

District 181 PTO President FINAL Meeting Notes  
*Provided by Faith Behr, D181 Communications Office*  
March 6, 2018 • Monroe School

**Call to Order**

9:10 a.m.

**In Attendance**

PTO Presidents, Oak School PTO Executive Board, Oak Principal Martha Henrikson, D181 Foundation Executive Director Meg Cooper, Board of Education President Jennifer Burns, Superintendent Dr. Don White, Communications representative Faith Behr, Student Information Specialist Stephanie Gardner and Guest Presenters Oak School Library Media Center Director Colleen Malone and HCHS Parent List PTO liaison Tara DeGeer.

**Welcome**

Oak Principal Martha Henrikson welcomed the group to Oak School.

**Minutes (February 6 2018)**

Approved as presented.

**Oak School PTO Presentation: STEAM plans**

Principal Martha Henrikson said that the administration and PTO have worked together to identify STEAM for future fundraising efforts. They also worked as a team to hire a new MRC director, who had the required library certification and has the technology certification, too. The school is fortunate to have hired Colleen Malone, knowing that they were getting ready to implement more STEAM learning in the school.

Mrs. Malone was introduced and gave a presentation on the status of STEAM learning at Oak. The administration and PTO spent time in the fall brainstorming how STEAM teaching and learning would look at Oak and the school's goals and objectives about STEAM. They focused on how to design a program that would integrate with Oak School. They felt it was critical to provide students with a chance to solve problems that are realistic, authentic and are interested in. Projects should also be across curricular areas. Though it's difficult to predict what students will be doing 25 years from now, skills we hope to develop in students are inquiry formation, problem solving, persistence, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. After research, Mrs. Malone said the group decided on an integrated project-based model with a goal of three projects per grade per year.

She shared an example of a social studies project during which students were learning cardinal directions by developing a large floor map of the classroom, creating arrows to get from one place to another and programming robots to follow those directions. Besides classroom projects, next year students will be offered an extra curricular type club where they can come in during open hours and build, program and problem solve in what will be called a "Makerspace."

A list of tools, apps and software is being developed including coding and robotics, computer aided design, building and construction, and multi media production.

The room will be reconfigured to better suit the lab area. Rolling carts will be added, which will allow materials and tools to be taken to the classroom.

Research and site visits began in the fall, followed by cost estimates. The focus from January to April will be on fundraising and curricular planning. In April through June, there will be beta testing and in the summer, the space will be renovated and more curricular planning will occur.

The STEAM lab will launch when school starts in the fall.

Superintendent Dr. Don White said similar efforts are being done in each school and that the administration is working to ensure that STEAM Labs meet goals connected to the Strategic Plan and curriculum, and are integrated into the curriculum. He said dollar amounts need to be assigned, the budget reviewed and vendors explored and vetted. A custom package could be developed depending on each school's needs.

### **Parent List**

Tara DeGeer, who is the HCHS PTO liaison to the Parent List, gave a brief presentation on how the resource list works. She said that local parents recommend medical and other resources in the community (e.g. psychologists, resources for ADHD, insomnia, autism, processing grief, depression, etc...) and provide reviews. The list is shared with parents in the school. It is a closed group where only local parents provide anonymous recommendations and reviews and only local groups can access the list. She said that some D181 schools are involved and encouraged others to get involved as well.

### **Update on Superintendent Search**

Board President Jennifer Burns said that the Board is excited to welcome Dr. Hector Garcia as the new superintendent beginning July 1. Presently, he is superintendent in Plano District 88. He has worked in curriculum and instruction for a number of school districts in the region and has broad experience K-12. She said that stakeholders had identified deep experience in curriculum and instruction and strong leadership skills as desired attributes. Dr. Garcia has also been very involved in the regional and national level, most recently chairing an academic committee for the College Board. She encouraged the group to attend a March 12 reception to welcome Dr. Garcia.

### **SchoolPay Update**

Student Information Specialist Stephanie Gardner gave an update on SchoolPay that allows PTO's to offer items for sale, sign up for dues and link the site to their websites. She asked which PTO's were planning to implement SchoolPay and asked that the site be live by April 1 so she can test it. Parents will start the registration process, which will begin in mid April, in Skyward, then go to SchoolPay. The group also discussed descriptors for one of the fields and decided that it should be "nickname/pronunciation help." The topic will also be put on the principals' agenda.

### **District Update**

- **Potential walkouts:** Dr. White addressed the nationwide walkout and safety protocols being used in D181. He noted that the District has a clear policy restricting political activity on school grounds and noted that parents will be asked to check their child out of school if the child wants to participate in a rally offsite. The administration is putting together plans to ensure that a potential walk out goes smoothly and that all students are supervised at all times.

- Communications: PTO representatives noted that former Director of Communications Bridget McGuiggan would email the PTO's by 5 p.m. Thursday with any news items or upload news items to their websites. Faith Behr who is working with Larry Randa until a permanent communications representative is hired, will send pertinent items weekly. In addition, Ms. Behr was asked to send reminders to PTO's about the official Teacher Appreciation Day this year. She also noted plans for the Summer Expo and World Changer Awards deadline.
- Budget reductions: Dr. White addressed the shortfall in the budget and plans to reduce the budget approximately \$1.7 million, a number which will likely change as plans are fine tuned. He said that items under review are posted on BoardDocs. Already, some cost efficiencies are planned but additional items will be considered by the Board this spring. He said at the same time, the Board has made a commitment to invest in its facilities, including roofs and parking lots. To make cuts, the administration has conducted research on transportation needs, which could necessitate a change in the start and end times of schools, reducing PE hours, changing hiring practices, starting orchestra in 5<sup>th</sup> grade rather than 4<sup>th</sup>, among others. About 1,000 surveys were completed by parents on the topic of budget cuts, a very good response. In response to a question from the PTO about why 5<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish was not considered for a reduction, Board President Jennifer Burns said parents had expressed a desire to incorporate more time on World Languages, and that the current program could be enhanced. She noted that the discussions are difficult and that the Board has much to weigh in making a decision.

### Foundation update

Jennifer Burns and PTO members commended the Foundation's Writer's Night. Executive Director Meg Cooper announced the Robert Crown/Foundation events on Drug Abuse Prevention on March\_12 and 13 and the Sex Education presentation on April 9 and 10.

### Questions from PTO

- Calendar: In response to questions, Don White noted that the Feb. 9 snow day will need to be made up. He will make a recommendation to the Board at its March meeting, adding another school attendance day to the calendar. Eighth grade promotion dates will not change.
- Open positions: In response to a question, Jennifer Burns noted that open principal positions at Prospect and Elm will be filled once the Department of Learning team is finalized. The Board will continue to update parents on the progress.

### PTO Collaboration

A few PTO' presidents noted that they have low open rates for newsletters. Some schools are using "Remind" to text parents updates and reminders. Hyperlinks can be used in the texts though verbiage content is limited.

