**MINUTES OF WOODLAND PTO MEETING**

**TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

Prior to the regular PTO Meeting, there was the New Parent Orientation meeting, which was called to order at 7:07 PM.

**PRINCIPAL—MR. HEANEY**

* Welcomed everyone and stated that it is fantastic to be back. Though COVID is not technically over we are in a much better place where we can do everything that Woodland has been known to do.
* Stated that we had a staff meeting in March of 2020 and informed everyone that there is this thing called COVID and we maybe out for a few days and will see everyone after Spring Break, but didn’t see anyone till September and we came back but we came back only till 1:00 and we were all in a mask. The lunch room was completely spread out and the kids had to sit 5 ft away from one another. We had limited recess. We didn’t do a lot of fun things that make an elementary school what it is and Woodland what it is. This year we are able to do everything and then some.
* Stated that we can’t do all that we do without your help.
* Presented a slide show about Woodland School.
* Stated that taking the step of volunteering in our school and coming in for things like Science Day, lunches, Olympic Day, Field Day, the basketball and volleyball games and all the things that we will be doing this year is something you don’t want to miss.
* Introduced Mrs. Frank and Mrs. Francione and expressed how wonderful they are and encouraged everyone to reach out to them with any questions.
* Stated that we continue to be a Blue Ribbon school and that we will never lose that designation.
* Stated that if you go to Great Schools and take a look at Woodland’s ranking, it is not an accurate depiction. We haven’t had state testing in several years; we did last year but there is nothing to compare it to because in order to have a comparison you need to do it one year to the next. We took NJSLA last year but we hadn’t taken it 3 years prior to that, so when we got our scores on Great Schools, it was the year after we won Blue Ribbon. It is like getting a hundred on a test but where do you go from there? The next year if you got a 98, you still did really well but your score went down and therefore your growth goes down. If you look at our performance on Great Schools, we are an 8 and 9 but if you look at our growth, we are a 3 and that gave us a lower score and that’s based on the year we came off of. Stated that he has spoken to them about this but they will not change anything because they do not get involved with that and they report what they report.
* Stated that the reason we are a Blue Ribbon school is because intelligence plus character is the true goal of what we do here. We do want our kids to come out as better people not just better students.
* Introduced our PTO Liaison, Mrs. Rzasa (Mrs. Rzasa welcomed everyone back and is looking forward to a great year). Also introduced Mrs. Braunstein and Mr. Gamage who will also be our PTO Liaisons for this year.
* Introduced Mrs. McWilliams (formerly Ms. Pranzo) as our school counselor.
* Stated that we have 3 rules here at Woodland School: 1. Take care of yourself 2. Take care of each other 3. Take care of our school. We also give respect and take responsibility.
* Stated that we do Student of the Month and said that you should be very proud if your child comes home with that as we only do 15 per month.
* Stated that drop off and pick up are going really well. But the buses have not been going that well. There have been a lot of changes as more kids are back on the bus and we have a lot of new routes this year, but that causes transportation routes to move around. Bus drivers are really hard to find so we really need to be patient with the bus drivers. Please also be careful driving in the morning and afternoon in our lot. Please also keep your kids with you when walking in the lot.
* Stated that we have a few changes this year. We implemented something called Everyday Speech. Everyday we do something called morning meeting; it’s a way we greet the students and help them start their day in a positive way. They often start by saying “hello” to one another and building that climate and culture in the classroom. The Everyday Speech lessons is a company that provides us with lessons and goes over important social and emotional skills that our kids need to learn about. Encouraged everyone to ask their kids about how the morning meeting and those speech lessons are going.
* Stated that we continue to do Spirit Days. We have one per month. We just did the team jersey day on Friday and more will come out. Please make sure you have signed up for school messenger.
* Stated that we have the Week of Respect coming up in October. Expressed thanks to the PTO for organizing the Week of Respect assemblies. We have 2 really cool assemblies coming in that the PTO put together for us and thanked Mrs. Marucci for doing that. We have Omega Man who is coming to in to talk to us about the power of kindness with our K-2 students. We have Mikey Fowlin coming in to talk about the importance of acceptance and respecting who we are with each other with our 3-5 students. Expressed thanks to Mrs. McWilliams who plans the entire Week of Respect.
* Stated that we will be making wonderful memories this year and that we are back to normal and back to traditional school. It is great to see the kids back.
* Stated that suggestions are always welcome and encouraged everyone to please reach out.
* Touched on Go Guardian which is on every student’s Chromebook. If a student types something in their search engine which is of concern, Mrs. McWilliams would instantly get a message and that would help us help that child.
* Stated that we cannot do anything without your support. Volunteering provides students with role models, it improves and strengthens our school community, it fosters an understanding of how we do things here and it provides opportunities for programs we couldn’t have otherwise.
* Stated that independence is taught at a young age but if you do see something while volunteering say something.
* Stated that it is important as a PTO to know that at times there will be disagreements on how things need to be done. It is important as adults that we are all on the same team and our focus is on the kids.
* Stated that if you see any bodily fluid from a child, please do not touch it and alert the nurse or staff member.
* Touched on HIB and student conflict. The NJ HIB law is the toughest school law in the country. If we get a bullying report, we are required by law to investigate it and it is a very lengthy process and it goes into the student’s record which goes with them to the middle school but ends there.
* Stated that in a recent assembly we talked to the kids about the importance of being kind and accepting people.
* Stated that if you are volunteering for lunch, please do not give any child food as we are not sure if they have any allergies. We also need to be mindful of the food that we send in for classroom parties and to follow the district-wide approved food list.
* Stated that his door is always open and that he values your feedback.
* Reminded everyone to follow him on Twitter.
* Stated that the security (screening of licenses) is tied to a database that incorporates New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Connecticut where it would scan all those states and come up with a possible sex offender.
* Stated that we are getting a vestibule next summer. There will be 3 doors and the only way you will able to get into the school is going through the office.
* Stated that every month we do a lockdown drill, emergency drill, fire drill and bus evacuation drill. Tomorrow we will be doing a lockdown drill.
* Stated that you can purchase ice cream up front for $35 for pizza and ice cream days. Please use the Cheddar Up App to make your purchase. We also plan to add more ice cream options in January. Please remember not to give a child ice cream if they don’t have one.

