

McKenzie PTA General Meeting – November 11, 2008

1. Call To Order and Welcome

Julie Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of 10/14/08 Meeting

Minutes from the PTA Meeting of 10/14/08 were distributed and reviewed. A motion to approve the Minutes was made. A voice vote approved the minutes.

3. Principal's Report – Dr. Welter

Dr. Welter welcomed attendees to McKenzie's first evening PTA meeting of the 2008-09 school year. We will continue to offer a variety of morning and evening meetings in order to accommodate different schedules. Today was Veteran's Day, with school in session. The opportunity was taken to make the day a teachable moment; students and teachers engaged in purposeful activities about U.S. veterans. Fourth graders had visits from WWII veterans, third graders did research on the different branches of the armed services, and so on. This week students in third grade are engaged in COGAT testing. The school Chess Team is performing fabulously, with McKenzie's kindergarten and first grade teams winning State championships last weekend. The second grade team competed well, but did not field a full team. The third grade team came in second in the state of Illinois (*Note: The 3rd Grade first place team came in second in the nation last year, which makes our third grade team's second place state championship very impressive*). The Book Fair is ongoing today through Thursday. The Third Graders went to the Lyric Opera's performance of *The Magic Flute* at Evanston Township High School last week, which was very well received. Other enrichment programs are enthusiastically underway throughout all grade levels – all funded by the McKenzie PTA.

4. President's Report – Julie Johnson

Thank you to Kate Flannery for providing coffee and snacks on behalf of McKenzie's Hospitality Committee. Thank you to Gilda Fox and Cara Gaziano for spearheading the fabulous Fall Frenzy event in October. McKenzie's Book Fair is open until 9:00 p.m. tonight and Wednesday, as well as 9-11:00 a.m. on Thursday. Extra help is needed for clean up after the Book Fair on Thursday. Thank you to Sonja Iribarren for her wonderful work on McKenzie's school directory, which looks wonderful.

A large part of the PTA's budget is devoted to Enrichment – namely in-class programs and field trips. Julie Johnson read a thank you note from Connie Bergmann thanking the PTA for funding the third grade field trip to see *The Magic Flute* by the Lyric Opera. Karen Dekker is the new head of PTA Advertising Committee, with thanks to her for promoting PTA meetings and events. On behalf of McKenzie's Sharing Committee, Julie Johnson noted that McKenzie's *Share The Joy* event is coming up, in which McKenzie families can sponsor holiday gifts to children in need at Carmen Buchner school. District 39's summer school enrichment programs will be held at McKenzie School in Summer 2009.

The next PTA Meeting will be held on Jan. 13, 2009 at 9:15 a.m., and will focus on testing and assessment with presentations by Dr. Welter and McKenzie's Differentiation Specialist, Ellie Logan.

5. Report by Faculty Representative – Chris Porter

Faculty members want to specifically thank the PTA for all the support for enrichment programs. The funding and great programs are much appreciated by faculty and students. An overview was presented of highlighted subjects being covered in each of the grade levels. Chris Porter noted that in art, she would be exposing to students to traditional artists as well as living artists who are less well-known. One such living artist that will be studied is the work of Andy Goldsworthy, who likes to capture art at its absolute essence. Artist Goldsworthy records his art with photographs, and the students collaborated enthusiastically on a project inspired by his work.

6. Committee Reports

- a. **Grocery Dollars:** Tip Walker presented *The Grocery Dollars Gab*, a newsletter about McKenzie's Grocery Dollar program, with an order form on the back. Grocery Dollars are available from Dominick's, Jewel, Whole Foods, Treasure Island and The Grand (local grocery store in Winnetka, who is giving us an introductory rate of 25%!!). If you

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subscribe to Dominick's, talk to Tip about registering with E-Scrips so that your Fresh Value purchases are automatically recorded and applied with a credit to McKenzie PTA; no work on the subscriber's behalf other than registering.

- b. **Gift Cards:** Kathy Freedman thanked McKenzie families who have placed orders through the Gift Card program. Kathy has inventory for popular vendors, and also places monthly special orders. There is one monthly order being placed tomorrow, and there will be one more special order before Christmas. Keep in mind the gift cards for any holiday gifts you may be considering for coaches, teachers, etc.

