

DARCEY PTA Meeting Minutes October 26, 2009

The meeting was called to order 7:06 p.m. by Co-President, Shazia Chaudhry
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Speaker: Dr Florio, Superintendent

Dr. Florio spoke of the need for the community to take care of our schools. He discussed how the Cheshire schools are doing more with less; how the number of teachers has decreased and, thus, class sizes have increased. He spoke of the school facilities getting old, the need to maintain them. He believes that some of the things that have made Cheshire schools so good are slipping away. He emphasized the need for parents to be vocal about wanting high quality education and services.

Dr. Florio also discussed how Darcey School is on the cutting edge. He described a recent seminar he attended where the speaker, Dr. Peter Senge, a graduate of MIT and leader on change management, spoke to a small group of Connecticut Superintendents. Dr. Senge, admitting he was not an expert in education, put up a slide of school performance standards from a school in Tacoma, WA, and commented that if he *were* in education, those performance standards reflect what students everywhere should be learning today. Dr. Florio was pleased to see that the standards on that slide were almost identical to the 7 standards of Cheshire public schools.

He also spoke of our science classrooms moving forward. Through the Dr. Lao Foundation for Science Education, Chapman School received a new science lab a couple years ago, and this year there is a new science lab at Doolittle. The Foundation would like to see a science lab in every elementary school.

Dr. Florio then spoke of the numbers 72, 4, and 3. In a recent ranking by CNN Money magazine of the best places to live in the country, Cheshire ranked 72nd. And for communities with populations between 25,000 – 50,000 people, Connecticut Magazine ranked Cheshire as the 4th most desirable place to live and the 3rd best for education. He emphasized that we have a special community of great kids and great parents. However, he stressed that we, as a community, must continue to support our schools.

Presidents' Report

Zoe Dolan talked about the Bonus Bucks program through Stop-n-Shop. She notes that Darcey School is now registered with the program and that you can go to the Stop-n-Shop website and register to have your purchases count towards Bonus Bucks for Darcey School. She indicates that a letter will go home with the children to provide more information on this program. She further notes that anyone can sign up to participate at Stop & Shops anywhere, so encourage other family members, like grandparents, to do the same.

Vice President's Report

Sandhya Desmond provided us with a PTA membership update. At this time there are 52 single memberships, 28 dual memberships, and 15 staff memberships, for a total of 95 memberships. It was emphasized that we need more members. A table will be set up during Pizza night to sign up new members. She further notes that she has emailed all committee chairs to assist with volunteering. Lastly, there are approximately 8-9 chairs that haven't paid their membership dues, adding that they must in order to serve.

Shazia Chaudhry further discussed membership dues. She mentioned that lowering dues has been considered to encourage more members. She added that we may also want to consider only providing student directories to PTA members. This is lowest membership the Darcey PTA has ever had and she feels that it may partly be due to a lack of presence this year at the school open house. Upon inquiry, those members present commented that they believe the dues are reasonable. We must focus on finding ways to increase membership. We will consider the idea of charging for the directory next year. In the mean time, a plea will go out in the next Week Ahead, the directory is funded by the PTA and to consider joining the PTA to help support this and other programs sponsored by the PTA.

Treasurer's Report

Anthony Damiane reported that funds are low due to low membership. He further adds that we are \$345 behind on t-shirts sales. The Fall Fundraiser went great, raising approximately \$13,214 from which we should net approx \$7000. The Bookfair netted \$1667.49; we await the check from Schoolastic.

Secretary's Report

Heather Prior reported that the Student Directory is completed and copies have been delivered to the school to be handed out to each student. The total cost for the directories came in under budget at \$196.37.

Last month's minutes were reviewed, with one change made. A motion to approve the amended minutes was made by Lori Brown, and seconded by Anita Sharif.

Committee Reports

Ways and Means

Phyllis was happy to turn in the approximately \$13214 raised in the Fall Fundraiser sale. She notes that the orders will be in for Thanksgiving.

