

# **JAMES FALLON PTO MINUTES OF March 12, 2008 MEETING**



**PTO Co-President Noreen Carlascio called the regular meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. The meeting was held in the Cafeteria.**

The attendance sheet was circulated together with the February 2008 PTO Minutes and the budget with activity through March 12, 2008.

In attendance were: PTO Members: Noreen Carlascio, Michele DePalma, Jeanine Hassert, Nancy Horbatuk, Beverly Pindulic, Colleen Cardinale, Lori Greene, Tony Salvatore, Don Pavlak, Julie Boylan, Karen Katz, Joyce Duncan, Joseph Butz, Dom Tolli, Lisha Piszczatoski, Nancy Leotsakas, Lisa Richard, Donna Daly, Marie Frank, Carolann Martello, Kim Brown, Deb Valente, Claudia Ramirez, Maddalena D'Amico, Maureen Cosgrove, Denise Pike, Kate D'Apolito, Amy Kirkman, Rosann Falso, Kiki Graham, Gillian Velardi, Pam Burns, Linda De Gennaro, Tina Pontone Teachers: Maria Cornetta, Tina Loureiro, Joseph Maio, Francine Nicosia, Christina Kehoe, Diana Gracia, Jo-Ellen Polizzotto, Donna Corsaro, Heather Altamura, Michele Thomas, Peggine Biondo, Roger Richter, Sue Caplan, Rose Guselli, Kathy Gonzalez, Linda Bursik, Kati Manwaring, Anna Montgomery, Renee Heine, Danielle Bressner, Rena Cooper Principal: Ethan Maayan

## **RECORDING SECRETARY'S REPORT:**

No report. Beverly asked everyone to review the February PTO minutes.

Noreen Carlascio asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

**A motion was made to accept the February 2008 minutes by Denise Pike, seconded by Kiki Graham. No discussion on the floor, a vote was taken, all were in favor, motion passed.**

## **CORRESPONDING SECRETARY'S REPORT:** - No Report.

## **TREASURERS' REPORT:** - Given by Lori Greene.

Lori noted that a copy of the proposed budget with activity through March 12, 2008 was provided for review.

**A motion was made to accept the Budget by Jeanine Hassert, seconded by Denise Pike. A vote was taken, all were in favor, motion passed.**

March 08

**VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** - No report.

**Co-PRESIDENTS' REPORT** – Given by Noreen Carlascio and Michele DePalma.

We would like to welcome Carol Leach, the Director of Elementary Education, to our meeting tonight.

Fifth grade parents are invited to meet the new assistant principal of Anthony Wayne MS on March 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

Candidates Night is April 1<sup>st</sup> in the Council Chambers at the Municipal Building. There are ten candidates running for the Board of Education.

There will be a budget presentation on Tuesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM. Our PTO meeting will follow the presentation. Voting will take place on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Tuesday March 25<sup>th</sup> is the last day to register to vote.

The PTO webpage is up and running. You may sign up to receive an e-mail informing you whenever there is an update to the webpage.

Our nominating committee is in place. They are charged with recommending a slate of officers for next year's Executive Board.

Since our last PTO meeting, the following events have taken place:

- Our School Spirit Committee ran a great Bowling Night.
- The Book Fair was a great success.
- Our Spring Spiritwear sale ended.
- We kicked off our new box tops incentive.

The following are some upcoming events:

- March 21<sup>st</sup> is the Fallon Flier deadline.
- April 4<sup>th</sup> is skate night
- April 7<sup>th</sup> is the Art Show.
- Our next meeting will be April 8<sup>th</sup>. At this time we would like to finalize our Fall Fundraiser.

We would like to thank the following committees:

- Pam Burns did an outstanding job in running the Book Fair while her co-chair was ill.
- Jari D'Alessandro has done a great job in running our box tops program and taking the initiative to organize a box tops incentive contest.
- Thanks to our Community Outreach chairperson, Julie Boylan, for the ongoing food drive.

- Thanks to our Fifth Grade Activities chairpeople, Maria Kelley and Donna Kratzer, for their work on the DARE graduation and It's a Boy/Girl thing.
- Thanks to our School Spirit committee, Chrissy Brown, Judy McLean and Ellen Puckowitz, for a sold-out bowling night.
- Thanks to our webmaster, Meryl Budnick, and Noreen Carlascio. Our website looks wonderful.
- We appreciate all of our volunteers.

