

**PTA General Meeting Notes
September 13, 2013
Mantua Elementary School**

The president called the meeting to order at 9:38 A.M.

Present at the meeting were:

Executive Board: Jennifer Epley, Teresa LeMair, Meri Farling, Carolyn Stephan, Julie Middleton

School Representatives: Jan-Marie Fernandez, Tina Tingler and Amy Alley

General Membership: Lori Recher, Shannon Murphy, Debra Hunter, Jill Haughey, Bethlihem Sebbibe, Domenico DeVita, David Eldred, Kathy Phillips, Kim Marin, Karen Gaughan, Deanna Freemeyer, Liz Schatzman, Amanda Frazier, John Judy, Sam Leiber, Jessie Leiber, S. Foster, Sonya Breehey, Donna Hoover, Vanessa Hall, Michele Banker, Amy Smith, Ina Hill, Juhyun Moon, Lisa Libby, Katie Zhouy, Jenny Mathews, Michelle Norman, Lesley Kowalski, Lori Brown-Simmons, Patti W., Marid Ruano, Sandra Oregvela, Teresa Weimar, Kackie Cranford, Monica Cameron, Mia Brennan, Paige Rushing, Megan Burski Wells, Rebecca Levsonson, Cathy Pangmalai, Kathleen DeCarlo, Joanne Grenoble

Vote: The Minutes from the June meeting were reviewed and adopted by the membership.

President's Report (Jennifer Epley): Jennifer pointed out that the Parent Resource library is now available in the Library. Mantua received the Phoebe Hearst award for parental engagement. With the funds provided, the PTA bought books, games and other items to help Mantua families.

During this first meeting, Jennifer wanted to focus on ways that the PTA communicates with Mantua families. The PTA would like to have meaningful communication with parents. There are 4 primary ways that the PTA communicates with parents: the Alert e-Newsletter, the MantuaPTA.org website, our new Member Planet communications platform and the Mantua PTA Facebook page. The PTA included a 1-pager in each folder that you received at the Open House outlining specific details of each of these methods of communication. Jennifer briefly explained what was included in that 1-page flyer. Please see Attachment A for this 1-page flyer.

Paige Rushing, our volunteer web master, discussed some more specifics about Member Planet, the new communications platform. She mentioned that everyone should have received an email to join Member Planet. Member Planet is a secure website with individual logins. Only people who are members can see the information. To date, the PTA has used Member Planet in a limited capacity, but has already seen

the benefits of using it such as having online membership registration. During this transition to using Member Planet, the PTA will continue to use redundant forms of communication such as Tuesday Folders and the Alert News to make sure that everyone is getting the needed information.

Treasurer's Report (Carolyn Stephan): Carolyn mentioned that the PTA still needs to close-out the financials for the last school year by approving the audit that was completed by Sandy Spector, CPA. Sandy is a former PTA Treasurer. PTA Membership approved the audit. Please see attachment B for a copy of the audit letter.

For this year, the Proposed Budget is based on actual and/or budget from the last school year with a few changes based on adjustments in fundraising and forecasts of expenses. There are a few new line items for this year including Afterschool Programs (not part of the original budget last year), Run for Rocky Fundraiser, and Type to Learn Software.

Amanda Frazier asked whether the Mantua PTA is a 501c3 organization, which it is. And, she asked if we paid sales taxes on the Spirit Wear. She was involved in an organization in NC that discovered that they should have been paying taxes.

Chrissy Boylin moved to accept the budget which was seconded by Shannon Murphy.

Principals' Report: Mrs. Fernandez started off her talk by discussing all of the activities that took place at the school this past summer. It was a very busy summer. Mantua hosted the ESY special ed program, as well as the REC PAC camp program. In addition, Mantua had its own 3-week summer school program in July. Mantua had funds to provide extra math and language arts help to 10% of the student population. The program focused on the 10 percent of students who could most benefit from extra help. The administration could not invite all students to attend summer school as there are not sufficient resources for that.

As of today, Mantua has 967 students. At the end of last year, there were 965 students. The school is full. Mrs. Fernandez announced that she is going to be able to add another teacher to help with the large regular 3rd classes that exist this year. So she said that the new 3rd grade teacher will help the current classes by pulling out students into smaller groups for different subjects. They are not planning to develop another separate 3rd grade classroom.

Mrs. Fernandez reiterated that Mantua is very interested in the latest research about the brain and learning. Every year the administration and some teachers attend a conference to listen to the latest research by neuroscientists. One area that they are working on is the idea of building resiliency in our students. She reminded us that there have been a number of tragic deaths at Woodson High School over the last few years.

