



## Rutherford Elementary PTA Meeting

Mar. 19, 2024 3:30 pm

Recorded by: Julie Harman

**A. Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 3:30 pm. There were 15 attendees in person.

(Micki Sievwright\*, Kate Berg\*, Emily Siegel\*, Julie Harman\*, Dawn Oppelt\*, Ashley Hennig\*, Nicole Heggernes\*, Lisa Tschida\*, Kelly Taverna°, Holly Yehlik°, Jamie Jansen°, Deborah Simcik°, Heather Nelson°. \* = PTA member ° = faculty/staff)

## **B. Featuring: Kindergarten!**

- The Kindergarten teachers talked about exciting things happening in Kindergarten. Some highlights:
  - The K team has a combined 84 years of teaching experience!
  - This year, Kindergarten has 17-18 students in each class. If we have the opportunity, advocate to keep class sizes down! This year's class sizes have made a big difference.
  - Reading is a huge focus of K year. The teachers are going through LETRS training, learning about the science of reading. This is 2 years of intense training teaching teachers how to teach reading and how the brain learns. According to the Ladder of Reading, this way of teaching teaches to a much greater percentage of students, instead of teaching to the top percent for whom reading is already easy. This year, kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers are participating in the LETRS training. MDE is requiring all teachers involved in reading instruction to complete this training by 2027, so our district is ahead of schedule.
  - Two programs used in Kindergarten are Heggerty (teaching phonological awareness) and Letterland (orthography). Kindergartners are taught to decode heart words even before they become instantly readable, so they're able to read high-frequency words sooner.
  - Kindergartners learn in leveled literacy centers.
  - This year, 81% of kindergartners met benchmarks in the Fall 2023 FastBridge early reading test. In spring, 91% of the students met benchmarks. This is really well compared to national and district averages!
  - Social-emotional learning is also a big part of kindergarten. The teachers use Second Step and Responsive Classroom (these are used schoolwide and districtwide).
  - Kindergarten (along with other grades) are using a new science curriculum this year. The teachers feel that some units are great, but some seem under the kindergarten level. The teachers are using 100% of the curriculum and supplementing it as they see fit.
  - The chicks are back for the spring! Each spring, kindergartners "adopt" about 80 eggs and observe some hatching into chicks. This is a highlight for all Rutherford students! Another highlight of the kindergarten year is the weekly Dance Friday.
  - Kindergarten used PTA funds to purchase a new paper cutter and label maker, pennies for recess soccer games, and Pink Cat games subscription.
  - Questions: One attendee asked about anticipated class sizes for next year. While it's too early to know, the numbers from the district suggest enough students to have 5 kindergarten sections for 2024-25.
  - Kelly Taverna is maintaining the new Ruthie's Closet, a mini supply "closet" where students can get personal supplies, outdoor gear, snacks, etc., as needed. They could use donations of more snacks and deodorant. Check the Amazon wishlist for updated needs.

- Kindergarten teachers suggest having yearbook photos available to teachers from the beginning of the school year, where they can copy all photos as they take them, vs. supplying them at once.
- Thank you to the kindergarten team!!

### **C. Wishes for Rutherford Update (Ashley and Nicole)**

- Wishes will be on Saturday, April 13, at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center. Purchase your tickets today! Registration is at about 60 people. Last year, Wishes sold out at 200 attendees. Heather will put a reminder in the e-news.
- Live auction packages are almost finalized. The event will be emceed by Rutherford parent Tim Daigle. Mrs. Oster and Kate Berg will speak. Lindsey and Matt Cremona are creating another video. Raffle tickets are due soon!

### **D. Fundraising Committee Update**

- Kate Berg is working on a survey for staff.

### **E. Other Updates**

- There will be a Summer Sendoff on May 29, the evening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last day of school. The first 45 minutes will be for 5<sup>th</sup> graders to wish them well as they move on to middle school, and the rest of the event is for all students and families. A committee will be planning this event, and anyone is welcome to join the planning committee! Contact Micki at [president@myrutherford.org](mailto:president@myrutherford.org).
- The PTA board will have two open positions in the fall: Vice President (2 year commitment; VP will work with the President in 2024-25 before transitioning to President for 2025-26) and Secretary (2 year commitment). Any questions or interest, please contact Micki ([president@myrutherford.org](mailto:president@myrutherford.org)) or any current board member. No prior experience needed!

**F.** Minutes from the Jan. meeting were approved.

Meeting adjourned at approx. 4:30 pm. **See you at the next PTA meeting: April 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 in the Multi-Purpose Room—with a focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> grade!** There will be a Zoom option for those who cannot attend in person.