs. Becker.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07pm.

Closing

You can keep up to date with PTA information by liking our Facebook page, signing up to receive e-news, and visiting nspta.com.

The next meeting will take place on Monday, December 5th at 7pm. We hope to see you there!