



Rutherford Elementary PTA Meeting

Feb. 20, 2024 6:30 pm

Recorded by: Julie Harman

A. Call to Order The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. There were 11 attendees in person and 3 via the virtual Zoom link.

(Micki Sievwright*, Emily Siegel*, Dawn Oppelt*, Ashley Hennig*, Morgan Spooner*, Sarah Netzer*, Noemi Nielsen, Brittney and Kevin, Allison Jansen°, Jessica Schmokel°. Attendees via Zoom: Melanie McNulty°, Jennifer Hogan, Julie Harman*. * = PTA member ° = faculty/staff)

B. Open Board Positions (Micki Sievwright)

- 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) or any current board member. We hope to vote in the two new board members in our May meeting.
- No prior experience needed!

C. Treasurer Update (Emily Siegel)

- Wishes sponsorship money continues to come in.
- Emily reached out to teachers and specialists with updates on the house funds remaining for this school year.
- Emily has processed a lot of reimbursements in the past few weeks for teachers – we are happy that teachers are spending their funds!

D. Book Swap Committee Update (Micki for Kate Berg)

- The Book Swap was a great success: we collected a record number of 4,876 books! This is more than double what we've collected in the past. Thank you to the families who donated books and to the volunteers who sorted all the books!
- Of the books left after all the students shopped the swap, we kept the early readers and chapter books to save for next year's book swap, and we donated the picture books.

E. Grants Committee Update (Emily for Jocelyn Gohdes)

- We approved almost all the spring grants! Among the new grant items are seat cushions, dry erase boards, games and curriculum for WIN time, tent and board books, privacy folders, and rollerblades. Stay tuned to future newsletters for photos and recaps of what was purchased with the grant money.
- The one grant request that is still pending is a request for a color printer; the grant committee is checking with Heather Nelson to see if this purchase might be covered by district tech funds.

F. Yearbook Committee Update (Micki Sievwright)

- Yearbooks are for sale! Order yearbooks online (\$20) through Lifetouch. If families need financial assistance, teachers can communicate with Mary Johnson in the office about scholarships. The PTA especially wants to ensure that all 5th graders who want a yearbook can get one.
- Families of 5th graders, send your student's baby pic to yearbook@myrutherford.org by March 2nd.
- This year's theme was chosen by the 5th graders and features emojis.

G. Outdoor Classroom and Playground Update (Micki for Kate)

- Construction of the outdoor classroom area (which will be where the current big playground is located) is postponed until next summer (2025) to allow more time for planning and fundraising. Teachers will be receiving a survey to gather input on desired uses for the outdoor classroom.
- Personalized bricks that have been purchased will still be incorporated into the outdoor classroom design, so the bricks will be installed summer 2025 as well.
- We have a "sneak peek" of the final designs of the playgrounds, using the Pony Colors theme chosen by the students! Demolition and construction will begin in June 2024. Fencing will surround the playground areas during the entire demo/construction process, for safety. The new equipment will be delivered in July 2024!

H. Staff Appreciation Committee Update (Morgan Spooner)

- The committee is providing subs and salads for dinner during conferences on Thursday 2/22.
- The appreciation day coming in March has a "rainbow" theme!

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

- Wishes will be on Saturday, April 13, at the Lake Elmo Inn Event Center. Invitations went home with students today.
- The Wishes event will feature a silent auction and a live auction, dinner and dessert, and a beer, wine, and spirit pull. More info is coming soon about donating to classroom baskets (themed baskets for the silent auction) and the beer, wine, and spirit pull (with various drop-off sites). Raffle tickets are coming in March. All donations will be collected before spring break.
- Note: This is Rutherford's only spring fundraiser this year. (We did not do Readathon so that we could focus on Wishes.) This is a good time to see if your company will match donations made for Wishes!

J. Upcoming Events

- Join us for Math Night at Rutherford on this Friday, Feb. 23, 6:15-8:00! This is free and hosted by Mathnasium.

K. Featuring: Pre-K!

- The Pre-K teachers (Jessica Schmokel and Allison Jansen) talked about exciting things happening in Pre-K. Some highlights:
 - Social-Emotional learning is a key part of the Pre-K curriculum. Miss Allison and Miss Jessica work throughout the year to help students feel safe at school and calm in their "green" brain. Since Covid, both teachers have noticed a huge increase in social-emotional needs. They focus on helping students with understanding signals from the body and learning coping skills, such as various breathing techniques. They practice these during calm and regulated times.
 - The next step in this year's social-emotional learning is the introduction of Problem Solving Kits, happening next week. Miss Jessica and Miss Allison passed around a kit at the meeting. These kits are available in the classrooms for use at any time. They work a lot with these kits, with the intention that by the end of the year

and in kindergarten, students will be independently identifying when they need to problem solve and seeking solutions to solve conflicts.

- This year at Rutherford, one class has 17 students, and the other has 18 students.
 - Miss Allison just received approval for her PTA grant request. This year, the class has a lot of social-emotional needs, and the open classroom can present a challenge when a student experiences dysregulation and does not want to be seen and doesn't have a private/quiet space in the classroom. Miss Allison will have a teepee-style tent in the room, with calming tools, for students to use as needed. Students were able to try out the new tent and really like it!
 - Miss Jessica got some new games and very popular connector toys with the PTA's support. These are purchases she would otherwise have needed to make on her own.
 - Pre-K says thank you to the PTA for being so supportive and including them as part of the Rutherford community. Pre-K does not receive any early childhood funds, so PTA support is appreciated!
 - Pre-K orientation for 2024-25 students is Feb. 28 5:30-6:30.
 - There have been questions about the new lottery system for registering for Pre-K in 2024-25. This new district-wide registration process hopes to make registration more equitable, especially for families who cannot log in at a particular time due to work schedules or Wifi access. Each elementary school in the district has two Pre-K classes except for Andersen, which has one. District families can enroll at any school.
 - Between Mar. 4 and Mar. 15, families fill out lottery forms. On Apr. 5, families find out their place in the lottery and register based on this. Full day Pre-K is now the only option in the elementary school buildings.
 - Question: Are you still doing Letterland? Yes! The kids love Letterland, and they end the year with a big Letterland party where students can come to school dressed as their favorite Letterland character.
 - Question: How can the PTA support you? PTA support is really appreciated, especially with consumable supplies! The teachers request and receive a lot of donations from Pre-K families as well. They do have Amazon wishlists.
 - The PTA board will look into either being present or providing informational handouts for the Pre-K open house next week.
- Thank you, Miss Jessica and Miss Allison!

L. Additional Updates

- Kindness Week is coming up in March. It will be either the week of Mar. 11 or the week of Mar. 18. Stay tuned for more details. This is a great opportunity to get fun classroom pictures for the yearbook!

M. Minutes from the Jan. meeting were approved by Dawn Oppelt.

Meeting adjourned at 7:19pm. **See you at the next PTA meeting: March 19 at 3:30 in the Multi-Purpose Room—with a focus on Kindergarten!** There will be a Zoom option for those who cannot attend in person.