

Symmes Elementary PTO General Meeting (Minutes)
Thursday, February 14, 2019

Call to Order/Introductions

Camilla Millar

Approval of January 10, 2019 meeting minutes

Leigh Grause

- *Motion to approve minutes - approved and seconded.*

Teacher Representative Report

Cathy Jones

- *Happy Valentine's Day!*
- *Thank you for the festive bathroom decorations and our delightful breakfast! Also, a special thank you goes out to Mr. D for being the d-jay for the Dance Party in celebration of the students earning more than 15,000 "Bee Bucks".*
- *We are excited about the upcoming carnival for which the PTO is preparing. We are appreciative of the wonderful resources that are provided to us through the proceeds from the carnivals.*
- **Kindergarten:** *Kindergarten students did a research project on polar bears. Their hard work is hanging up in the kindergarten hallway. We have been talking about "how to" books in writing workshop. The children are excited for their Teddy Bear Valentine Picnic on Thursday!*
- **First Grade:**
 - o *In first grade, students have been learning about many different celebrations! First graders made predictions about whether or not a groundhog would see his shadow, celebrated the Chinese New Year, decorated valentines and will learn about the lives of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln! Students love learning about these special holidays!*
 - o *First graders are also discussing and writing their opinions. They are working toward providing reasons to support their opinion. Students are also talking about characters in stories and how they are feeling! In math, students are working on telling time to the half hour. Also, they are finishing their discussion of the many different habitats and the living things that are there!*
- **Second Grade:**
 - o *The Second Grade is studying biographies. They are using books, and internet sources such as "InfoBits" to learn about historical individuals who have had a positive impact on our lives, even today. The children are working in groups and will present what they have learned with their classmates via a tri-fold board presentation. This will be completed during both reading and writing classes.*
 - o *In math, they are currently wrapping up the subtraction of larger numbers unit. Students are doing a great job. Continued practice of this skill, and improving math fact recall, are ways parents can help at home. Next, we are beginning a preview to multiplication and division. The children have been pretested to ensure they receive the instruction needed at their own level. Three of our classes (Weigel, Schafer, Maticia) will be "surfing" the kids to other teachers to allow them to receive their level of instruction.*
 - o *They are finishing their study of Science (for and motion) and will begin the Social Studies unit on Geography. They will first learn about map skills, such as cardinal*

and intermediate directions, map symbols and scale, and grid maps. Then, we will move into landforms. This is a fun unit!

- **Third Grade:**

- In language arts, the students are writing an informational piece about a topic they are considered an expert on. Also, in language arts they are reading biographies. They will present their information at the annual wax museum next week. In science they are learning about natural resources and the importance of conservation. In math they are finishing their unit on Division and will begin a study of fractions. Third grade will be celebrating Valentine's Day with a party on Thursday.

- **Fourth Grade:**

- The students colored the pieces that embody the "Black History Month" mural. Each student colored a square and Mrs. Blair and Ms. Johnson put the squares together and mounted the mural. Each morning, a student reads information about one of the persons included on the mural, and then his/her name is added below the picture of the person.
- In Math, students are focusing on adding, subtracting, and multiplying fractions and changing improper fractions to mixed numbers.
- In Science, students will complete the Science Inquiry unit by completing "M&M" and "Skittles" experiments.
- Students are reading historical fiction novels, such as Number the Stars and The War That Saved My Life. Students are discussing these novels in their own book clubs. The class novel is Trouble Don't Last, which chronicles the journey of a young boy names Samuel escaping slavery during the 1850s. In writing, students are researching and writing about the time period of their book club books.

- **Julie Paterson:**

- Students in my reading classes have kept me on my toes. Third graders brought up the concept (for which I provided the vocabulary term) of prejudice. They contemplated why people are so quick to judge, and we discussed the root of making quick judgments as a way to stay safe, but then extrapolated the stubbornness with which people want to hold onto their beliefs...even when presented with facts to the contrary. A focus all year has been the idea of synthesizing - adjusting your understanding. It's pretty neat to see them so thoughtful!!
- Fourth grade reading students are reading the novel Trouble Don't Last. Students are working hard to grasp the idea of human beings treating another living being so poorly.... even if slaveholders didn't see the slaves as any more than livestock. The students are coming to the understanding that we are not going to debate the right or wrong of it...since clearly, we know how terrible and wrong it was. Instead, the kids are working to gather facts, understand as best they can, and gain empathy. It's been incredibly impressive to me how mature they are being as we approach this charged and challenging topic. The kids have an understanding that just because this is an uncomfortable topic, we need to learn about it and have conversations together.
- Math isn't quite so exciting a topic, by my excitement as a teacher is coming from the growth I see in the kids - especially my fourth graders. They display the desire to "step it up" and improve accuracy, recognize their weak areas and work to fill those gaps, and find errors to name and then repair for the future.

