

District 181 PTO President Draft (Unofficial) Meeting Notes
Provided by Bridget McGuiggan, Director of Communications
January 9, 2018 • Monroe School

Call to Order

9:05 a.m.

In Attendance

PTO Presidents, Monroe PTO Executive Board, Monroe Principal Justin Horne, D181 Foundation Executive Director Meg Cooper, Board of Education member Rich Giltner, Superintendent Dr. Don White, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Learning (C&I) Joan Woolwine, Director of Communications Bridget McGuiggan / Guest Presenter: Monroe PTO Grants Committee Chair Melissa Burke

Welcome

Principal Justin Horne welcomed the group to Monroe School.

Minutes (December 5, 2017)

Approved as presented.

Monroe PTO Presentation: Educational Staff Grants

More information about this topic is available on the Monroe PTO website (Programs tab). Visitors can access program guidelines, the online form, rubric, and wish list purchases policy. Per request, Melissa can also make available the presentation to introduce the program, a letter to introduce the program to staff, chairperson checklists, and summary forms.

Purpose of Monroe PTO Educational Staff Grants Program (Why)

- Put the “teacher” in PTO
- Aligns with parent desire to use donated funds to support curriculum enhancements
- Grows upon 2017 wish list
- Allows funds to get into the classroom more immediately (do not have to wait for wish list process in spring)
- To award funds for projects, programs, and materials that enhance the school curriculum and environment and which would not otherwise be funded through the school budget

Key Information

- Monroe PTO has allocated approx. \$9,700 for the program (5% of 2017-18 operating budget)
 - They reorganized the budget and eliminated some line items to make these funds available
- The application form is easy for staff – it takes no more than 5-10 minutes
 - The process is different for requests \$1,000 or higher (based on PTO by-laws)
 - Mr. Horne must give approval for the request
 - There is an online form on the PTO website; the form submission is automatically sent to all committee members (Nine people serve on the PTO’s Grants Committee)
 - PTO committee members individually evaluate the submissions via a rubric and submit scores to the PTO mailbox
- The rubric has a 1-10 scale
 - Rubric Areas: it cannot be funded through other sources (including D181 Foundation, District budget, and school budget); it fills a need that is not already available; it benefits a reasonable number of students relative to the dollar amount needed; the goals and objectives fit within the mission of the PTO; implementation can be nearly immediate with measurable results; and it could be rolled out on a broader scale and considered useful
 - It was clarified that the request does not have to earn a perfect score; the committee members are looking for a score of 40-50 approximately, understanding that some criteria may not fit and so the request will not get a 10 in those areas
- The Executive Board reviews recommendations at their monthly meetings
- (Under \$1000) Once approved, applicant can purchase item and start program

- (\$1000 or more) Voted on at general PTO meeting and/or rolled into annual wish list for funding
- Recipients report back informally on the success of the project
- The process allows for quick, responsive funding within a structured process
- The PTO hopes to spread funding across grade levels and among specialists
- Examples of funded items: nine square game, MRC shelf, STEAM materials, picture books
 - Example of item that may not be funded is charging stations for iPads (PTO Question: Should the District be funding it?)
 - Bridget McGuiggan had a follow-up conversation with Director of Technology Matt Kunesch about this question after the PTO Meeting. He noted, “We do provide charging carts for iPads. However, these are retro-fit computer carts that we now use for storing iPads. They are less than ideal due to their size, however, because of the expense for charging stations, we are not purchasing them at the District level. We have provided the schools an option that fits into our District budget. If the schools feel this is not adequate or want something extra, we are allowing them to request charging stations from the PTO.”
- Mr. Horne noted that not all ideas or new purchases will result in a success, but he would rather have teachers try and fail than not try.

Findings / Current Status

- Majority of asks are between \$60-\$500
- Currently – About \$2,000 has funded six grants; two larger asks will be voted on at an upcoming meeting
- Promotion is key to success (emails, staff meeting reminders)
- Very little time needed to make it run successfully once set up, easy to replicate
- Competition among staff was a detractor from them applying before (Concern about not enough to go around)

Role of the Foundation

- For PTOs considering implementing this type of program, Mr. Horne noted the importance of teachers and principals understanding the opportunities provided through the Foundation (including KIDS Grants)
 - It was noted that Monroe PTO did not implement a grant program for students because the Foundation has KIDS Grants
- The Foundation awards teacher grants throughout the year. Approximately \$25,000 - \$30,000 in the Foundation’s budget is set aside for grants. Grants have to be a pilot program (no one has done it yet) OR something that could work or will be used District-wide. When thinking about their own programming, PTOs were encouraged to consider partnering with the Foundation, as they can augment a PTO’s ability to get a teacher what they want by using Foundation funds. The Foundation is a partner to the PTOs. The Foundation’s grant process starts with a 150-word letter of inquiry (simple form). PTOs can fill out the form after hearing a teacher request if needed. The Foundation sometimes redirects requests to the PTO, if applicable.

PTO Clarifications

- It was clarified that Monroe PTO does still has a wish list – the grants are for immediate purchases while the wish list is for bigger, more long-term items.
- Monroe PTO did debate increasing stipends rather than having a grant process, but felt the grant process was more likely to result in the money being used and being used for a need. They allocate approximately \$5,000 for stipends.
- The Monroe PTO budget no longer includes Book Fair because it is now run by the school, so the MRC receives funds raised, and therefore the PTO allocates less to the MRC.

