**PS/MS 278**

**General Membership Meeting Minutes**

**11/20/13**

1. **Welcome**
   1. Danielle Floyd (DF), PTA Co-President, welcomed everyone to the General membership meeting
   2. Members are encouraged to sign up for text messaging
2. **Principal’s Report (Maureen Guido, or MG)**
   1. **Book Fair –** MG reported that the Book Fair raised $5,200.
      1. MG thanked all of the parents who volunteered to run, manage and help out with the Book Fair.
      2. MG stated that they haven’t decided what they will purchase with the money yet but mentioned that last year they were able to buy new rugs for all of the classrooms. This year they were thinking about buying books for the library.
   2. **School Progress Report**
      1. The report has been published and 278 earned a B this year. We missed the A by 3/10th of a point.
      2. 278 is in the top 26% of all school in NYC!
      3. MG stated that the because the tests were so difficult this year, she was prepared for the B but when she found out that they were so close to the A score, she felt bad. But she said that for a baseline year she is extremely pleased that we are in the top 26% and is confident that we will earn our A score back.
      4. The Progress Report is online and posted on the PTA website.
   3. **Storefront Science**
      1. Dr. Leonisa Ardizzone is the Founder of Storefront Science. Unfortunately, her center closed last month due to the increase in rent and she is now reaching out to local schools to bring her after school programming to the schools.
      2. Dr. Ardizzone has a long history with 278. She was the Director of the Salvadori program a few years ago.
      3. She wants to offer two 12-week after school sessions at 278 on Tuesdays, starting first week in December, as follows:
         1. 2:30 – 3:30: We Built this City (a study of structural engineering)
         2. 3:30 – 4:30 – Critters (a study of animals/bugs)
      4. Each 12-wk. session will cost $325 ($27/class) (discount if you sign up for both sessions)
      5. Dr. Ardizzone and MG are discussing offering scholarships for this program. If parents are interested, they should contact MG.
      6. Also, we can do fundraising for scholarships.
      7. This is a pilot program to offer enrichment in science. If it successful, she will offer it again.
      8. This is not affiliated with the Inwood Community Afterschool program. It
      9. Registration is through the Storefront Science website.
      10. PTA offered to work with Dr. Ardizzone to help promote the program.
   4. **Questions for MG from parents:**
      1. Can we paint a chess board in the backyard (on the wall or ground), or a vertical suduko?
         1. Parent who brought this up volunteered her husband to do the painting.
         2. MG said we can talk about it. she asked what about the chess pieces?
         3. Parent said they would be the very big ones.
      2. What grade do students get computer lab?
         1. MG said we do not have a computer lab. We have a classroom labeled Tech Lab, but we don’t have any technology and that room has never been used for that purpose.
         2. What we have is a cart with Ipads which the teachers use in their classrooms, and several classrooms have computers.
         3. We also have an enrichment cluster run by Ms. Demeri.
         4. 278 will be receiving $30,000 for technology from Microsoft but half of that must go for software (Microsoft software to be exact).
         5. Eventually all students will be taking their tests on computers so we need to upgrade our systems to prepare for that.
         6. The problem is that we don’t have the bandwidth to support that many computers and the teachers complaining already about not being able to get online, etc.
      3. How are the school tours going?
         1. Very well. A full house was scheduled for the following day (11/21).
         2. 5th grade applications went out and are due back 12/15.
         3. The process for kindergarten is different this year. Parents must apply using the Kindergarten Connect system either by going online, by phone or in person to the Enrollment office on 125th St.
         4. 278 is continuing to do what they have always done, which is accepting application in person, as they come in. But it is unclear at this time if the schools will have any say in who gets a placement, with the exception of sibling priority. Sibling priority still stands but the schools will be asked to confirm that the sibling is in fact enrolled in the school.
         5. Through the Kindergarten Connect system, parents rank their school choices 1-20.
         6. The online system is in 150 languages.
         7. MG is concerned about how the wait list will be determined and believes it will be completely out of her control.
      4. What if a student is currently in Private School and wants to come to 278 for Middle School?
         1. They must apply at the Enrollment Office and rank 278 #1.
         2. Even 278 students who are in 5th grade must submit an application for middle school and rank 278 #1 in order to be guaranteed a spot at 278 for 6th grade.
