

PTO Executive Board Meeting - 9/9/2020

Meeting held via ZOOM 7:30pm – 10:15pm

In attendance - Agnes Pietrzyk, Jayven Rappa, Eric Sprung, Michele Morris, Mary Glendon, Joanna Josephson, Nicky Chapman, Ginny Richmond, Lauren Myers, Flora Edwards, Robin Levenson, Blair Lesser Sullivan, Richelle Smith, Rachel Bennett, Annette Nedeljkovic, Krisla Strand, Josina Raisler-Cohn, Norah Ferry.

INTRODUCTIONS & GETTING TO KNOW THE COMMITTEE

Short poll to get to know the board members circulated prior to meeting. Questions around education model, factors that guided decision making, outlook for school year.

Educational model: 78% of committee chose Hybrid model; 22% chose DLA

BUDGET

Three items up for executive committee approval:

- (1) Seat cushions for every student to be used when learning outside
- (2) A mask for every child with Cabot Cubs logo
- (3) Sandwich boards to be used directing students and families around school grounds

Discussion around evolving guidelines from NPS Equity Committee. E.g., PTOs may not purchase additional tents or chairs.

Item (1) - AP to reach out and inquire about seat cushions and whether purchasing one for every child as a gift is within equity guidelines.

Items (2) and (3) approved by majority.

EVENTS

Event chairs were asked to reimagine events in light of COVID-19 or to make them virtual. Committee is anticipating responses from event chairs circa 9/18/20.

Cabot Community Supper is one event that is not possible in the current environment; cancelling this event returns \$1300 to the budget.

Discussion around guidelines for organizing socially distanced gatherings. Families are desperately seeking connection and asking for more opportunities to gather. Kindergarten meetups over the summer have been well attended. Feedback has been positive. Second grade is planning a very well-received, socially-distanced gathering.

Discussion around possibly hosting an outdoor movie in Cabot Park. BLS shared her experience planning outdoor movies, in her role as ED of Newton Community Pride, and the need to secure public performance licenses for certain films (ranging in cost from \$600-\$1,000). Questions around use of Cabot Park; attain permit from Newton Parks & Rec.

All Cabot PTO gatherings must comply with the city of Newton's HHS guidelines for gatherings (maximum of 50 people outdoors). Encourage grade-level reps to organize smaller, outdoor events and create signups to limit and track numbers.

NF and MM to review Newton and MA HHS guidance on gatherings and create a comprehensive list of guidelines for Cabot PTO gatherings.

UPDATE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

ES understands need for information and frustration around lack of details. Cabot team is disseminating information as soon as it becomes available.

Staff has participated in a number of district PDs, including: antiracism, culturally-responsive teaching, social-emotional learning, online platforms (e.g., Google classroom, Seesaw), among other topics; full list detailed in email to Cabot Community on 9/8/2020.

Internally, teams are meeting to address challenges related to:

- (1) COVID guidelines
- (2) Social-emotional learning
- (3) Fostering connections among Hybrid/DLA students
- (4) Arrival and dismissal changes
- (5) Fun and enjoyment
- (6) K and Grade 5 transitions
- (7) Special education (2 groups)

Cabot is in the process of hiring a new administrative assistant to replace Ms. Balise. In the interim, Jan Westman from the Literacy Room is helping out at the front office. Nicky Chapman is assisting with data entry of family information into Membership Toolkit (MTK).

Q&A WITH THE PRINCIPAL

(1) Will there be a meet and greet for DLA students? A: ES recommends reaching out to Jen Shore, the principal of DLA.

(2) Will class lists be published? A: ES notes that class lists will not be published as they have in the past; this change is consistent throughout NPS and based on recommendations from the district's legal advisors. Committee discussion around the importance of having families log in to Membership Toolkit and provide their information for the Cabot directory; doing so will allow families to find others in their cohorts/classes. Cabot PTO to send an email encouraging families to do this immediately.

(3) Some DLA teacher names seemed familiar prompting the question of whether retired teachers were asked to return. A: As far as ES is aware, no retirees were tapped. Some schools did have to do some new hiring.

(4) What is the district doing to support staff and family mental health? Could the PTO help in supporting mental health initiatives? A: District-wide efforts to support on this topic have included PD on social emotional learning and transitioning back to school. At Cabot specifically, Lisa Lacava (new social worker) led a trauma training for all staff that was well received. All teachers will be connecting

directly with families to check in on how students are doing through phone conversations and SEL surveys.

(5) How can we ensure that Creative Arts and Sciences programs are delivered equitably? A: GR is exploring virtual programs and brainstorming how best to deliver these programs to ensure equity and that timing dovetails with complicated schedules. Looking at the possibility of programming on Wednesdays.

(6) Is attendance mandatory on remote learning days? A: We want all students to attend all day. At the moment, we do not have written rules. We understand things happen. But if a student is consistently absent from remote learning, we will be reaching out.

(7) What can we do to help staff? A: Please be patient and kind with staff. They have high expectations for themselves, and this is a challenging time.

(8) If there is a problem with a cohort assignment, what should parents do? A: If ES had a previous discussion with you and you have a serious problem, you can reach out to him.

(9) How can we foster connections at this time? A: ES notes that teachers have begun discussing this and are spearheading opportunities to connect hybrid and DLA students.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AMONG COMMITTEE

Delivering Understanding our Differences curriculum this year. AN looking into this; she found some virtual programming on the UOD website

How to foster connections among families. Conversation around whether Cabot PTO can help connect families looking to create PODS, share childcare, connect students with similar interests, etc. What platform is best to facilitate this, without class lists? FE sent a google doc to Grade 2 parents asking about their interests. NC mentioned searchability of Google student email and the importance of MTK to allow families to search for and find others in their cohorts and classes. Reminder to update student information will be included in weekly PTO newsletter.

GR noted complexities of teacher reimbursements with DLA and hybrid models. Should DLA teachers who are not from Cabot be reimbursed by the Cabot PTO? Discussion on how best to handle this. Co-presidents agreed to send question around DLA central fund to Newton PTO Council. In the meantime, topic is still under discussion. Agreement that Cabot PTO budget can be modified once DLA needs are clear.

Discussion around memorial for Molly Williams, how best to support teachers and staff amidst this loss. Families have different thoughts on whether to share this information with their children. More information to come.

How to welcome new families in this environment. NC to flag new families and connect them with PTO grade level reps.

Upcoming Principal Coffee on 9/15/20 – opportunity for families to ask additional questions.

NEXT MEETING: TBD