

**Minutes of the Mantua PTA
October 1, 2003
Mantua Elementary School**

The president called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Present at the meeting were:

Executive Board: *Carole Thomas, Pam Promisel, Kandy Barham, Beth McKeown, Laura Mead, and Rob Luftglass.*

School Representatives: *Jan-Marie Fernandez, Tina Tingler, Cheryl Thompson, and Jan Pry.*

Board Members: *Allen Clark, Cheryl May, Jennifer Cooper, Loren Brandman, Mary Townley, Kathy Frongello, Lynn Richmond, Laura Samotshozo, Linda Halstead, Randi Kirkland, Deirdre Mayes, Cheryl May, Barb Suidikas, and Nathan Merrells.*

General Membership: *Suzanne Summers, Hilary Strasser, Gabriela Reitz, Sabrina Pagkalinawan, J.B. Casey, Chris Purcell, Pam Pavord, Alice Durek, Kate Marosek, Gayle Novak, Debbie Schwartz, Ann Ames, and David Kravitz.*

Pam Promisel made a **motion** that the minutes of the September 10, 2003 meeting be approved. Laura Mead seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Beth McKeown presented the officially approved budget. This budget was approved at Back To School Night by a vote of 139 to 2. Expenses are tracking well so far.

Carole Thomas presented the **Announcements:**

- This meeting will have a different format from most previous meeting. It will include a discussion of the math program led by Ms. Fernandez. We hope this will both increase attendance and educate parents.
- The discussion at last month's meeting regarding recess led to much staff follow up and work continues to utilize other forms of punishment than losing recess for not doing homework.
- Carole made a request for volunteers for various activities including ticket sellers for Woodson football night, PTA meeting refreshments, Mentors, parent education bulletin board/shelves organization, and representatives for the County Council, School Board liaisons and the Woodson Coalition.
- Carole asked for Teacher of the Year nominations.
- Carole described various technology initiatives including online forms and credit card processing for basketball and the auction and a web-based/password protected draft directory for verification. Many thanks to Pete Brandman. We also plan to start publishing the PTA Meeting Minutes on the PTA website (which will also be password protected).
- A tour of the school is scheduled on October 22 for Mantua residents who do not have children in the schools.

Mrs. Fernandez made the **Principals' Report**:

The two Back To School nights went well. This format improved parking and overall crowds, and will be utilized next year. The dates for next year's Back To School nights will be September 22 and 28. The school hosted visitors from the Egypt Ministry of Education on September 11, though a follow up meeting on September 21 had to be postponed due to a visa issue.

Ms. Fernandez reiterated what Carole said about finding better consequences than taking away recess for not doing homework. Discussions are ongoing.

Tina Tingler announced that we now have one parent liaison for Korean speaking families. We are also looking for resources/grants for the TC after-school session.

Ms. Thompson addressed the amount of time that is scheduled for recess. We have increased times for all but grades 5 and 6 and are still working on grades 5 and 6, balancing recess and curriculum requirements.

Ms. Thomson attended a speech by the 1996 Disney Teacher of the Year, Rick Wormeli from Herndon Middle School. He spoke on differentiation of instruction for children and about teachers taking risks in the classroom. He is willing to speak to the PTA from a parents' perspective. Cheryl will help coordinate this event, which will be done with other schools in the pyramid.

Teacher Representative Report: Jan Pry announced that Janet Sottolano has sent out reminders to the staff about the auction. Janet and Jan are working on warm fuzzies for the teachers.

The following **Committee Reports** were filed:

Parent Education: Pam Promisel discussed the active learning program. Twenty-two parents have signed up so far.

Kids Care Club: Jennifer Cooper announced that the first meeting was held yesterday. The KCC is collecting items for injured troops. The KCC is also collecting used eyeglasses in conjunction with a program by Lens Crafter/Lions Club.

Fall Fundraiser (Sally Foster): Lynn Richmond announced that the initial tally for Sally Foster is just over \$18K including online orders.

Auction: Laura Mead mentioned that planning proceeds for the auction. There are still many volunteer opportunities.

At the request of the PTA, Ms. Fernandez presented information on the **math** program at Mantua.

Ms. Fernandez discussed the fact that there have been many questions regarding what the Mantua staff is doing to support math education. There has been a lot of staff activity focusing on how to best improve math education throughout the school. The staff has used the results of SOL testing, informal evaluations and observations of where students to develop programs to improve students' capabilities in math.

Based upon SOL results, it has become apparent that a large percentage of students are very proficient in math and that students are getting stronger each year in this area. This can be attributed to the Success By Eight program, flexible grouping and individual attention.

For example, the most recent SOLs for the 3rd grade resulting in almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the students receiving passed/advanced grades and 21% receiving passing grades. Fewer than 5% of the students did not pass.

The objective is to address the needs of all students. This means providing a faster curriculum pace and more enrichment for a majority of the students, while also focusing efforts on those students that need additional help.

After pretests, we used to split the students into high/medium/low groups. We now have multiple high groups so that we can provide extension materials and to teach the reasoning behind the formulas to the 'high group'. We need to make major changes to how we are teaching math for a majority of the students since so many students skilled in math. The GT Resource teacher, sometimes in combination with the classroom teachers, is working with students in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades providing additional enrichment.

We are also providing more individualized attention to the groups that need additional support. These groups are taught by a teacher and an instructional assistant to provide the extra support needed in this group.

We are keeping track of which students are doing which extension activities – i.e., which students are moving up in each strand/concept. The goal is to flow this up to the 6th grade so that students are continually challenged.

Ms. Fernandez fielded many questions:

- A request was made for specifics on the 4th grade. Ms. Fernandez indicated that a majority of the grade needs enrichment and that we are moving everyone on a faster pace while some students are getting remedial support, as needed.
- A question was asked on what areas need the most focus. Ms. Fernandez indicated that students have not done well in fractions, decimals and measurement and that this is most likely due to the fact that children don't use these skills for practical applications. We are trying to fit these skills into games.

- A question regarding the amount of review each year was asked – specifically, why it appeared that reviewing last year’s work was taking a whole quarter. Ms. Fernandez indicated that she did not think this was the case, but that she would research.
- A question was asked regarding the need for volunteer support. Ms. Fernandez indicated that volunteer support is always encouraged and that support in the take-home math program would be appreciated.
- A question was asked about math requirements for entering Frost – specifically in regards to taking algebra. Ms. Fernandez indicated that while through this year, a student could not test for algebra unless they were in GT center math and achieved specific SOL test results, next year, these rules will not be in place and that anyone can take the test. But, she strongly recommends that a student not take the test unless they have had exposure to pre-algebra
- A question was asked in regards to whether the home schooling curriculum was a year ahead of the Fairfax County curriculum. Ms. Fernandez answered that programs vary so there is no straightforward answer to this question.

Carole thanked Ms. Fernandez and asked to be provided with feedback on today’s topic and any suggested topics for the next time.

Motions Carried

A motion carried to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2003.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm. The next meeting will be November 5, 2003.

Robert Luftglass
Secretary