Woodson H.S. and Frost Middle School are working with an organization called Actively Caring for People (AC4P). This organization grew from the shooting tragedy at Virginia Tech in 2007. Actively Caring for People refers to any behavior that goes above and beyond the call of duty on behalf of the health, safety or welfare of another person. From the AC4P website, “thousands of green actively-caring wristbands were distributed across the country to individuals performing acts of caring with the instructions to pay it forward, by passing on the wristband, when (s)he observes someone else performing an act of kindness. By using the wristband to recognize helping behavior, a tangible reminder of kindness is associated with the feeling of self-transcendence.”

Woodson H.S. is going to be implementing this philosophy at school and will mentor Frost students about the program. In addition, Mantua will also implement pieces of the program at the elementary level. The school is still working to figure out the best way to integrate the program into the elementary grades. This program will go nicely with the current Reflections program for 4th-6th graders. In addition, teachers are working on a K-3 program that will help these younger students reflect on their behavior. As a result, all of these efforts will hopefully lead to a safer, more caring community. In addition, these efforts are trying to take some focus away from the negative behavior of “bullying.” The word “Bullying” is being over-used, sometimes in inappropriate ways. The hope is to start focusing on children’s positive behavior instead of the negative ones.

Mantua is implementing another exciting program for K-2 students called Activate. Mantua is one of five schools in county that is piloting this program. Dr. Bruce Wexler from Yale has been studying ADHD, executive functioning, and attention issues in children. He has found that the Activate program has increased children’s abilities to focus and pay attention. In addition, they have seen significant increases in reading skills in children who participate in this program. The program, which was developed by C-8 Sciences, pairs computer games with certain types of physical education activities. These PE activities involve more than just throwing a ball- they take that activity one step further by having kids throwing different colored balls that require them to play close attention to what is going on (this is one example of an activity). Many activities are already taught in PE class, but just need to be adjusted for this pilot program.

In order to see results from this program, children need to spend a minimum of 1000 minutes on such activities. 1600 minutes is ideal. We hope to gather data on individual kids to use in the classroom. Families will also have access to the games and activities at home. Due to the cost of the program, we are not exactly sure what the long-term viability of the program will be. The pilot will follow the same kids for a couple of years. Teachers will have a 3.5 hour training session on the program in the near future.

Ms. Alley mentioned that it is usually her job to discuss testing at PTA meetings. She was pleased to announce that the county has been reviewing the testing load. One change that has been made is that 3rd-6th graders will only be taking the Ecart tests one

time per year instead of two times. The test will now be given in the middle of the year. That should help cut down on testing.

Coming up, all second graders will be taking the Cogat test. Select 3rd-6th graders who don't have a test scores on file will also take the test. In November, all first graders will take the Naglieri test. Both of these tests are solely used to place kids in the Advanced Academics Program (AAP). Parents are allowed to request that their child retake one of these two tests if they wish. Parents should keep in mind that once kids reach 3rd or 4th grade, they are required to read the Cogat test themselves. However, in 2nd grade, teachers read the test to the children. Someone remarked that they wished they would get rid of the SOL tests. Mrs. Fernandez mentioned that the State is working to change the types of questions asked on the SOLS to alleviate some of the criticism of the tests.

Ms. Alley told the members that she is the one who develops all of the schedules for 5th and 6th grade students. Developing these schedules takes a long time. Each child has a schedule that is individualized to his or her needs. She is happy to announce that she is almost done making final adjustments to the schedules.

Ms. Alley has also been working on the 4th grade schedule for strings. Once they know the number of students planning to try strings, she can finalize the schedule. They are hoping to start 4th grade strings next week.

Mrs. Tingler mentioned that it is usually her job to discuss the calendar at PTA meetings. She thanked the PTA for another great breakfast on the day of the Open House. Everyone enjoyed it. In addition, from her point of view, everyone had fun at the Ice Cream (and Pizza) Social. There will be two Back-to-School nights next week. One of them was rescheduled from last night to next week. Back-to-School Night for 4th – 6th Grades will be next Tuesday, September 17th at 6:30 p.m. Back-to-School Night for K – 3rd Grades will be next Thursday, September 19th at 6:30 p.m. From 6:30-7 p.m., the “specials” teachers will be available to talk with parents. Mrs. Fernandez will give a talk from about 7-7:30 p.m. After that, parents will be able to meet their childrens' teachers during one of two sessions- 7:30-8 p.m. or 8 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. In addition, parents will be able to sign up for Parent View in the reading room. Parent View is the parent portal for the county's 24-7 learning system, often called Blackboard. Parents can have one login to see all of their childrens' accounts.

Mrs. Fernandez also mentioned that each student is entered into the County's messaging system called: Keep-in-Touch or KIT. Families also have the opportunity to join KIT Plus, which allows people to sign- up for other e-newsletters and announcements that the school system delivers.

