

Van Hise Elementary PTO General Meeting Minutes April 7, 2015

Present: 6 board members, Peg Keeler, 13 parents.

Principal's report.

Peg asked for questions from the group:

Are the students required to take the Badger Exam? Peg gave the following summary of assessment.

1. Formative: ongoing assessment, given by teachers throughout the year to determine students' progress.
2. Benchmark: PALS (given to grades k/1-2), helps show students' fluency and also shows growth in learning. MAP is the benchmark assessment given to grades 3-5. Benchmark assessments are used to help set goals.
3. Summative: These are the state tests. They were formerly called the WKCE. School report cards based on these tests. This year, there's a new format, called the Badger Exam. It is computer-based (the kids take the test on a computer). It is assessing on Common Core and is given to kids in grades 3-5. It's new to MMSD. Peg says it will be a challenge, but the kids are ready for it.

Peg stated that although testing is pretty politicized, as an educator, she wants to see the data to see how the kids do.

One parent commented that she had information that the test won't be helpful this year, and won't be given again. Peg clarified that while it's true the tests won't be helpful this year, it's not true they won't be given again. It's hard to predict the future of the test, but we're doing it, and will support our kids in doing it. The summative test used to be in the fall, with the data available in May. Now the test is in the spring, which makes more sense, and the information will come before the end of the school year. The staff will do an "item analysis" to see what lots of kids are missing, where they have to beef up instruction.

Another parent noted that parents can go online and take the test.

Peg notes that the staff "triangulate data" - they never base decisions on one piece of data, but pull in lots of different data.

A parent asked: aren't the test vendors changing, so the test may change? Peg's not sure, but there are some glitches; the current test doesn't adjust based on the kids' level as it was supposed to.

Common Core really started about 3 years ago - it's been a process, but the major focus on common Core in MMSD started with Superintendent Cheatham. Her focus has been very much on instruction and learning.

Other updates from Peg:

April is all about keeping our feet in current year while looking ahead. Class placement happens in May; Peg is talking to teachers about who's retiring/moving/wants to move. Parent input forms will go out soon via backpack mail and also with classroom newsletters.

A parent asked if k/1 will still loop? That's the plan. With the old multi-grade system, the big pro with parents and teachers was looping. Last year, it was decided that K looping to 1 with their teachers would be beneficial, also at 4/5. But between 2 and 3, students might have a new teacher, given the developmental differences between 2nd and 3rd grade, also the teacher's expertise with the curriculum. There will be some shifts, so not every teacher will be looping. We'll be hearing more after classroom placements. These are the things they're talking about right now.

There is some big stuff coming up, garden re-do, accessibility, etc. The teachers on the green team will start doing professional development about how to use the outdoor classroom.

We have a visiting artist, Megan Cain. She is working with the students on a large mural. A \$1500 garden art grant was going to put mural outside, but now it looks like the mural won't go outside after all. Instead, we will use that grant to develop the area outside the breezeway on the Waukesha side, with tables, a little zen space with zen gardens, etc.

There was a plan to have each child paint their name on a river rock, along with a symbol of their culture, but the project got too big. Now it will be a new tradition for 5th graders, to leave a little piece of themselves at VHE.

Presentation by Ida Yu from REAP Food Group.

REAP Food Group is a nonprofit that works to support local food systems in Southwestern Wisconsin. There's a farm to business group and a farm to school group that provides snacks to some schools.

On May 17, from 12-3, there will be a Farm to School event at Lincoln Elementary. It is open to all students and families in Madison. There will be food, cooking demos, music, art activities, a seed mural, seed instruments, and bands geared toward kids, but there will also be activities for grown ups. There will be food trucks selling local food. Leading up to event there will be 2 contests; kids can send in a recipe for their favorite after school snack, preferably produce. Also, there will be a contest for videos about farm to school there will be flyer for the contests. The entry deadline is May 1. There will be a Facebook event with details and an event page on REAP's website. Hopefully there will be local farmers and a table about Hmong farming, among other tables. It is a free event, with food samples, but food from the food trucks will cost money.

Events Update.