**SCHOOL COUNSELOR—MRS. McWILLIAMS (formerly MS. PRANZO)**

* Introduced herself as our school counselor and is here to lend a helping hand. She is here to support students social, emotional and academic growth. Stated that one of the big things that she values is embedding herself into your children’s everyday activities to the best of her ability by being with them at lunch, recess and in the classroom as much as possible. Shared that she does individual counseling as well as small group counseling. She will also be reintroducing lunch bunch this year which is an opportunity for students to come and have lunch with her. This helps foster peer relationships. A letter was sent out today and asked parents to reach out if they do not want their child to participate.
* Provided her new contact information and asked parents to reach out if they needed anything.

The New Parent Orientation Meeting was adjourned at 8:01 PM

**PTO AGENDA ITEMS**

**PTO PRESIDENT—DANA MARUCCI**

The PTO meeting was called to order at 8:06 PM by Dana Marucci.

* Welcomed everyone back and introduced herself as the PTO President.
* Reintroduced Mrs. Rzasa, Mrs. Braunstein and Mr. Gamage as our PTO Liaisons.
* Introduced the Executive Board Members: Vice President-Ashley Abines, Treasurer-Melissa Frega, Secretary-Sumitra Nicholson, Officers-Lou Grace Cua, Brooke Ditta, Cristina Tayal, Stephanie Lindy, Denise DeCorso and April Pearce. Introduced Anna Mohallim as the new SEPAG representative. (Anna Mohallim—stated that if you have any questions about special education services at Woodland, please contact her. We meet 4 times per year and we have a meeting in October.)
* Talked about the events that we are planning this year which are the volleyball and basketball games, Science Day, maybe a Science Fair if we can get a teacher to help us, Bingo Nights, Trunk or Treat, etc.
* Stated that in order for us to do these events we do need funds so when you join the PTO the money you spend joining goes back to the students whether it’s for class parties or other events so, please consider joining the PTO. We always need volunteers.
* Touched on the importance of confidentiality when volunteering. For those of you who are homeroom parents, the email that went out list the expectations of what is required of a homeroom parent. 1. Join the PTO 2. Signup to chair or co-chair a committee or serve on at least 2 committees 3. Attending at least 2 PTO meetings 4. Attending the Scholastic Book Fair at the time you need to 5. Attending Field Day in June 6. Help in preparing the crafts for the 5 classroom parties 7. Maintaining signup geniuses and email communications.
* Stated that we do get a lot of individuals that want to be involved in their child’s classroom. Unfortunately, we are not able to give everyone that opportunity due to class distribution. If you feel like you can’t make the commitment and there are a number of parents signed up for your child’s class to do it, we have these rules in place in order to get parents participating and coming into the school if they are able to so this is something for you to keep in mind.
* Stated that we are all volunteers and there are certain behaviors that we are expected to follow and our behavior reflects directly back on the PTO which reflects back onto Woodland.
* All volunteers are required to sign a Code of Conduct which state:
1. A volunteer must respect the individuality, dignity and worth of each student, staff member and other volunteers.
2. A volunteer should not use abusive or profane language at any time while volunteering at a PTO sponsored event, on school property or in the presence of children, staff or other PTO volunteers.
3. A volunteer shall abide by and support the implementation of all health and safety protocols, drills and emergency responses.
4. A volunteer must not seek information about an individual student. A volunteer must respect the confidentiality of any information gained about an individual student, by whatever means.
5. As a volunteer I will refrain from engaging in any derogatory actions which reflect negatively upon or cause embarrassment to the PTO or Woodland School.
* Stated that we had to add point 5 to the Code of Conduct because there have been some issues in various schools and settings where parents have actually gotten into physical altercations with one another.
