



Rutherford Elementary PTA Meeting

Nov. 21, 2023 3:30 pm

Recorded by: Julie Harman

A. Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 3:32 pm. There were 19 attendees in person and 6 via the virtual Zoom link.

(Heather Nelson°, Micki Sievwright*, Nicole Heggernes*, Melissa Roback*, Kate Berg*, Bethany Cox*, Taylor Pass*, Kelly Rink, Melanie McNulty°, Monica Murphy°, Katie Coulter°, Mollie Kane°, Celeste Nelson, Stephanie Flom*, Emily Siegel*, Sarah Netzer*, Julie Harman*. Attendees via Zoom: Morgan Spooner, Ashley Hennig, Danielle Linell, Amber, Lisa Tschida, Bridget.

Jocelyn Gohdes*, Christina Torke*, Nicole Heggernes*, Celeste Nelson, Emily Siegel*, Sarah Netzer*, Carolyn Felty, Taylor Pass*, Micki Sievwright*, Lindsay Cremona*, Holly Kranz, Bethany Falch*, Morgan Spooner*, Meredith Rice, Kate Berg*, Melanie McNulty°, Jamie Jansen°, Claudia Stannard°, Lacy Oster°, Kate Papke°, Julie Harman*, Jaret Ethridge, Ashley Hennig*. Attendees via Zoom: Borgen family, Kaylyn Schaefer (sp?), Dawn Oppelt*.

* = PTA member ° = faculty/staff)

B. State of the School (Heather Nelson)

- Heather and some of the teachers have started LETRS training on the science behind learning to read.
- Today (Tuesday), the Yellow House (a program for students living with developmental/cognitive delays) hosted their second annual Thanksgiving feast. The students planned the entire meal celebration and invited adult guests to join them.
- Fourth graders held their second annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. They incorporated math and science to design their own balloon floats and to program them (using coding robots) to parade through the gym. Some other classes came to watch the parade. Carts purchased through PTA funds were used.

C. Treasurer Update (Emily Siegel)

- Emily passed around a printout of this month's spending for attendees to see.
- Spending this month is down 68% from last month. About half of this month's spendings were on deposits for the Wishes event in April. Other spending included some house funds and teacher appreciation treats.
- Kate Berg suggested that we clarify or determine our process for spending scholarship funds (i.e. to assist with field trip costs). Mr. Tasch had asked about what is available for a potential field trip. The PTA has about \$300 for scholarships. Heather Nelson said that the school pays for field trips through the supplies and materials budget, and when families send money for the field trip, the school reimburses itself. The school currently has no money available for field trip scholarships. Emily Siegel asked if the PTA board could receive documentation of field trip/scholarship requests that Heather has had to deny, so that we can see where the need is. Usually, families communicate scholarship needs through Emily Young, the school's social worker, but Emily has just begun short term disability leave.

D. Playground Committee Update (Kate Berg)

- The students had a blast voting for their favorite playground color scheme. Pony Power won! The next step is placing the order.

- Brick sales (personalized bricks for the outdoor classroom area) are ongoing, but only about a dozen have been ordered. Adding clip art to your brick order will be free until Jan. 1. Brick sales will be available until the end of February. Spread the word!
- Heather suggested that we advertise brick sales at the Grand Event on Nov. 30. Bethany said that it would be helpful to provide more details on what the bricks are for and to clearly advertise the end date for sales.

E. Grants Committee Update (Jocelyn Gohdes/Micki Sievwright)

- Jocelyn is still looking for someone interested in leading the Grants Committee next year. She'd like to work with someone through the spring grant process to help transition the leadership. If you are interested, please let Jocelyn or Micki know! (president@myrutherford.org)

F. Grounds Committee Update (Nicole Heggernes)

- Winter planters are coming soon!

G. Scholastic Book Fair Committee Update (Micki Sievwright)

- The Scholastic Book Fair is November 27 to December 1, with an evening Grand Event on Thursday, November 30. The committee has many volunteer slots filled but still needs a few more volunteers.
- The Grand Event on Nov. 30 will have some NHS volunteers helping too. Micki noted that the committee will try to prevent guests of the event from touring the school. Micki asked if Adventure Club will get/has been notified of this event (and other after-school events in general). Heather said that Deb adds events to the school calendar, and the Adventure Club staff should have access to that calendar.