**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:** - Given by Ethan Maayan.

Bethany Sotsky has been chosen to replace second grade teacher Rose Guselli. Parents may meet her tomorrow at 3:30.

Our traffic flow is the best that it has been in three years. The improvement is due to the great job Mrs. Hohman does, the increased police presence, and everyone's cooperation.

The Parent Notification System is now in effect. This system will notify families of emergencies, school closings, early dismissals etc.

Many different donations from the PTO have been discussed at previous meetings:

- Chairs – The chairs with the baskets were approved at our last meeting.
- Everyday Math Online Games – The cost for all grades for one year would be \$4,600.

The website is up and running. Thank you to Mrs. Budnick and Mrs. Carlascio for all of their hard work. Thank you to the teachers for their class web pages.

The following events took place recently :

- Family Science, with Mrs. Houlihan and Mrs. Thomas, was very successful.
- Kindergarten changeover was on February 4th.
- Kindergarten registration is now taking place. As of now we have only two sections. This could be our smallest class in years.
- "It's a Girl Thing" with Mrs. Scian and Mrs. Milone, went very well.
- The Second Grade program was excellent.
- The Book Fair was a tremendous success.
- "It's a Boy Thing" went very well.
- NJ ASK testing for the third grade was done today. Fourth grade testing will be held on Thursday and Friday.

The following are upcoming events:

- NJ PASS testing for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders will begin on March 25th.
- School will be closed on Good Friday and the Monday after Easter.
- The mini-invention competition will be held on April 1st.
- The First Grade program will be held on April 7th.
- The Art Show will also be held on April 7th.
- First Grade DNA testing will be held on April 8th.
- The fourth grade will have an Internet Safety presentation on April 8th.

**TEACHERS' REPORT** Given by Fran Nicosia.

The teachers wished to thank the PTO for the Purell. They also wanted to thank the Book Fair committee for the wonderful job. Mrs. Maggio wanted to thank the PTO for the Barnes & Noble gift cards for Read Across America Day.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**ART APPRECIATION** – No report.

**BACK TO SCHOOL PACKAGE** – No report.

**BIRTHDAY LUNCH** – No Report.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION LIAISON** – Given by Don Pavlak.

Before our next PTO meeting there will be a presentation of the 2008/09 proposed school budget. The proposed increase is only 3.75%, which is less than the 4% allowed by the state. This represents an increase of \$198 per year for the average homeowner.

The Board of Education will pay for beautification of school grounds.

**BOOK FAIR** – Given by Pam Burns.

Pam thanked Noreen Carlascio, Michele DePalma and Lori Greene for helping her run the Book Fair when her co-chair was sick. The event was successful. Every child received a free book, and each class will receive five “build-a-books” to use as a service project. All book orders have been filled. Thanks to Mr. Maayan for dressing up as Clifford.

**BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE:** - No report.

**BOX TOPS FOR EDUCATION & INK JETS** –No report.

**CLASS PARENT COORDINATION** – No report.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**- No report.

**CULTURAL ENRICHMENT** - Given by Kate D’Apolito.

Our next Cultural Enrichment assembly is an interactive program entitled “The Bodacious Book Show”, which is designed to inspire children to read. We will also host an assembly focusing on environmental issues for our younger students, while the fourth and fifth graders will watch an assembly about the American Revolution. Further information on Cultural Enrichment programs is available on the PTO webpage.

**FALL FUNDRAISER (TRICKY TRAY)** - No report.

**FALL FUNDRAISER (KIDSTUFF)** – No report.

**FIFTH GRADE YEARBOOK COMMITTEE** – No report.

**FIFTH GRADE DAY** - No report.

**FIELD DAY** – No report.

**FIFTH GRADE ACTIVITIES** - No report.

**HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE** - No report.

**HOSPITALITY COORDINATORS – SPECIAL EVENTS** - No report.

**HOSPITALITY COORDINATORS – TEACHER APPRECIATION** - No report.

**MEMBERSHIP** – No report.

**MEDIA CENTER** – No report.

**MEDIA FUND** – No report.

**NEWSLETTER** – No report.

**PLANT SALE** – Given by Marie Frank.

The children's plant sale will be held on Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. For adults, we will sell gift cards like we did last year.