- Thank you for sharing the kids and sending them to us willing to open up and lay themselves bare.

Presentation by E.H. Greene Transition Team

- Team from Greene School includes Matt Tudor (Principal), Jennifer Asher (Counselor A-K), Tracey Bachmann (Counselor L-Z), Jay Meno (5th Grade Administrator), Jason Dimaculangan (PTO Co-President) and Patricia Barros (PTO Co-President).
- Matt Tudor - Principal Introduction
 - Our kids tend to be resilient, and the parents are more nervous about the transition to Greene.
 - Please send your kids to Greene 101
 - This is a 2-day experience where kids learn everything about their new school, building, lockers, lunch, etc. This is the week before school starts, organized by team so they can meet some new kids that will be on their team.
 - A formal presentation will be shared with 4th grade parents and there will also be parent orientation meeting.
- Presentation
 - Greene's focus is a collaborative experience - parents, the PTO, teachers and the administration all work together.
 - Important dates
 - 3/24 - Student information forms are due - this will be electronic this year.
 - 4/26 - Students will go to Greene for lunch (Symmes will organize and coordinate the trip).
 - 5/14 - Rising 5th grade parent orientation
 - 5/15 - Meet the Teacher Day for students
 - 8/5 - Get Connected Day (pictures, computer pick-up)
 - 8/6-8/9 - Greene 101
 - 8/14 - First day of school
 - Teams
 - Primary focus is on a team-based school. This makes the large school format feel much smaller, and emphasizes close relationships even in a building with 900 students.
 - There are (4) 5th grade teams, red, green, yellow or orange
 - Teams are just 4 teachers working together with the same group of students.
 - Students are assigned to 1 homeroom that teaches 1 subject. They rotate through the other team teachers in the pod for additional subjects.
 - Students do not move as a homeroom unit, they have their own individual schedule.
 - Special programming (ex. IEP) - these students will have an assistant/special education teacher that works within the team.
 - Gifted programming needs are also met within the team, which is new this year. For example, the math teacher within the team will teach 3 bells of traditional math and 1 bell of accelerated math. This allows more flexibility in the schedule.

- *PBL - 2 teams will be Project Based Learning teams (green and yellow), and 2 will be traditional (orange, and red).*
 - *Every student will have the opportunity to be in a PBL team in either 5th or 6th grade, but parents may not choose specific teachers or teams.*
 - *Future goal is to bring even more PBL teachers on board to make this an option for every student every year.*
 - *Please note that PBL and traditional experiences will be mixed throughout every classroom.*
- *Specials - students are allowed to pick any specials they are interested in (ex. 2 music classes).*
 - *5th grade has academic bells in the morning, lunch and then specials in the afternoon.*
 - *Teams are mixed in specials, this provides more opportunities to mix with new kids.*
 - *Greene follows the same A, B, C, D process as other schools.*
- *Schedules may also be adjusted throughout the year based on student needs, positive or negative peer experiences or other specific needs.*
- *Clubs and Activities*
 - *Greene has a very long list of clubs and activities. These opportunities encourage kids to explore after school interests. After school activities promote friendships, independent learning and discovery of personal interests. They also help develop their Sycamore identity.*
- *PTO*
 - *Greene PTO Presidents - Patricia Barros and Jason Dimaculangan are both former Symmes parents.*
 - *Everyone can be involved in the PTO - moms, dads, and working parents.*
 - *If you're afraid to join don't worry, there are not as many activities at Greene as at the elementary schools.*
 - *The PTO still raises funds to meet the needs of students and teachers as well as parent requests.*
 - *We are currently looking to fill some open board positions.*
 - *Committee and position descriptions will be shared closer to the Greene transition for anyone interested.*
- *Facilities planning -*
 - *Mr. Tudor's current opinion is it's impossible for him to objectively decide the benefits of rearranging grade levels in different buildings. He feels they are doing a phenomenal job currently, and that Greene provides a great transition from elementary to older grades. His vote is to keep 5th and 6th grade together in a new building.*