H. Staff Appreciation Committee Update (Morgan Spooner/Micki Sievwright)

- The appreciation committee hosted an Acapulco dinner one of the evenings of conferences (thank you to Acapulco for donating \$100 to the dinner). The November appreciation treat was a caramel apple bar in the staff lounge. A hot cocoa bar is coming in December.
- They received about 60 orders for Rutherford gear through the Heritage pop-up sale. The apparel will be delivered on Dec. 8.
- Melanie McNulty said a thank-you card for the PTA is circulating among the teachers. The treats were much appreciated!

I. Wishes Committee Update (Ashley Hennig and Nicole Heggernes)

- Wishes will be on Saturday, April 13, at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center.
- More info will be shared next month. The deadline for sponsorships is Dec. 31. The committee is working to put together live auction packages.
- The next meeting is Dec. 10 at 6:30. Meetings will always be held the second Sunday of each month. All are welcome! Contact Nicole at heggernesn@gmail.com if you are interested.

J. Featuring: Second Grade!

- The second grade teachers (Monica Murphy, Katie Coulter, and Mollie Kane) talked about exciting things happening this year in second grade. Some highlights:
 - The Room Parents helped with this year's class Halloween party and will be helping with the winter concert.
 - Second grade house funds were used for Scholastic News (to supplement the social studies curriculum) and some tools to facilitate the prep for the new science curriculum, such as an air pump. The science curriculum

prep is very time consuming, especially since this is their first year using it. The teachers might be reaching out to room parents for help with the prep.

- Second graders worked on nonfiction research projects on a state and an animal. They end the animal research unit with a trip to the zoo. This was the first time most of the students have presented research to the class, and they did a great job!
 - Question from Micki: How can the PTA help? The teachers said that making the Amazon wish lists available has been nice – many parents used these lists to donate materials very quickly (costumes, props, etc.). Room parents have been very helpful as well.
 - Returning to the question about field trip scholarship funds, the teachers noted that when they've given families the option to donate an extra field trip fee to a family in need, families have generously donated. Heather said that we will work to figure out a system of helping families in need for the fee-assisted field trips (we can't charge money for field trips that are part of the curriculum). Melanie asked if we could set up a donation account; Dawn said that Danielle Heller could share how they do this for Stillwater Middle School. Heather noted that we cannot collect donations beyond what is needed – the school cannot keep an account of donations. Once money comes into the system, it belongs to the district. This would probably need to go through the PTA. We will continue discussing this question.
 - Question from Kate: Based on statewide deficiencies in meeting 3rd grade reading goals, how is this affecting instruction in 2nd grade? Monica Murphy said that this year's 2nd grade is in a much better place regarding reading than the past two years of 2nd grade classes. They benefited from in-school instruction on phonics that previous classes missed during Covid. The school is also now using Heggerty and Letterland curriculums; both programs are amazing and game-changers. Per Heather, Letterland teaches phonics and foundational skills. At Rutherford, they have been taking 3rd grade materials and incorporating it into 4th grade instruction, to deepen the 4th graders' understanding of phonics.
 - Question from Bethany: Do you have book recommendations for a 2nd grader who is reading above grade level for books with age-appropriate content? Monica said it can be hard to find books challenging enough for advanced readers with content appropriate for a 2nd grader; the teachers ensure that all books available to the 2nd graders are age appropriate. Mollie Kane said she would send recommendations. In general, the teachers are great resources for book recommendations!
 - Comment from Melissa: All her second grader talks about is science! Thank you to the 2nd grade teachers for all the work behind making science fun.
- Thank you, second grade teachers!!

K. Additional Updates (Micki Sievwright)

- If you paid PTA dues this year, you have access to a special PTA parking spot! Look for the PTA parking sign with stars in the corners. It is available for paid PTA members unless there is a concert happening at school. Micki noted that the Veteran's Day concert was phenomenal! Thank you to Ms. Holroyd!
- Lost and Found items will be donated tomorrow. Monica Murphy suggested we do not donate winter gear yet, because teachers send students to the Lost and Found to borrow gear if they forgot theirs. It's helpful to have extras. Do we have somewhere to donate winter gear to Rutherford? Heather said we do not have room to collect donations, but individual requests and questions can be sent to Emily Young.
- Book Swap is quickly approaching (January) and we need a committee leader! Sign up using the PTA signup genius, or contact Micki (president@myrutherford.org).
- Celeste Nelson asked about hosting a Rutherford Math Night. Micki said that we would check the PTA calendar and get back to her.

L. Minutes from the September meeting were approved.

Meeting adjourned at 4:20. **See you at the next PTA meeting: December 19th at 6:30 in the Multi-Purpose Room—with a focus on Fourth Grade!** There will be a Zoom option for those who cannot attend in person.