

Bigelow PTO Meeting Minutes  
September 27, 2012

Present:

Todd Harrison, Principal, Becky Manley, Co-President, Mindy Peckler, Co-President, Ted Everett, Treasurer, Julie Burgoin, Vice-President, Leslie Williams, Secretary, KB Spector, Michelle Kfoury, Holly Georgiadis, Megan Campbell-Risen, Lauri Perry, Angela Pitter, Miriam Alandydy, Sally Brickell, Young-Shin Choi, Berit Ramseier, Marian McDonough, Rachel Milgram, Donna Manley

Meeting came to order 8:30 a.m.

- Welcome and Introductions: Becky

- Principal's Report: Todd

- All has gone well at the start of the school year. Very smooth so far. One rough patch: see below re: suspicious strangers in the park. 6<sup>th</sup> graders have impressed beyond belief with adjustment. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are locked in with mid-year attention levels. Visitors: Superintendent has been here already.

- Back to school night had a good turnout. Things went smoothly.

- MCAS results released last week. Bigelow was rated a Level 1 school. Not all schools in Newton got that rating. It's a new system, different from the AYP. Level 1 is the best. Ratings have 5 levels, level 5 means the state is taking over school. This is based on performance and progress last year. Bigelow is ranked in 89 percentile, which is good, but Todd wants it to be higher. The rating is based on ELA score of 96 (scale of 0-100). In math there were big gains: 6, 7, 8 point gains in almost all subgroups (White, African American, Special Ed, Asian, Hispanic, low income) school average around 90. These ratings are good feedback; show that things worked on last year made a difference. We will continue to improve on these assessments.

Q: Was there a big curriculum shift? To what do we attribute these gains?

Todd: 1. Math had big shift: more hands-on, more problem solving, more conceptual work. Support of the math coach. Coach is half time - this is 2<sup>nd</sup> year of having math coach. We worked hard to tighten coordination between special ed and regular teachers.

2. Co-teaching small support groups for first time last year. Content and pedagogy expertise together working with groups of 5-8 kids a couple times a week.

3. Entire staff trained in Empower writing techniques. Graphic organizers for thoughts. Strong English and writing results.

- Great 6<sup>th</sup> grade potluck dinner Friday.

- NEW Student Activities Calendar lists all afterschool activities in one place. It will have an announcement board for new things. Haven't had great communication with parents in the past

on this. Check it often. **\*Beth Coomber is doing the newsletter. Todd will ask her to put a link to the site.** Tennis club starting next Monday. Cheerleading, chess, volleyball, fencing, computer-aided design, bridge club, woodworking are also starting. Most activities are seasonal. As long they're attracting kids they will go on. Kids can just show up for many of the activities except for organized sports. No long-term commitment required.

- Suspicious strangers in the park. Police are stepping up their surveillance. There was a case in Burr Park of a High School student approached by a stranger. Just one report that hasn't been confirmed. Todd sent e-mails to parents, talked to kids about it. Police don't think there's real dangerous activity going on, but that kids are now hyper sensitive. Several have reported to police that they were followed by someone suspicious. All reports to police are from Bigelow students. The students showed on their news this morning five safety tips for each other. About four years ago there was a problem in that park. Just be aware there are strangers in the neighborhood and safety is important. Now students wait by gym after sports, not out on sidewalk. Parents pick up in the parking lot.

- Budget Review: Ted

Ted has been working with his predecessor. It's so early in the year there's not much activity to report. Ted distributed two handouts for the 34K budget. This year and last year, budget vs actual. Last year was higher than the budget because of planned spending for tech equipment (sound equipment). Todd says it's fabulous - they had the equipment in time for the school musical. This took almost 3 years of planning. The POPS group raised money for it as well. RE: technology spending, Ted sat down with all parties, including the head of IT for whole school system, to find out needs for next few years so we can plan out more than just one-off situations.

- The Parent Night video on technology was great.

**Q: \* Can we link the video and PDF of the technology brochure to the website? Then link to Paypal and have "Donate Now" button. Would also be nice to put this info on PTO website: Tax ID number and the address to send donation checks to. Also a link to a page with info about matching funds.**

Q: Does NPS have a Middle School Plan?

Todd: yes, they provided funds for iPads for a pilot group.

Smart boards were installed for 6th and 7th grade, but not in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

People don't feel they are quite as useful as they thought they might be.

There are ELMOs for every class and LCD projectors. Todd does not know if there's a plan for new purchases. They do support current equipment.

A grant from BC purchased some computers in library.

- Past Events: Becky

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade car wash. Raised \$746.00. It was lots of fun with lots of kids participating. Money goes toward 8<sup>th</sup> grade graduation.

