

Bigelow Middle School PTO Kick-Off Meeting
Bigelow Learning Commons (formerly known as the library!)
October 3, 2014, 8:30 -9:45 a.m.

Attendees:

Todd Harrison, principal
Jacquie Arbuckle, co-president
Carolyn Judge, co-president
Laura Davis, head of Creative Arts and Sciences Committee
Sarah Rizzo, co-treasurer
Vicki Spetter, co-treasurer
Beth Panella, vice president
Tami Ireland
Susan Donellan
Misia Landau
Tammy McKenna
Agi Sardi
Sally Brickell

1. School Updates: Todd Harrison

The library has become the new “Learning Commons,” as the school has divested itself of books (e.g. encyclopedias and outdated reference books) that weren’t being used and reclaimed space that used to be taken up by towering book stacks. Low-lying portable bookshelves were purchased so the library feels much more open and can be reconfigured as needed, including as a classroom space. Computer stations were added.

Upgrades to the school this summer included a refurbished entrance and retiled hallways and classrooms. An art display case, (purchased with PTO funds and from class gift funds from the past two classes) was due to arrive October 3.

The year is off to a smooth start. The sixth grade rock-climbing trip was great. Seventh graders jumped into classes and are focused. Heard good things from teachers.

MCAS scores are coming in. School-wide, the English Language Arts (ELA) scores increased slightly while the math scores dipped a little. We started a new format called flexible grouping, whereby 1/3 of seventh graders moved between advanced and regular math groups throughout the year, which threw off the pacing for topics covered. So seventh graders didn’t learn about probability until after the test date, and about eight of the MCAS questions were about probability.

The 2013-2014 school year was the last year of MCAS. We’re now transitioning to the The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which are based on the common core standards. They will require a lot more problem-solving than did the MCAS.

Students will begin discussing ***Schooled*** (One School, One Book) the week of October 6.

A book recommendation from Mr. Harrison: **Mindset**, by Carol Dweck. It deals with how kids develop resilience. The teachers have read it and are now charged with encouraging students to think of their brains as malleable while discouraging “I’m not good at math” thinking.

3. **Vote to install** Jacquie Arbuckle as co-president and Sarah Rizzo as co-treasurer

4. Overview of PTO events

- Soup and Supper Stroll, Saturday, Nov. 1
- Magazine Drive – Mid-to late-November: 8th grade fundraiser
- Bigelow's Big Night – late April or early May

5. Volunteer opportunities - Committee positions open:

- **Big Night co-chair:** largest fundraiser of the year where we eat, drink and raise money through a silent auction
- **8th grade fundraising co-chair:** the eighth grade raises thousands of dollars for students’ end-of-year trips to NYC and Montreal. The money helps defray some of the cost for everyone and supports trip scholarships and end-of-year activities like the Six Flags field trip.
- **Representative** to citywide **Safe Routes to School committee.** This very important committee played a large role in getting the school’s traffic patterns reconfigured to increase safety.

6. Overview of Creative Arts and Sciences: Laura Davis, chair of CASC

The PTO spends \$9-10K on arts and science enrichment programs. CASC is a citywide program with a paid coordinator and volunteer chairs at each Newton school. Laura, as the head of CASC, vets new programs and decides whether they’re suitable. A priority for teachers is that programs relate to the curriculum. **Laura welcomes parents who would like to help by being chaperones in the classrooms as the presentations take place.** Check out the PTO calendar for dates. One visiting artist that all of the schools will see is jazz vocalist Semanya McCord and her *Journey into Jazz* program.

Other artists booked for Bigelow:

6th grade

- Science fiction writer Greg Mone: One of his themes is hard work and grit. He shows students all of the revisions his work undergoes.
- Motion, Velocity and Acceleration

7th grade

- Tanglewood Marionettes: ties into mythology unit.
- Engineers Teaching Algebra: traffic engineer who shows kids how to figure out traffic flow using algebra.

8th grade

- Shakespeare Now performing A Midsummer’s Night Dream
- Theatre Expressive re-enacting the Boston Massacre Uprising on King Street. Includes trial with students as the jury.
- Science presentation: TBD