      5. Can we improve the busing on school trips?
         1. A parent stated that on the SEM school trip day, the bus she was on came so late that the students had very little time to see the exhibit and only because the teacher begged the bus driver to allow the students to eat their lunch on the bus were they able to do that so as to be able to have as much time as possible at the site.
         2. MG explained that they have no control over the buses and are doing their best to make these days as successful as possible. That day they scheduled 20 buses and only one came late, so it really wasn’t that bad. She also explained that the bus drivers do not have to leave until 9:30. Sometimes, some might agree to leave earlier if they are ready, knowing that they might hit traffic, etc. But they are not required to and MG cannot ask them to.
      6. What about staff on buses (for those kids who bus to and from school)?
         1. Again MG explained that busing is not in her control. She has in the past maintained paras on the buses because she personally thinks it’s a good idea and a safety issue but this year she was told explicitly by OPT (Office of Pupil Transportation) that it was illegal.
         2. They think it is adults trying to get a free ride home.
      7. Can we (the parents) appeal? What if we offered to pay the salary for someone to ride on the buses with the students?
         1. Answer: this is not a 278 issue. It is citywide.
         2. Answer: No, you cannot fight this. It is out of our control.
3. **Co-Secretary Position**
   1. We have an opening on the PTA EB again for the Co-Secretary position. If anyone is interested, they should contact DF or KK (Co-Presidents)
4. **Musical Program Supplementation (Annie Shikany) – all done after school**
   1. Middle School Choir Program
      1. Annie started this program last year with funding from the school. However, due to the cuts in Title I funding, the school is not able to sustain it and the Middle School girls really miss it.
      2. PTA is proposing to take it on and fund the program for $1,400.
      3. It is in the budget.
      4. **We voted and the members agreed for the PTA to fund the Middle School Choir program.**
   2. String Ensemble Support Program
      1. Anina spoke to a friend who is willing to fund this program for 278 for $500.
      2. It will expand our current String Ensemble and help support Mr. Quinto who is not strong on string instruments
      3. It could also help inspire more students to be interested in joining the ensemble.
      4. **PTA voted to accept the money from Anina’s friend to pay for this program.**
   3. *Side note – Mr. Quinto has asked for donations of musical instruments (e.g. horns, woodwind, etc.). If anyone has access to such instruments, they should contact the PTA Co-Presidents or speak to Mr. Quinto directly.*
   4. MSM Musical Residency Program
      1. Annie explained that for another $500, we could fund a Jazz Residency Program through the Manhattan School of Music (where she works).
      2. All of this is to help fill the gaps for grades and students who are not currently getting this kind of enrichment (e.g. 5th/6th grades).
      3. We would get 2 Jazz Concerts/yr. which would include opportunities for the students to engage with the musicians and learn about Jazz as a genre of music.
      4. Program could support up to 90 students (3 classes of 30 students).
      5. It can be somewhat tailored to our needs but we would need to work out those details.
      6. **PTA membership did not feel like we had enough information yet to vote on this program and agreed to table it for next month.**
   5. *Side note – the PTA has not forgotten about the visual arts. The reason why we are not discussing enrichment programs for visual arts at this time is because we have a new Art Teacher this year, Ms. Knightly, and we are giving her some time to acclimate to the school before approaching her with ideas for how we can help enrich her curriculum.*
5. **Printer Ink Recycling Program**
   1. Lahcen (Elias (1st grade)’s father) proposed a fundraising option for us to collect used printer ink cartridges and submit them to companies who will pay us 50¢ to $2.50/cartridge.
   2. Lahcen has researched and contacted external companies as well who have agreed to donate their printer cartridges to us.
   3. Bins can be set up at the entrance and at the end of each hallway for students to deposit them. Lahcen has agreed to do the sorting and mailing of the cartridges to the companies.