Foundation – PTO – Admin – BOE Partnership

Ms. McGuiggan provided a report on the December meeting of representatives from the PTO Presidents, Foundation, administration, and Board of Education. (Please see the attached report.) Ms. McGuiggan highlighted the administration’s thanks to the PTO and Foundation for their strong support. She also remarked that, as was noted at the meeting, changes at the State and Federal level may result in the District relying more and more on its partners for support to enhance and enrich students’ educational experiences.

STEAM Labs

STEAM Lab discussion was included as part of the December partnership meeting referenced above. Ms. Woolwine noted that with Madison's STEAM Lab already complete, and Oak PTO considering implementation of their own STEAM Lab with a fundraiser in the works, the District does want and need to provide direction on STEAM Labs. She emphasized the importance of a STEAM Lab being integrated within the curriculum, not a stand-alone place students visit separate from the rest of their school day. She also commented on limited time in the school day for instruction. Ms. Woolwine and Dr. White commented on the importance of parity while supporting entrepreneurial efforts and encouraging children to be innovators. Ms. Woolwine discussed that the Strategic Plan has STEAM as a priority area within curriculum, and the Labs can help meet that goal. Being on the same page with STEAM Labs could also result in cost savings for all by purchasing in bulk (economy of scale).

She and Mr. Horne commented on the work principals have been doing to outline the components of a STEAM Lab they have in place now, including space, curriculum, a model for integration, devices, low-tech and high-tech engineering products, robotics and coding resources, and circuitry resources. Ms. Woolwine said the administration does have a "good picture" of what is in place across the District. The principals also ranked their schools on a scale of 1-4 in terms of how complete or incomplete they are in creating STEAM Labs; all schools have at least some components of STEAM Labs already. She clarified that most of the conversation is focusing on elementary because middle school curriculum and resources were addressed in 2016-17 (new Applied Tech curriculum and FUSE program, etc.).

It was discussed that the staff (administration, teachers), need to first confirm STEAM Labs meet goals connected to the Strategic Plan and curriculum, outline how the Labs would be integrated in the curriculum, consider how and when professional development would be done, and define the components of STEAM Labs needed to meet the goals (both a baseline and a "nice to have" list, ideally). Then, dollar amounts need to be assigned and the District budget reviewed to determine what funds are available. From there, Ms. Woolwine said a joint fundraising initiative could be collaboratively planned with the PTOs and Foundation to discuss any gap that may exist in funding. Ms. Woolwine remarked that the staff needs to take time to consider what is working about Madison's existing Lab and review Oak's completed research into curriculum options. (Per a question, she confirmed the DOL has been engaged with Oak in their conversations.) It was noted that the Board needs to be fully behind the effort. A later remark also highlighted that a new superintendent was coming in, as well as an Assistant Superintendent of Learning, and they would have involvement in planning and considerations for STEAM Labs, as well.

It was requested that a timeline be established for this process. PTOs said typically at April meetings, they discuss budgets and major fundraising. A concern was shared that if the process takes too long, parents would not support it because it would be for a space or resources that would not benefit their own children. Ms. McGuiggan said an update would be provided at the February PTO meeting. Mr. Horne commented that part of the reason Madison's Lab is successful is because getting there was a journey that started small and brought stakeholders along.

Along with the timeline, clarity was requested on who would be the project manager within the District.

In regard to fundraising, the group discussed some benefits and challenges of a major joint fundraiser, particularly as PTOs have varying fund balances and varying fundraising capabilities.

Update on Superintendent Search

Mr. Giltner said BWP reported there were over 30 applicants in the superintendent search. He noted that the initial screening is going on now (January 9). BWP and the Board hope to narrow the group to approx. five individuals to be interviewed and then have approx. two finalists in final interviews. He said the Board hoped to have someone named in February. Per a question, he confirmed the names of candidates are not released to the public. He also shared congratulations to Dr. White in being named the incoming Superintendent of Mokena School District 159.

Other

- Dr. White commented on the ongoing progress of HMS construction.
- Dr. White said the Board and administration have made long-term facility needs a budget priority. An approx. \$1.5 million increase for capital projects (over past years) has resulted in a deficit budget anticipated for 2018-19, but he commented on the need to invest in the buildings and complete necessary major work (i.e. roofs, parking lots). He

said the administration is currently reviewing the budget to consider how dollars may be shifted and/or reductions made to achieve a balanced budget for 2018-19. He said keeping the community informed during the process would be important. Mr. Giltner commented on the importance of partnerships with the PTOs and Foundation, particularly with budget challenges ahead, changes to property tax deductions, etc.

- Ms. McGuiggan highlighted the dates for 2018-19 registration and encouraged PTOs to build a test page in SchoolPay. She said she would report back on the date a decision is needed from PTOs regarding whether they are moving forward with SchoolPay, and when their own materials and/or forms would need to be ready.
- Ms. Cooper and Ms. McGuiggan highlighted upcoming events.
- Ms. McGuiggan shared a draft communication to families about procedures for the upcoming implementation of a visitor management system. She requested that PTO Presidents share any feedback they may have on the document, including topics related to visitors and volunteers that may be missing. She anticipated the system would be in place District-wide prior to spring break.
- Monroe PTO volunteered to complete a contact list of officers within each PTO so that people in like-positions (i.e. treasurers) could easily connect with one another.

Adjourn:
10:45am