Art Fair (Shelby Connell): The third annual Art Fair is May 2. As of right now, there are 21 adult vendors and 48 kid vendors. Send email to the art fair for more info. This year there will be the bake sale again, and there will be grilled food for sale for the first time this year (Heidi Weitzman and Jen Roth are organizing the grilling). Spring garden work is at the same time, so while people are here, they can do some work in the garden. Someone generally puts together a list of stuff that needs to be done.

Science Night (Afan Ottenheimer): April 14. Students will be in the hallway between the 2 gyms, adult presenters in the 2 gyms. There will be 25-30 presenters, 9 outside presenters, plus some parents. The group that does the tests for neutrinos from Antarctica will have an ice core; also reptile group again and physics rube Goldberg thing again. Runs 6-7:30. Not too late, if kids want to do something, talk to Geoff Siemering. There's a group at the UW doing a study re: colds, pay \$5 for kids who have colds to fill out a form. A form? A flyer? Afan will contact them to see if they can put together something about the study, if not, then just a flyer about participating in the study.

Backyard Bites (Chris Frakes): The April snack is spinach and dried Door County cherries. The spinach is locally grown, harvested at Crossroads Community Farm. They are talking with the kids about what people did before refrigeration and trucking from California, etc., how they used to preserve food. Last month's snack was bread and pickles. They did storage carrots one month, and have done yogurt in the past as well. Lots of families have been involved, and it has been very successful - the teachers and kids love it. Someone asked, for next year, can we get the write-ups and put them on the website? AND: they're looking for volunteers to take over coordinating Backyard Bites. They have a volunteer coordinator, and a kitchen person, but Chris will be leaving after next year, so they will need someone to contact vendors, organize pickup, etc. Whoever volunteers to be the coordinator can work with Chris next year to learn the ropes.

Green team (Chris Frakes): Check out the bulletin board at end of hallway; also the outline of new garden has been spray painted on the grass next to the playground, so go see it. There will be an accessible path of crushed gravel, so kids who need wheeled assistance or have mobility limitations will be able to use the space. There will be touchable herbs, etc. Then, there will be the 6 grade level boxes in concentric circles. (See diagram in hallway). One of the aims of the garden is community building. Each grade level will have a theme, like salsa, pickles, etc. The plan is to get the whole kid involved, so the new garden is very intentionally designed. Someone asked if the old one will still be there? Maybe. The building expansion, if it happens, might be into that space, or might block the sun. Maintenance might not be practical for 2 locations. If the garden space is next to the playground, it's easier for families to access. It is being viewed as a huge community building space. The pavilion planned for the second phase will also be good community building space. It does not address "Lake Van Hise" (the blacktop on the Segoe side of the school where water pools, especially in the spring); that will probably be addressed when we do

the playground. What will the space where the garden is right now become? Maybe a community garden space for people in the community that don't have space for a garden? Gathering space for families? The rain garden is doing great, doing just what it needs to. Mary Michaud has grant money and a plan to build a bridge over the rain garden, but nobody to build it. The new garden will also have spaces where people can sit and have quiet time. Will Hamilton be involved? No, not at this point. Their PTO hasn't been super active; their principal has been interim, so after this year (when they get a permanent principal), they'll be more settled. We will need lots of labor to actually complete the creation of the new garden space. Next week we will identify a timeline. We will need families to plant the 6 free fruit trees, etc.

Kristin Ruedi-Krause will help with setting up a Sign-Up Genius page once the timeline for the garden work is set. Someone suggested working with groups like Kiwanis to help get some of the work done. The final budget will be determined by the end of next week.

Kindergarten Event update (Kristin Ruedi-Krause): Kristin will be putting together the summer playdates for the incoming Kindergarteners. There will be 3-4 playdates, all of them at the VHE playground. She will need 2 parent volunteers for each playdate, preferably parents who have incoming Kindergarteners and another student already at VHE. Info about that will be handed out on Sat. May 9 (Kindergarten round-up day).

Multicultural Night (Kristin Ruedi-Krause): Kristin hasn't heard back from the organizers, but it sounds like it was a good event and things went well. The one issue is that we just have to remember to leave the kitchen exactly as we found it. Anjali will stay on as coordinator, but she will need a co-coordinator for next year. One note for the team, maybe there needs to be more food ordered for late arrivals (some people reported arriving slightly late, and the food was already gone).

