

Highcrest Middle School PTO  
General Board Meeting Minutes  
November 7, 2007

Jenny Frentzel, PTO Co-President, called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the September 5, 2007 general meeting were approved.

District 39 Foundation: Mimi Brault gave a brief overview explaining that in addition to parents of students making contributions, the foundation receives many private contributions. Several Foundation sponsored events include a circus fundraiser; free fine arts programs scheduled in the spring; a certificate of appreciation (teacher gift). This holiday season over 30 members of the Foundation marched in the Wilmette Holiday parade.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Ray Lechner gave a presentation highlighting The vision and goals of District 39, "Teaching tomorrow's Leaders." He focused on four topics:

1. Student achievement- this is a top priority focusing on individual strengths and weaknesses of each student. Scantron testing, gender difference research and analysis and teacher assessment will be used to help advance each student's general achievement. There will be an emphasis on teaching reading/writing and math skills. He shared the differences in ISAT math and reading scores between boys and girls in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.
2. Progress Reporting and Conferencing- Currently there are different report cards for all grades. As part of a long range strategic plan, a unified common report card will be incorporated for all grades.
3. Student Wellness- The district is committed to each student's nutritional, physical and emotional well being. New cooks and a trained nutritionist have been hired who are committed to these efforts.
4. Teacher Mentoring- Extra attention and focus will be given to new teachers hired within the district. Committees have been formed to create a process of initiation whereby each new teacher has a greater awareness of the goals and expectations of district. Mentors are assigned and regular "new teacher talks" are incorporated.

Dr. Lechner then spent a few minutes sharing his background as a young student and how he developed his passion to help others through teaching. As the eldest of six children growing up on a working farm in Oregon,

Illinois, he was strongly influenced by a teacher in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This teacher focused on his personal writing strengths and challenged him to be an even better writer. The biography summary he wrote on Louisa May Alcott changed his life. As he began to realize how much this teacher helped him, Dr. Lechner knew then that he wanted to help others in a similar teaching manner.

The meeting was then open to Q & A for Dr. Lechner.

**Teacher's Report:** Hillary Harvey reported several highlights. Two 5<sup>th</sup> grade Classes sponsored a food drive for low income families. The music department has released dates for upcoming band, orchestra and chorus events. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade parent/child book club has started. In addition, a separate 5<sup>th</sup> grade parent/child book is also underway. Spirit day will be held this coming Friday. Hats and scarves are being collected for needy families.

**Principal's Report:** Interim Principal, Margaret Clausen reported on many issues. The upcoming parent/teacher conference process utilized electronic scheduling for the first time at Highcrest. It was a smooth process. Scantron testing will be completed at the end of this week. A COGAT testing is underway for 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The results of ISATS testing are in the mail for parents to receive. She noted that the scores are low in writing for the first time and that this was being addressed in the school improvement process. This plan will focus on writing and math enrichment with "flexible grouping" of students with similar strengths. Safety issues were emphasized on two topics. 1) In the spring, the need to push use of bicycle helmets will be reinforced with Wilmette Police training. 2) Many students are still crossing the main intersection at a diagonal. A PR campaign will begin to create awareness and danger of crossing this way.

Student of the month breakfasts have begun. These students are nominated and voted by homeroom based on 10 character traits focusing on positive behavior.

The Kindness Connection (one week service project per grade) will be coming up in December. This not for profit effort is sponsored by the PTO (\$3 per child for a total of \$2,400 dollars) allows each child to make something as part of a "service project" for a designated organization. This message will be broadcast in Monday's broadcast.

Margaret also noted that improvement was needed to streamline supply lists required at the start of each school year. A uniformed list used by all teachers of each grade is needed.

Lastly, she asked that each parent make certain they were receiving her weekly Friday email which features highlights and Backpack 39 and other timely messages.

## **Committee Reports-**

**Legislation:** The amended PTO by-laws were approved by the 23 people attending this meeting. The amendments featured the minor changes to the PTO schedule.

**Ways and Means:** Alison Bischoff reported as of this meeting over 269 donations were received as part of the year long Kids are Key campaign resulting in over \$20,000. All of these funds are used for enrichment events for students at Highcrest. The Parents Night Out event held last week was a big success with over 265 people in attendance.

**Youth Connection:** Maria Secaras reminded parents of the several events sponsored by this group. The RAD after-school program is a safe place for students that need after school supervision from 3:40 to 6pm. On February 1<sup>st</sup>, a TGIF party is being held for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. Also, a community service project is planned during this school year.

**President's Report:** Jenny Frentzel reported that the entire district is looking into streamlining three issues: common school supply list per grade; same photographer/vendor for picture day at all schools (goal is to lower costs); Yearbook vendor to be same for all schools (lower cost goal).

The update and delay on school directory (due out in mid- December) is caused by many technical and process discrepancies. It was recommended that the district help in this process next year so that the directory can be received on a timely basis. All parents were reminded not to use the school directory as a resource for solicitations.

The Freaky Friday event was a huge success. Over 700 wristbands were sold. Thanks to all involved in planning this event. As a result of the huge turnout, two policemen were hired to help direct and control traffic flow into school for pick up.

Finally, Jenny emphasized the PTO is working on all issues that are important to the school, parents, teachers and students. The PTO is committed to eliminating paper distribution by using electronic communication as the tool.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:42PM**

**Minutes submitted by Pepe Miller**