7. School Gift Discussion – Presented by Kimbra Burnside, President Elect

Kimbra presented ideas, which were gathered from an online survey circulated to teachers and parents:

- a. **Cheetah Gym:** Wall mats are being replaced in both the small and big gym. The mats are being replaced through McKenzie's D39 Building Fund, as designated by Dr. Welter. The gym teachers have requested that the Cheetah Logo be added to wall mats in the Big Gym. The incremental cost of adding the Cheetah Logo in the Big Gym is \$500; the Exec Board recommends this cost be absorbed, in an effort to add school spirit to the gym.

There also has been a request for a climbing wall in the McKenzie Gym, with the cost being \$3140 (including safety mats and instruction for gym teachers). Todd Fowler, one of our gym teachers, formerly worked at Glencoe South, which had a climbing wall. It was very enthusiastically received at Glencoe South.

- b. **McKenzie Gardens:** Plan, design and build a cohesive "outdoor classroom" and school garden designed for educational impact, curricular and student involvement. This project is proposed by Kirsten Stadheim. The garden project could take many forms, including enlisting support through grants, from the Botanic Gardens, and through student-involved fundraising. We will need to discuss if, how and when the PTA should be involved in assisting to fund the garden. Harper and Central Schools both have school gardens that we could draw on for ideas.
- c. **LCD Projectors:** The purpose would be for immediate use in classrooms once installed for computer projection that would allow web-streaming, movies, student technology projects, etc. Price per installed projector is \$2200 and includes an installed projector, classroom speaker, hardwiring for classrooms, and labor. McKenzie's Technology Instructor (Julie Garry) provided an overview of a number of ways that teachers would use these projectors on a daily basis. Applications include presentations in Art Class, quick lessons by Spanish teachers in each classroom, EveryDay Math, special projects that may be enhanced by classroom viewing of real time web-based presentations. Harper has implemented this through the PTA in each classroom.
- d. **Digital Cameras:** Julie Garry has requested a new digital camera for each classroom, with all classrooms having the same type of camera.
- e. **McKenzie Choir:** This might best be considered and implemented as a McClub extracurricular activity, but was raised in the context of School Gift ideas.

NOTE: Our current budget for a School Gift is approximately \$4500, although additional funding may be available AND ideas presented this year could be considered for the 2009-2010 school year when a fundraising Benefit is planned. This is a transitional year when changes have been made to the Grocery Dollars program, and McKenzie is not holding a benefit. Most of our fundraising is put toward enrichment. However, we are looking to put together short and long-range plan for the PTA's use and raising of funds.

8. Presentation – Dr. Ray Lechner, Superintendent, District 39

Dr. Lechner addressed instruction, and, in particular, external influences that impact instruction. In District 39, the ISAT is not our ruler. Rather, District 39 now focuses on the Performance Series Scantron tests.

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Dr. Lechner thanked Dr. Welter specifically for being an instructional leader, working in collaboration for each of the grade level teams, and challenging instructional methods. In 2007-2008, District 39's Community Review Committee studied Continuity of Instruction and discovered that the average elementary teacher missed 7 days of instruction. Elementary teachers were disproportionately absent compared to middle school and junior high teachers, which was largely attributable to teachers' attendance at training and professional development for various district-level initiatives in place. Substitute teachers were used at a high level. To address this issue, in 2008-09, various absence-reduction measures were taken, namely: (1) half-day early-release days scheduled for in-service training; and (2) block scheduling was explored to assist in collaboration by grade-level teams, especially with specials at the elementary level. Regarding general instruction, new technology is being explored. All teachers will receive laptops, and assessment technology is being bolstered. There is a negative effect on the district's technology infrastructure, which is struggling to accommodate all the new technology additions throughout the district. The district is looking at targeted, cutting-edge technology at Wilmette Junior High School.

9. New Business

Next PTA Meeting will be held on Jan. 13, 2009 at 9:15 a.m.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.