Two other important dates coming up are the following:

- Sept 24th- Take Home Reading training at 10:30 a.m.
- Oct 2nd- 6 p.m.- 5th grader- overnight field trip meeting for parents

Report of First Vice-President for Programs (Teresa LeMair): The list of Fall Enrichment programs is on Member Planet. These activities are taught by outside companies that have contracted with the PTA. The Fall Enrichment Program is coordinated by Shannon Murphy. Sign-up begins next Tuesday, September 17th at 6 a.m. Everyone must use the sign-up link that will be emailed that morning.

Mrs. Fernandez is thankful for the new enrichment program. She really appreciates the efforts of the parents. These programs help kids to try things to help them find their passions in life.

Other Clubs/Programs:

- Drama Club – Grades 3-6. Registration will open this weekend. Information meeting on 9/23. Registration Deadline is Thursday September 26. Rehearsals on Mondays and Fridays after school for 1.5 hours (October through Thanksgiving). Speaking, Non-Speaking and Technical Roles. \$80/85, Member Planet
- Kids Care Club – Grades K-6. Meets third Thursday of each month beginning October 17th, Member Planet.
- Basketball – Grades 3-6. Registration is now open. \$50/55 until October 1st, then \$60/65. Registration closes Friday, October 11th. Link on MantuaPTA.org.
- Chess Club – Grades 4-6, Mr. Malc, meets once/month after school.
- FLEX – 15 weeks each, \$199, www.fcps.edu/aceclasses
 - German, Thurs 8-9am, starting 10/17/13
 - Chinese, Thurs 4-5pm, starting 10/17/13
 - Chinese, Fri 4-5pm, starting 10/18/13
 - Spanish, Fri 8-9am, starting 10/18/13
 - Spanish, Tue 8 - 9am, starting 10/15/13
- Chat N Chew – Grades 3-6. \$25/30. Registration will open next week, closes Monday, September 30th.
- Boy Scouts (Cub Scouts) and Girl Scouts – Information at Back to School Nights next week.
- Raccoon Runners – Grades 3-6 Girls, \$55/50. Registration will open next week, Paper, forms at MantuaPTA.org
- Reflections - The theme for the 2013-14 school year is *Believe, Dream, Inspire*, due November 7th.
- Junior Chess Club – Grades K-3 – if interested contact Paige Rushing.

We have one change to the original combined calendar- Family Fun night for October is now going to be Oct. 18th. The theme is Pokeman and Games night.

We currently have 110 members of the Facebook Page. Since the group is now closed, each member will need to re-join the new closed group.

Mantua is still looking for a FLEX instructor for the Spanish classes. There will be a Volunteer Information meeting after this PTA meeting, for those who are interested. The class-room volunteer sign-ups will be out at Back to School Nights. The Room Parent volunteer is a key piece of classroom organization. In October, we hope to have on-line sign-ups for jobs in classes.

Report of Second Vice-President for Fundraising & Membership (Meri Farling):

Fundraising

- Ice Cream Social- we made \$1800 this year
- Box Tops Competition has started- please label the bag with your child's name and the name of the teacher so that the class can get credit for the competition
- Carnival Chair- the PTA is still looking for someone to coordinate the Carnival
- Parent Directory- looking for advertisers to help underwrite cost of the directory
- Escripts- Individuals must renew their grocery club sign-ups *each year*.
- Partnerships- The partnership with Amazon has helped us raise funds with little effort. Parents need to remember to go to the MantuaPTA.org website and choose the Amazon button before shopping in order for the PTA to get credit. In addition, the PTA has started another partnership with Book Benefit the functions in much the same way.
- Printer Cartridges- the PTA continues to make money by collecting used printer cartridges.
- Restaurant Nights- the PTA has several promotion nights on the schedule at close-by restaurants. Money is earned on dine-in or take out dinners.
- New Fall Fundraiser- Run for Rocky Fun Run is a fund raiser that every student at Mantua. It is a 1.5 mile run. Kids will collect sponsorships for the run ahead of time. Kids are encouraged to ask neighbors and friends. \$20 in sponsorships will get a kid a run for Rocky t-shirt. Prior to the run, there will be weekly drawings on GMM for 4 MP3 players. Each student who raises over \$100 will qualify for the MP3 drawing. Local realtors, Anne and Sarah Harrington, are sponsoring the event.

- Spirit Wear sales- Parents can view the new line of Spirit Wear at the Back-to-School Nights next week. A flyer is available and there is a link on Member Planet.
- FYI- Sally Foster is defunct so we can't do an online sale
- Yearbook- Lori Prendergast is a new Yearbook coordinator this year

Membership

Shannon Murphy gave the report on membership status to date. In total as of September 12th, 145 people have paid their memberships by check and 100 have paid through Member Planet. This is a huge increase in comparison to the same time last year. At the same time last year, 165 families had paid for memberships.

At Open House, a total of 64 memberships were purchased (25 through the online site at Member Planet and 39 by check).

Old Business:

New Business:

Meeting adjourned at 11:13 A.M.