* Stated that we want to model certain behaviors for our kids and one of them is kindness. As Mr. Heaney stated we should be celebrating when they come home with the Student of the Month certificate because it is a character-based assessment.
* Talked about the chain of command and referenced an org chart about how things move up and down regarding communication between homeroom parents and grade level reps and up to Mr. Heaney and so on if there are any issues.
* Stated that one thing that we are doing new this year is trying to do a little bit more with our community in terms of giving back by doing food drives connected to Trunk or Treat, collecting socks for veterans possibly at a Bingo Night, doing a color run possibly in the spring and partnering with a charity to raise money for that charity. We looked at the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society that is based in Cranford as a possible option. There is also the CHD Coalition in Butler as another option. We are also working with a women’s shelter (The Agape House) in Somerville and doing a book drive during the Scholastic Book Fair.
* Stated that another thing that we are doing this year is that in order to keep things streamlined and moving in a timely manner, we have April Pearce acting as our liaison between the PTO Executive Board and the committee chairs and Melissa Frega is acting as the bank and handling all the financials.
* Stated that the lunch program with Catering Solutions is a district-run program which is 4 days a week. The pizza day is the 1-day program that is run by the PTO.
* Upcoming events—Omega Man and Mikey Fowlin for Week of Respect. Bingo Night is October 13th. Trunk or Treat is October 28th with a rain date of October 27th.
* Basic Reminders—please remember to be careful in the parking lot when dropping off and picking up. Please remember to label your child’s items. Please select Woodland School as your charity partner on Amazon Smile as we get a portion of your purchase back. Please remember to scan your Box Tops.

**BOOK FAIR—SUMITRA NICHOLSON, MELISSA FREGA AND ANNA MOHALLIM**

* Stated that the Book Fair will take place next week and mentioned that we earn Scholastic Dollars with your purchases and we spend those dollars on the teachers where they can purchase big ticket items like rugs or stools and essentially that is free money for us. We thought for the book drive we could ask parents to purchase new books that we would donate to the Agape House. We are also updating how we do the teachers wishlists and not do bins but do more of a wishlist type thing where you can select a card and purchase a book for a teacher.

**PIZZA AND ICE CREAM—BROOKE DITTA AND MELISSA FREGA**

* Asked everyone to get their orders in. Order by Monday to get it in for Thursday. Ice cream has changed to Friday. Signup for the year on Cheddar Up which will be on the PTO website.

**FUNDRAISING EFFORTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA—ASHLEY ABINES**

* Mums’ sale
* Ciros Pizza-if you order lunch or dinner on Monday and mention Woodland, we get 10% back on every order
* Square One Art-we partner with the art teacher and they create a piece of art and you can order products with that piece of art through Square One. Students have already started working on their artwork.
* Follow Woodland School on Facebook and Instagram

**AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES—JEN CARR/DANA MARUCCI**

* Soccer-grades K-2
* On the Court Basketball-open to all
* Code Ninjas

**SPIRITWEAR—APRIL PEARCE**

* Stated that we have sent a lot of e-blasts pushing spirit wear. Go to the PTO website and click on the link to order. We are trying to clean out old inventory. Outstanding orders will be delivered to the school this week. If you have any recommendations that you want to see, please reach out.

**THANK YOUS—**To Anna Mohallim for organizing the back to school staff luncheon and to Stephanie Lindy and Silvia Amorim for their help setting up the room, as well as to everyone who provided baked goods, beverages, etc.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

* The minutes from the June 9, 2022 PTO meeting were submitted for approval by Sumitra Nicholson, approved by Melissa Frega and seconded by April Pearce.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.