Shazia discussed ideas for fundraising, noting that we need to decide on the Spring Fundraiser. Square Art and Yankee Candle were done last year, and both did well. She suggested that we look to do something in time for Mother's Day and/or Father's Day. She further noted that we need a Chair for the Spring Fundraiser.

Beautification

Shazia reported on behalf of Maura Esposito that Maura has gotten some volunteers and is happy to have the help.

Book Fair

It was reported that the Book Fair was a great success, netting \$1667.49. We await the check from Schoolastic.

Curriculum & Enrichment

Anita Sharif reported that the visit by Mother Goose on October 15th went very well. She further reports that the Chinese dance troop will be here to perform 2 shows on November 5th. Then all is quiet until Star Labs in January.

Tshirt/Sweatshirt Sales

Shazia Chaudhry and Tony Damiani reported on behalf of Julia Contardo that we are slightly behind on our sales. We will have a table set up at Pizza night to sell more.

Special Activities

Zoe Dolan reported that they are doing well with coordinating Pizza night, scheduled for November 10th. They have a lot of volunteers and are ready to go, but could still use more volunteers for the 2nd seating. Please volunteer if you are available.

Townwide PTA

VP Sandhya Desmond reported on behalf of Mary Vece that the Board of Education Candidate Forum was a success. There will not be a November Townwide PTA meeting; the next meeting will be in December.

Box tops

It was reported by Carrie Brabant that many box tops have come in so far, but please keep sending them in.

Teachers Comments

Mrs. Goldberg opened by commenting that she is surprised that our PTA membership low, as many parents around the school seem to really care and want to be involved.

She tells us the children, now 8 weeks into the school year, are so comfortable and “own” the school. She adds that the many activities have helped to elevate their comfort level, and she thanks the PTA on behalf of the staff for all that we do.

New Business

First, holiday pointsettias for the staff was discussed. It was recently noticed that funds for holiday pointsettias was not included in this year’s budget. There are approximately 70 staff members, and would cost about \$350 to continue this tradition. A motion on floor was made by Anita Sharif to purchase pointsettias for all Darcey staff; Phyllis Pavlik seconded the motion, and it was passed.

Second, Shazia and Zoe have gotten a lot of emails from parents that own businesses expressing an interest to participate in fundraisers. There was a discussion about a fair approach to choosing businesses. The idea of a vendor night, where the various businesses could pay for table, was discussed.

Principal’s Comments

Mrs Stern reported that the kindergarten literacy assessments will be done in the next coming weeks. She further discussed the “take home readers,” which will be coming home with the children, allow the children to show parents their independent reading abilities. She encourages parents to come to the November 18th workshop on literacy and pre-literacy skills for kindergarten and pre-school children. She adds that the kindergarteners are working on economic principles such as wants/needs and consumers/producers. The kindergarten teachers will be doing online profile surveys for each student (for privacy, no names are given) on readiness indicators and basic readiness for classroom life. She reports that the kindergarten food drive began this week and will have the children discussing and thinking about giving. Mrs. Stern also added that the Book Fair was a great success and thanked the PTA for a great job. She reports that there will be a meeting this week to rehearse the phone tree for calling parents and daycare centers for school cancellations. Mrs. Stern ended with comments regarding H1N1 flu. There have been 2 reported cases in the school. She notes that more kids are staying home sick, for which she is grateful, as parents are being more cautious. Vaccines should soon be made available at Chesprocott; children between 6 months and 24 years old are most vulnerable to the H1N1 virus.

Mrs. Stern added that Darcey School is looking to purchase a sound field system. They have learned that these systems, which use to be used just for those with hearing problems, benefit all students in the classroom because it reduces ambient noise. She reports that they have tried the system out in the double classroom, and the voice clarity was incredible. She notes that it wasn't loud, just clear. There is a small fund from Cheshire Nursery, and a proposal has been submitted to purchase the equipment for 4 of our classrooms to start. Her goal is to get one in every classroom. Darcey will be first school in town to have this technology.

Leadship Council Update

The first meeting was held at which they went over the strategic plan. They meet again in November.

Board of Education

No report.

Upon motion by Anita Sharif to adjourn, seconded by Brenda Ferraro, the meeting was adjourned.