   4. He said we may receive a check from the company or they can deposit the money directly in our account.
   5. We will get the specifics together and backpack information home about the program.
6. **See agenda for admission application deadlines**
7. **Walk-a-thon**
   1. We raised $16,300 at the walk-a-thon!
   2. We discussed but never voted on the decision to use some of this money ($8,000) to pay for the 92nd St. Y program.
   3. **We voted and approved the $8,000 to go to the 92nd St. Y Program!**
   4. We have ongoing fundraising ideas throughout the year (e.g. annual PTA dues, read-a-thon, Spring Fair, etc.) and will therefore be continuing to raise funds to ensure our ability to continue funding the 92nd St. Y program, among other enrichment projects.
   5. In the past we talked about a portion of the walk-a-thon money going to its original purpose which was for pediatric cancer research. But we need to decide how much money of the $16,300 raised at the walk-a-thon, to donate.
   6. 10% was proposed (or $1,600).
   7. Anything over $15,000 was suggested (or $1,300).
   8. A question was asked if the NY Presbyterian program was relying on our funding?
   9. MG explained that she started this walk-a-thon several years ago when there was a student at the school who was in remission and she thought it would be nice if the kids could help raise money by walking for kids like them who are not able to walk themselves due to illness.
   10. Someone asked if we could do better than $1,600, thinking that it is a very good cause, it is the original purpose of the walk-a-thon, and that $1,600 in the medical research world is pennies.
   11. Karen Joculier, chair of the Fundraising Committee, commented on the fact that there is a small issue regarding the spirit for which the money was raised (many people gave thinking they were helping to fund the school’s arts program) and that as a nonprofit doing fundraising for its own cause, it’s a little problematic to turn around and give some of that money to another cause.
   12. It was noted that it was written in the packet that some of the money would go to pediatric cancer research.
   13. Someone suggested we simply round the amount up to $2,000.
   14. **PTA voted on giving $2,000 of the $16,300 raised from the walk-a-thon to the Pediatric Cancer Research program. Vote passed!**
8. **Next General PTA meeting – Dec. 20th, @ 8AM**
9. **Career Day – Wednesday, Jan. 29th**
   1. What is Career Day?
      1. It is an opportunity for parents and other adult friends/family to come in to speak to students about their careers.
      2. Or parents can volunteer to host the adults who come in for Career Day to speak to students about their careers.
      3. The students really look forward to Career Day every year and it is an extremely rewarding experience for all involved.
10. **Title I Committee**
    1. The Title I Committee helps MG decide how to spend the Title I funds.
    2. MG is recruiting members for the committee, including the committee Chair (who must be a Title I member). If interested, please see MG.
11. **W.I.T.S.**
    1. Wellness Walking Groups – every Monday and Friday mornings @ 8:10am. Meet in front of the school. All are welcome!
    2. Chef Anne’s Ginger and Kale recipe is on the website. The students who participated in this all loved it and came home eager to eat kale.
    3. Chef Anne will be bringing another credentialed chef to her next workshop to make polenta.
    4. She will also be at the next PTA general meeting on Dec. 20th (breakfast!)
    5. MG asked parents to PLEASE encourage their kids to eat the school hot lunch. She said it really is very good and we need to use the program in order to keep it. Some students just refuse to even try it. We need to encourage them.
    6. Bulb Planting
       1. 8 classes participated (K-6) and a total of 250 bulbs got planted that day.
       2. We had some left over and one extra tree that got dug up for the project, so as an FYI – some members of the PTA decided to plant the rest of the bulbs in that tree too (in other words, the PTA has an adopted tree on 220th St. to the left of the backyard entrance (facing the school).
       3. Check back in the Spring to find out if they sprouted.
12. **Other updates**
    1. We raised $1,300 at the Community Dinner/Bake Sale.
    2. The teachers especially really loved it and are so incredibly appreciative of what we do to help support them on Parent-Teacher Conference night.
    3. Someone asked about putting the button or icon on the website to be able to collect online donations
       1. Karen explained that we are currently experiencing some problems with the IRS which was caused by them and is delaying our ability to get that set up. It is a bureaucratic problem which is in the process of being resolved. Once it is resolved, we will be able to make that happen and will announce it to the PTA.
       2. Meanwhile, we do have the Square Program and are therefore able to take donations via credit card that way. See Anina if you are interested in making a credit card donation.