Principal & Assistant Principal Report

Anne Van Kirk and
Jessica Ralston

- *Mrs. Beckman, Media Specialist, had her baby who is named Joelle.*
- *Our 4th ESL teacher is starting next week; her name is Katie Bauer.*
- *Master facility planning meeting - scheduled at Symmes on February, 19th. This meeting provides a lot of information, especially for kindergarten parents as their students would probably be the first affected by the new buildings.*
- *Warming Hearts Project - this is a school-wide community service project.*
 - o *We have been collecting hats, socks, and other winter items for Project Operation Give Back.*
- *PBIS reboot*
 - o *Students earned a dance party for earning over 15,000 Bee Bucks.*
 - o *Officer Vicky (Symmes Township Police Department) participated as well, by sharing safety information and getting kids comfortable with law enforcement presence in case of emergency. She does Bee Buck drawings and the kids love it.*
- *Cincinnati Symphony -*
 - o *Kindergarten & 1st grade were able to see a Symphony presentation courtesy of the Montgomery Women's Club.*
- *Facilities*
 - o *One potential option is having a Pre-K/K building. Mrs. Van Kirk feels having kids moving campuses after just 1 year is a detriment vs. and improvement. However, all-day Kindergarten is not currently mandated in state of Ohio (it was mandated and then pulled back). If that becomes a mandate, Symmes does not have space to accommodate all the students. The new building would allow for that increase.*
 - o *All options include updates or construction at Symmes since we're the oldest building. Nothing specific has been shared on the exact process. The Symmes meeting might share some more specifics.*

President Report

Camilla Millar

- *District looking into Neighborhood Bridges program - this organization partners people in need with people who have items/support to give. This does not replace current programs, but would supplement additional needs.*
- *Please come to master facilities planning meeting. Money issues will be a big topic that is of interest to many of us involved.*

Treasurer's Report

Ashley Werthaiser

- **Budget Report**
- *The budget is very similar to last month.*
- *The 10,000 Villages store contributed a portion of sales from Cultural Heritage Night to the PTO.*
- *The Symmes PTO contributes to the Preschool and HS After Prom programs.*
- *Please submit expense reimbursements ASAP. Spring gifting is coming up soon and we need to have final numbers to determine how much we have to give this year.*

SAC Report

Margo Rapp

- *Facilities sessions are encouraging thoughts about future involvement. Obviously, all the plans cost money and 70-80% of voters that will affect the district planning do not have students in school. So, we need to be sharing the positive impact these changes will have within the community.*
- *Committee is exploring engagement with our diverse families, non-native English speakers and how we can improve communication. Jackie Ogden consulted since Symmes has had such a big impact in this area.*

VP Ways and Means

Karina Alves

- Carnival March 1st!
- Volunteers
 - Decorate at school on Saturday February 23, 9:00AM-1:00PM
 - Carnival Night - please come a work game, concession or prize room shift!
 - SignUp Genius link - <https://tinyurl.com/carnivalvolunteers2019>
- Sewing and Cleaning prize animals
 - Friday, February 15, 9:30-12:00
 - Wednesday, February 20, 7:00-9:00
 - Week of Carnival Feb 19-23...MPR 11:00-1:30 each day.
- Charity Auctions Today - Auction website
 - Still accepting donations. Donate an auction item, promote your business or make a \$50 cash donation to sponsor a game room!
 - <https://www.charityauctionstoday.com/auctions/SymmesCarnival2019-6369>
- Ticket Sales
 - Pre-sale tickets are still available at a discount until February 22nd. Tickets will be delivered home via backpack mail before Carnival.
 - These tickets are used to play games and buy food during the Carnival.
 - Order online here: <https://tinyurl.com/yawzzf4x>
- Cash Raffle Tickets
 - The cash raffle sale is going on now through Carnival night. Each ticket costs \$10 and represents a chance to win the \$1,000 cash grand prize or \$300 2nd place prize. Tickets can be sold by students to relatives, neighbors, friends, etc.
 - Student sellers also win prizes based on how many tickets they sell. The top student seller will win a Chromebook!

VP Family Involvement

Megan Haring

- Cultural Heritage recap
- *Cultural Heritage Night was a huge success. The chairs did any amazing job even with school being canceled that day.*

VP Student Programs

Camilla Millar

- Symmes Players

Recording Secretary

Leigh Grause

- Yearbook orders due soon. Send pictures to Michelle Martin

Corresponding Secretary

Michelle Martin

- Symmes Ambassadors
 - *The next Gathering meeting is scheduled for Monday March 4th. Everyone is welcome. Jackie and the Symmes Ambassadors are invited to share at the next ASSPO meeting about the impact the program has had here at Symmes. Other schools are wanting to implement similar programs in their buildings.*
- Teacher Appreciation Staff
 - *The Committee decorated the staff bathrooms for Valentine's Day and had a January teacher breakfast.*
- PTO Parking Space Drawing
 - *Jason Dimac won the parking spot for February.*

Old or New Business

Adjournment