

Newton South High School PTSO

Minutes of the meeting of November 20, 2014

Present: Joel Stembridge, Betsy Blagdon, Emily Prenner, Faith Paul, Lori Lass, Robin Sherman, Olivia Grouper, Katie Kaufman, Brian Yoffe, Ian Paul, Ady Hwee, Leslie McConnell, Al Manditch, Matt Briggs, Cindi Jxue

I. Principal's Statement:

- a. Joel provided an update on the Signs of Suicide (SOS) suicide prevention screening program that has now been completed on the junior and senior class. Overall about 5-10% of each class completed forms indicating the need for follow up. Although the percentage is low, students have been identified who were not on the "radar."
- b. The homework free weekends initiative is moving forward and this is a conversation that the administration is continuing to have with the teachers, with an overall goal of 30 minutes per night per class for 70-80% of the students. There are still a lot of questions—should honors classes have more work—or just deeper, more thoughtful assignments. This continues to be a work in progress.
- c. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math)—There will be a new program instituted for upcoming sophomores to create a small learning community, like Global, called DaVinci, that will incorporate science, math, and art classes, all three learning levels together.
- d. The school council is working on an initiative to consider later start times. Ideally there will be a plan for this by the end of the year—but there are quite a few things that must be considered, traffic, bus schedules, after school sports, homework time.

II. Student Comments: The student representatives (Ian Paul, Brian Yoffee, Katie Kaufman, Olivia Groper) provided feedback to Joel's comments. There was overall support for the SOS program, but mixed response to the later start time. On one hand, it would be "cool," on the other hand, for those involved with school sports, it will make for an even longer night with sports ending later. Students also mentioned problems with teachers emailing homework assignments in the evening while still expecting the assignment to be completed for the next day, and also problems with teachers who are out sick for periods of time, without substitutes.

III. 2014-2015 Update:

- a. Approval of minutes from May 2014 meeting. Faith made motion to approve, Matt seconded it and it was approved unanimously.

- b. The Library Renovation is complete and looks great. It includes new paint, carpet, technology, bookcases. The next project will be the STEAM Lab (see Joel's comments).
 - c. The Emotional Wellbeing Committee continues to meet. Their goal is to focus on changing the culture at NSHS and improving south mental health education.

- IV. Treasurer's Update: Faith updated the year-to-date fundraising information. The Community Dinner raised \$2,743 (net) for Success@South. The main S@S fundraising drive will occur later in the fall. This fall's membership drive raised about \$48,000, which is about \$950 more than last year. In general, income and expenses are performing about as expected. Faith noted that much of the library renovation occurred over the summer, so those expenses appear in this year's financials. However, the funds for this work were raised last year, so these costs are completely covered by last year's S@S campaign. We anticipate having the full amount budgeted available for this year's STEAM project, assuming the S@S campaign is successful.

- V. Grants Committee Update: Betsy said that \$9000 has been distributed to the departments and there is \$8500 left for individual teacher grants. The application form has been streamlined. All teachers are encouraged to apply.

- VI. PTSO Officers for the 2014-2015 School Year:
 - a. Co-Presidents: Betsy Blagdon, Emily Prenner info@newtonsouthtso.org
 - b. Treasurer: Faith Paul treasury@newtonsouthtso.org
 - c. Secretary: Robin Sherman secretary@newtonsouthtso.org

- VII. PTSO Committees: The Community Dinner was very successful. It was a nice way for parents to meet and talk. Maybe next year there will be pairing of volunteers so that all of the hosts do not have to live so close to the school.

- VIII. New Business: Al Manditch (Parent) spoke about his concerns with the Athletic Department. Emily advised, on behalf of the PTSO, that the PTSO does not have a role in this conflict and that Mr. Manditch continue working with Newton Public Schools and official channels to address his concerns.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Sherman, PTSO Secretary

Attachments:

P & L Year to date