-Upcoming Events

- Soup Stroll October 13. **Still need a couple of hosts.** A great fundraiser and community builder. Hosts: please tell Becky if you have a limit on numbers. Becky will tell host 24 hours before the event how many attendees there will be. Soup stroll begins at one house for light appetizers and drinks. At that house you get your assignment for soup dinner. Soup is more casual. Some do sit down. Some do buffet. At soup dinner you receive instructions for dessert place. There is a ticket to be purchased. You can drive, don't have to stroll. Dietary restrictions can be accommodated. KB will have gluten free, Thai coconut soup. Themes are great but not required. It helps with marketing if we know what soups are. It will be on the invitation to the extent possible. Some people get co-host to provide beverages. Or you can ask people to bring their own. Some hosts also serve bread and salad. You can host or provide the food or both. We can match you if you want to do one or the other.

- November 6: Election Day Bake Sale.

Money goes to PTO. **\* Need a chair for that event.** Responsible for putting a Google docs up and coordinating shifts. Make sure everything is clearly labeled. Not starting from scratch; people are already signed up to bake and work shifts. It's right outside the gym. Polls open at 7. But people are in line at 6am. Start shifts at 6am, end late afternoon or till we run out of stuff. We have a good helping community; it's easy to get volunteers.

- November 16<sup>th</sup> Kick off for Magazine Drive: Marion and Berit

Kids sell magazines to their family and friends. 40% of price goes to the school. We make about 5K. \$5700 last year. Kids get pumped up by the sales rep of magazine company. 6<sup>th</sup> graders are most into it. Becky: maybe we can give incentives for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

Last year one kid got \$800 worth of prizes. Changes this year to spread prizes around.

Renewal subscriptions: wait to renew through magazine drive so Bigelow can benefit or put in school code. **\* Put this info in PTO newsletter. Berit: email Becky with school code and whether or not people can subscribe to electronic editions of magazines and still have it benefit our school.** This is Berit's third year as chair so will not do it next year.

Responsibility: Spreadsheets to keep track of sales. It's a nice discrete project. Marion said Laura D. volunteered for next year.

- November 9<sup>th</sup> Turkey Bowl

8<sup>th</sup> graders play flag football. Two clusters square off. Teachers usually coach.

Right after school at the park. PTO will provide hot chocolate, snacks, etc.

Q: Is that day a spirit day? Todd: Yes. One year we gave out purple necklaces, encourage kids to wear purple or Bigelow stuff. Didn't do it last few years, but this year we will declare it spirit day. We need people to bake. Ideas: please tell Becky. Ideas from past events: Comellas pizza.

\$2 a slice to kids. Popcorn machine? But have to plug it in. West Newton Cinema will give us popcorn. Last year had megaphones with popcorn in it. Other ideas: City Pizza-

Washington Street. Gives Newton North \$15 price per pizza. Can sell pizza for \$2.50 a slice. Papaginos will also give a discount. Ask for NPS discount. The city will supply it too. Nice to support local business. **\*We need a chair (esp 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents) Also Ms. Ahearn (?)**

**-can pull some kids in to help.**

- Community News[news](#): put together by Beth Coomber. At Newton North they put a link to

Ournewton.org on the website, a clearinghouse for nonprofit announcements. Right now Bigelow, Brown and Oak Hill collaborate. This might even better. We want to make sure there's info relative to middle school on it. \* **Becky will coordinate with Beth on this.**

- School Council is coming up: This is a state mandated group of 6 or 7 parents, staff and Todd who meet monthly. \* **Todd will put out an announcement.** It has to have the same number of staff as parent representatives. There is typically an election, but there aren't many people so volunteers are taken. Meetings are Thursday afternoons, or before school. Usually the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month. There is an open period for public comments. Minutes haven't been posted in past. Council advises principal primarily on budget issues, identifies school needs and makes sure they're being met. The existing school improvement plan is adapted each year. \* **PTO minutes will be posted on website; Todd can also send School Council minutes to Becky to post.**

- Apparel: Todd: student council has been in charge. Not currently a money maker. If this could coordinate with PTO we could have a school-wide product. Do kids design the logo? Becky has a good printer. We could take orders online and have it as a fundraiser. How would we take payment? For now it's checks with order slips. New 6<sup>th</sup> graders who want spirit gear. Two years ago it was launched during magazine drive: not a good time. Now is a good time to start. Pre-order, pre-pay. Then we don't have extra merchandise. Suggestion: could set up relationship with a website that has unlimited merchandise and we provide the logo. Ideas: Prep Sportswear, Café Press. But let's start slowly. Kids need to see it. Have products to sell at Election day and before Spirit Day/Turkey Bowl. \* **Todd will talk to Jason, student council advisor, today.**

-PTO Communications: an auto reminder comes out Sundays, so if anyone would like to have an announcement posted, make sure to get it in before then.

Meeting adjourned at 9:40am.