**PUBLICITY** – No report.

**READING INCENTIVE PROGRAM** – No report.

**SAFETY** – Given by Don Pavlak.

Don thanked everyone for their cooperation during drop off and pick up. Traffic problems have significantly improved.

The “No Left Turn” sign is still awaiting township approval.

**SCHOOL DIRECTORY** – No report.

**SCHOOL PHOTO** – No report.

**SCHOOL SIGN COORDINATOR** – No report.

**SCHOOL SPIRIT** – No report.

**SCHOOL STORE** – Given by Denise Pike.

Our School Store has had another great year. We would like to purchase a small item for each child from the school store. The committee will determine a recommended amount and present it at our next meeting.

**SCHOOL SPIRIT WEAR** – No report.

**SPA REPRESENTATIVE** – No report.

**SPRING FUNDRAISER** – No Report.

**STUDENT GOVERNMENT LIAISON** – No report.

**SUNSHINE** – No report.

**VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS** – No report.

**WAYS & MEANS** – No report.

**WEB PHOTO COORDINATOR** – No report.

**WEBMASTER** – No report.

**OLD BUSINESS:** No old business was discussed.

**NEW BUSINESS:** No new business was discussed.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION:**

Many teachers and parents have attended tonight's meeting to discuss standardized testing. Mr. Maayan began by presenting his views and analysis regarding Fallon's test scores.

Mr. Maayan emphasized that test scores are not black and white. Many factors need to be considered that are not evident by simply looking at a percentage. It is also important to realize what the published percentages represent. For example, a score of 86% for a particular school would mean that 86% of the students scored in either the proficient or the advanced proficient categories. It does not represent an average score.

Scores should be looked at vertically, and not horizontally. What this means is that we should evaluate the same group of students from year to year. For example, the prior year's 4<sup>th</sup> grade percentage was 86.6. The same class in third grade had a proficient/advanced proficient percentage of 88.9%. In this instance the decrease was 2%.

There are many factors which impact our published results. Every year we have several students who leave our school to go to the GNT program in Packanack. Prior to last year, these children's scores were included in our percentages. This year they were included with Packanack's scores.

Many of the students who fall into the non proficient category are Special Education students. Our Resource teachers are doing a great job with these students. We also have

students within our district who are sent to other schools for full time Special Education programs. These students' scores will be included in our totals.

Last year's fourth grade had larger class sizes than most schools in the district. Only one other school in the district had 28 students in a class. One had 27, and the others had 19, 26, 20, 21 and 24.

Last year two of our three fourth grade teachers were new. While these teachers did an excellent job, it is more difficult to prepare students for testing when a teacher is new or a maternity replacement.

Without considering Packanack, all of the other schools in Wayne were within ten percentage points of each other.

All of our staff is working very hard on improving test scores. We are taking several steps to address test scores at Fallon:

- Every teacher has a Test Prep Calendar which ensures that they will cover all of the material believed to be on the standardized tests. Each grade level gets together and examines which areas they need to improve upon. They use this information to revise their calendar. The test prep calendars are reviewed by Mr. Maayan.
- The Board of Education is providing full time Basic Skills teachers. Kate Manwaring does an excellent job for us. This should help to improve test scores.
- Over the past two years JFK and Ryerson have received Title I funds for test prep classes to help children who are just below the proficient or advanced proficient mark. We are trying to obtain this funding at Fallon.

Carol Leech, the Director of Elementary Education, spoke about what is being done on a district wide basis to improve test scores. She agreed with Mr. Maayan that scores should be compared across years and not across schools. There is a standard of error of approximately 4%, which means that variations which are less than this amount are statistically insignificant.

The totals published in the newspaper include our Special Education and ESL students.

We perform a curriculum analysis, which would look for areas that our students are not doing well in. These areas would be added to our general education curriculum.

This year we are focusing on bringing more students into the advanced proficient category. We are holding our teachers accountable, and they are doing a remarkable job. Short of teaching to the test (which most parents don't want), we are incorporating testing concepts into our daily activity.

Mr. Maayan expressed great faith in our teaching staff. He doesn't feel that pressuring teachers in order to obtain a few higher points on standardized testing is what learning is all about. We do not want to put too much pressure on our students either. Test results are not what make a great school. Atmosphere, character education, and many other factors are necessary.

