

## **PTO MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, March 19, 2008  
Bishop School Library, 7 pm

**WELCOME:** Co- President Karen Stark welcomed everyone and introduced the guest speaker, Arlington School Superintendent, Nate Levenson. Other PTO officers present were Co-President Gwyneth Morris, Treasurer Mark Slomiak , Corresponding Secretary Alixe Bonardi and Recording Secretary Eliza Burden. Steve Carne and Judy Pooley were the staff representatives. School Committee member Ron Spangler also was present.

**SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:** Nate Levenson began by reviewing the "Vision" for the Arlington Public School System and described how Arlington aims to accomplish this vision. He outlined five ways to do this: 1.) to build on past strengths; 2.) to ensure collaboration among teachers within the nine schools so the education is consistent throughout the town; 3.) to appropriately support and challenging student learning by being responsive to different learning styles; 4.) to support students' social and emotional needs; and 5.) to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century not by rejecting the past but determining what skills are essential for the future (i.e. teaching teamwork). He mentioned that the system was committed to focusing on the whole child and not getting too focused on the MCAS and the No Child Left Behind programs. He is also committed to recruiting and retaining highly qualified and diverse staff. He stressed the importance of professional development, explaining that teachers need time to become better teachers. He also emphasized parents and the community as partners in education. He also mentioned the necessity of increased public education funding. Levenson also provided examples of the way Arlington is addressing social needs of students. He said that Arlington has partnered with a drug and alcohol specialist and brought in a social worker to AHS. He also explained that AHS has begun an "in-house detention" program. That is, rather than sending a student home for poor behavior at school (this only perpetuates a bad cycle), the student is expected to attend in-house detention in order to break the cycle of poor behavior. Regarding special needs, he explained that 38% of the budget goes to special needs. The school department is trying to focus on early intervention programs (particularly reading) so that special needs might not be required later on.

**RECORDING SECRETARY'S REPORT:** The minutes of January 2008 were reviewed and approved as written.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Mark Slomiak reported that currently "money is tough" for the PTO and it has been this way for several months, largely due to the fact that we started the year with a \$9,600 deficit. The PTO Board has had to make difficult decisions as to what to spend money on. Mark explained that the number one priority for the PTO is to ensure that the enrichment programs scheduled for the remainder of the academic year get paid for. Several parents present at this meeting remarked that they were unaware that the PTO is in a difficult financial position and urged the PTO Board to be more communicative with parents. The Board stressed the importance of parental participation in the Annual Drive, explaining that 100% of these donations goes to PTO programs as opposed to only a small percentage of the fundraising efforts. To date, roughly 20% of Bishop families have contributed to the Annual Drive.

The PTO Board was receptive to ideas and was grateful that people were present at the meeting to brainstorm some additional ideas for generating support for the PTO. Some of the discussion included small change efforts, requesting \$5-10 gifts from families to get the PTO through this difficult period leading up to the Bear Fair, additional emails that explicitly describe the current financial situation. The PTO also stressed the importance of a successful Bear Fair.

**CORRESPONDING SECRETARY'S REPORT:** Alixe Bonardi reported that PTO Thrift Shop sadly has announced that it will be closing its doors in May of this year.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Playground Committee.** Justine Bloch presented the progress on Phase II of the playground. They are focusing on the beautification of the playground and the construction of the 3-sided community board that

is currently being designed. She reports that the surface of the playground will be repaved for free by a Bishop parent. She also reported that BPIC was granted a \$2,500 Toyota grant. They are trying to integrate as many science and educational elements as possible. Kiera Campbell reported on the buy-a-brick fundraiser that will finish up on March 31.

**Enrichment.** Alison Vaishnaw gave a summary of the more recent programs at the school, including the Science Fest. Rob Aptaker, Drumming workshops, Wampanoag programs and Tidepool experience for Kindergarten and First graders. Upcoming events include Bay Colony Educators for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders on April 7<sup>th</sup>, Math Movement workshops for grades 3-5 between April 8 and the 14<sup>th</sup>. The Third Grade play "13 Colonies" will start up after the MCAS exams has finished up in early April.

**Bear Fair.** Karen Stark made a plea for Bear Fair volunteers. She is looking for 20-30 people to coordinate this effort. She has all the info on the games from previous years.

**Family Art Night.** Robin Cassell reported that Art Night is scheduled for May 8 from 6:30-8. There will be hands-on stations as well as displays. She mentioned that Ms Martin will need help in advance with set-up and display. Book sponsorship will occur in library.

Mother's Day Flower Sale. Need a volunteer to run this sale.

**Recycling.** Gwyneth announced that the first month of paper recycling was a success, collecting 1 ton. Circus. Anne Murray is coordinating the sale of 50 tickets for the Big Apple Circus.

**Brain Bee.** Kelly O'Toole explained that she and Robin Cassell are the Bishop AEEF reps. Each year they have 2 fundraisers, the Starz program and the Brain Bee. The Brain Bee will occur on April 13 in Town Hall. This year the AEEF has given 2 grants to Bishop, one for the weather station in the playground and the other, is the "13 Colonies" play that the third graders will put on.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:** Steve Carme reported on the following topics:

1. 60+ kindergarteners registered. There are lots of siblings in this group.
2. Re: the school budget, it was decided that fees will increase to prevent teacher cuts. The incoming kindergarten fee will increase from \$1,800 to \$2,400 for the year.
3. Advisory Council is working the core values posters.
4. Jungle Book was a huge success. MCAS will occur between March 24 and April 4 for 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders. The long composition test for 4<sup>th</sup> graders will be on March 25.
5. Daffodil Day on March 21 was also successful.

#### Upcoming Dates

4/8 Early Release 1:00

4/16 – Music Concert at 9:00 a.m.

#### **STAFF REPRESENTATIVE**

Judy Pooley thanked the PTO for the enrichment programs that are so nicely tied to the curriculum.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Karen Stark presented Laura Fairbanks' proposal to hold a Pampered Chef (kitchen equipment) fundraiser. She said an ordinary Pampered Chef fundraiser generates 10-15% of total purchases for the school, but as a Pampered Chef rep she said she would pass up her commission, bringing this percentage to 20-25% for the school. The decision was made to proceed with the fundraiser.

Walk to School Effort. Carry Aluia, was not present, but wants to try to encourage people to walk to school. She will try to establish Wednesdays as special walk-to-school days.

#### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE**

Ron Spangler was present. He mentioned that each school district is making efforts to do Phase I work relating to the Safe Routes to School program, such as repainting. He also explained that with the new school committee, it is likely that he will be reassigned to another school, so that this will probably be his last Bishop PTO meeting. He thanked the PTO for teaching him so much about Bishop.

#### **NEXT MEETING**

The next PTO meeting is Weds., May 7 at 7 p.m.