Comment about the building plan: Afan Ottenheimer mentioned that the PTO might have the opportunity to talk to the architect before the project starts, and to upgrade some of the improvements.

What's next if the referendum passes - Peg's not sure. Most likely they will not start work this summer, except maybe on a few schools.

Financial report (Dana McCloskey): The PTO finances are still in good shape. We currently have \$57,000, about \$3,500 of which belongs to the garden. The After School classes have brought in \$18,000; including after school art the total is \$21,000. If we end the year as predicted we will carry almost \$50,000 into the 2015/2016 school year.

The carnival brought in about \$10,071 this year, including food, games, raffle, and silent auction. Minus expenses VHE PTO made a profit of \$7,925.

Amazon sales continue to bring in money. The percentage donated per order depends on the number of items ordered. As of April 2013 we have collected \$671.

VHE Teacher/staff grants - So far, the PTO has given \$17,382 in grant money during the 2014/2015 school year.

Teacher appreciation week (LeAndrea Vernon): It will be May 4-8 this year. There is a meeting scheduled this coming Monday night, 6:15-7:00, somewhere in the school. Deanna Stadler is the head and Donna Stark is on the committee, but this is their last year. Jodi and LeAndrea will work with them. If anyone else is interested in helping out, go to that meeting or contact Deanna. Teacher appreciation: there are designated ideas for each day of the week for both the PTO and the students to do things to show the teachers appreciation, like dessert bar, flowers, hugs and high-5's. The committee also spruces up the bathrooms every year and they try to add something new each year. Watch for the email requesting help.

Mallards Game (Kristina Nardi): Kristina got a Mallard's game set up for this summer. It will be Sunday, June 28, 4:05 first pitch. The tickets are \$20 each for the game plus all you can eat until first pitch, or \$12 each for the game plus a hat. Van Hise gets \$2/ticket for either type of ticket. The seats are all together. Ticket sales for VHE will close mid-June and open for general public at that time. The online portal for purchasing tickets will probably open May 1 or May 15. The Mallards organization will make the flyers.

Shelby asked for other business from the rest of the group. There was none.

PTO Board News (Shelby Connell and Dana McCloskey): Shelby announced that Wendy Crabb has agreed to be PTO President for the 2015/2016 school year. We are still trying to work out the rest of the board, and figure out what worked and what didn't with the board composition this year. We still have holes; we need someone for multicultural night and for most of the carnival slots: raffle, prize table. We also need help with Science Night and an events co-coordinator. We still need to follow up with the people currently running the Talent Show, to see if they want to continue running it next year. The ice cream social is set. One idea was to have a board member act as fundraising coordinator, overseeing how the direct appeal, REAP, and other fundraising activities, work. All the fundraising events have individual coordinators are filled, except benefit nights. Several people expressed interest in communications. Another idea was to have a school programs coordinator, who would oversee adopt a school, backyard bites, 5th grade graduation, etc. Most of those positions are filled, they just need a coordinator.

Background: Before the 2014-2015 school year, Shelby coordinated everything, so this year, the board tried to break it down using coordinators to oversee activities (volunteer, events, communications, outreach, etc). We would like to try to keep a structure where everyone is not reporting to Wendy but we are still in the planning stages. Whether or not the coordinator is actually on the executive board would be

determined at a later date. Requirements for being on the board are that you should try to go to every meeting. It has been once a month, but the requirement in the by-laws is only 2 times per year. Sometimes it's just a board meeting. The board makes final calendar, decides what the PTO sponsors, and makes financial decisions. Currently, we have 9 board members. Technically that's the maximum - 4 executive board members, 5 at-large members.

The current board is looking for new members to fill in gaps. It was suggested that classroom reps could spread the word to their classroom parents about the gaps. They could contact Dana or Shelby for more information.

Anyone coordinating multiple people would ideally be on the board; if the commitment is too much, it would be ok to not be an official board member. How can people contribute without being overwhelmed - doing what works for them. Wendy wants to keep it really flexible.

We will still have room parents next year, then things come up during the year, so if you're interested in having more of a voice, coordinator or board position is next step. Sara Hayes offered to help with coordinating classroom reps.