Mrs. Polizzotto spoke on behalf of the teachers. Her comments follow:

*“Standardized achievement tests are useful tools to provide evidence about students’ academic strengths and weaknesses. They provide a snapshot of the individual child so that educators and parents can meet the needs of that individual child. There is no doubt that standardized tests can provide educators with important data that can give teachers information that will help the child succeed in school. As parents you should be concerned with the individual test scores and if you see that your child has dropped dramatically it is certainly your right and responsibility to talk to the individual teacher so that an educational plan can be implemented. However, standardized tests should never be used to make important decisions about people or institutions. They should never be used as indicators of school performance. When this is done a very useful tool can be turned into a dangerous weapon.*

*In order to learn why certain results occur, such as class or school standings, one must conduct a comprehensive study. Results of standardized tests include any number of factors including a student’s native intelligence, number of participants, gender and special needs students – to name a few. Since each group of learners is different, a complete analysis of that particular group must be studied and followed through the years. This type of data analysis is done by trained professionals and researchers. A detailed, item by item assessment result for each student as well as whole class reports must be analyzed. It is a mistake to think of data in terms of test scores. When this is done, the results are inaccurate, misinformation would be distributed, and the educational system will be misrepresented.*

*The students at Fallon School have always been well prepared for standardized tests and will continue to be. To suggest anything less is a complete fallacy. In the past three years we have attended workshops, implemented new strategies and purchased new materials. Mr. Maayan has used every available staff member to give in-class support as well as provide small group instruction to students who we feel need a little more reinforcement.*

*Needless to say, we as a staff are very disheartened by the events that have taken place over the past few days. However, we are professionals and I can assure you that on behalf of the staff it is our privilege and honor to continue to provide your children with the outstanding thorough and efficient education that they have always received. They will not only be prepared for standardized tests, but we will continue to educate the whole child – both academically and morally so that they will also be prepared to be successful in the competitive world that lies ahead.*

*On a final note – please remember that standardized test scores are not a license to live or a measure of deserving oxygen. They are just one way to utilize information so that we can provide a quality education.”*

Michele De Palma suggested that the PTO Executive Board be used as a liaison between the staff and parents. Please call us to set up meetings or distribute e-mails regarding any concerns you might have.

Claudia Ramirez introduced herself. She has a daughter in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. She has gone to the teachers to discuss test preparedness and other concerns and been told that the curriculum is fine. She has also experienced problems with confidentiality. Complaints directed at teachers have gotten back to the children. She also expressed concern that class sizes are too high.

Mrs. Polizzotto responded that all teachers follow the same curriculum, but present it differently.

Mrs. Leach reminded everyone that Study Island is available as a tool. The budget that will be presented includes funding for GNT in each elementary school. We also offered 36 workshops to parents. Anyone with suggestions for workshop topics should contact the Board office.

Amy Kirkman spoke specifically about this year's fifth grade class. When these students were in second grade there was a large class with two teachers, which was very chaotic. When they moved to third grade a fourth class was opened, but one teacher went on maternity leave. In fourth grade the classes were extremely large, and two of the teachers left on maternity leave during the school year. This year they have 28 children in each class.

Mr. Maayan commented that maternity leave cannot be predicted. We are very careful about choosing replacements. No one is hired without providing a demo lesson and interviewing with our Site Based Committee.

Karen Katz questioned why our advanced proficient percentages are significantly higher in math than in language arts. A discussion ensued regarding the difficulty of the language arts test. A new committee is looking into the district's language arts program.

Nancy Horbatuk summarized the evening's discussion. She felt the meeting was productive. We learned a great deal about interpreting standardized test results. We will see if we can obtain Title I money for test prep. Mrs. Leech updated us on the district's language arts program. We discussed the importance of reading incentive programs throughout the year. Everyone's new ideas are welcome and we are glad you were able to attend tonight's meeting.

An unrelated sad note...Kathy Drago's husband had a terrible work related accident. The Sunshine committee will send our wishes for a speedy recovery.

**A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Tina Pontone, seconded by Colleen Cardinale. All were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.**

**Respectively submitted by Beverly Pindulic, Recording Secretary.**

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Beverly Pindulic, Recording Secretary**