



Bigelow PTO Fall Meeting Minutes

October 18, 2017, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Attendees: Jessica Gilmartin (Co-President), Jennifer Weber (Co-President), Miriam Alandydy (Co-Treasurer), Michelle Welford (Co-Treasurer), Una Simmons (VP of Fundraising), Joana Canedo (Secretary), Todd Harrison (Bigelow Principal), Dan Cotter, Krista Chavez, Tami Ireland, Frances Kervin, Meredith Andrews, Regina Sullivan, Monica Sawicka

1. Call to Order

Jessica called the meeting to order.

2. Welcome and Introduction

Participants introduced themselves.

3. Principal's Welcome and Update

Todd Harrison:

The 6th Grade Social event (10/13) was a success, with 75 participants.

The parent open house (10/11, 12 and 13) had a good turnout.

Coming up at Bigelow

1) Two research studies:

- a. Brandeis University. Study on political socialization of adolescents. One such study was done in the 50s, and they want to update it. Focus on: development of political ideas, and gender differences in this development. It will be done in 6th grade Social Studies class.
- b. Wellesley college. Study on social media and the effects on early social media use: how children get into it, how schools manage the issue. It will be a 20-minute online survey with the whole school. After that, 20 students will be selected for a more in-depth talk. They will share the results when they are done.

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42 Vernon St., Newton, MA 02458



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- 2) All School Dance on 10/27. The theme will be Halloween. The school will need parent chaperon volunteers. Contact Assistant Principal Lucas Mogensen at Lucas.Mogensen@newton.k12.ma.us.
- 3) Bigelow has a new Tweeter account: [@BulldogWoofs](https://twitter.com/BulldogWoofs). It's helpful to send short notices, cancellations, etc.
- 4) Progress reports will come out on November 1.
- 5) One Book, One School program. This year the author is giving a Skype talk on 12/07.
- 6) Football team is on a winning streak.
- 7) Turkey Ball. It's a flag football game between clusters 8E and 8fF. It happens on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving in the morning (this year it's on 11/22). Parents are invited. We should announce it. The 8th grade committee will be informed.

Group Discussion:

How to deal with smartphones for kids? Todd: Bigelow does not recommend. Parents can restrict it, and developers are coming up with safeguards for kids. In 2016 the PTO sponsored a talk with Joani Geltman, MSW Child Development and Parenting Expert, on "[Texting and Social Networking: What's A Parent To Do?](#)". Maybe we could bring her back in the Spring. Or host a screening of the movie [Screenagers](#). Would anyone be interested in coordinating this?

4. PTO fundraisers

The Supper Stroll will be on 11/04. We have hosts for appetizers, dessert and many for dinner. Registration is open, and people need to register and make a donation in order to participate. All the information is on the [PTO website](#). Please come to the Supper Stroll. Two parents at the meeting offered their houses to host dinners.

New Ginza. On 11/21, from 4pm to 9pm the restaurant will give 20% the revenues from dinners from the Bigelow Community. It is possible to order out or eat in. People will need to take a printed coupon. We will advertise soon and have a link to the printable coupon on the PTO website.

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Skate Night at the Warrior rink. Friday, 12/08 in the evening. It's during public skate hours, students, families and the Bigelow Community are welcome. Part of the revenue from tickets will be donated back to the PTO.

Bigelow Big Night. It's schedules from 03/24/18, at the Cambridge Boat House. We are looking for co-chairs and committee members. Two parents (Meredith Andrews and Frances Kervin) volunteered to help. The work involves organizing food, music and an auction (there's already a website in place for the auction and for selling tickets). Planning can start anytime.

Amazon Smile. The Bigelow PTO uses Amazon Smile as a source of fundraising. "Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Bigelow Middle School Parent- Teacher Organization Inc whenever you shop on AmazonSmile." We have a [button](#) on the right side bar of the website, but no one is using it. We need to advertise it more.

Candle Fundraiser

Kathy Ahern, school counselor, put together a fundraiser for fall. Students will have order forms to sell PartyLite candles. It does not involve a lot of work and the orders will be ready for the Holidays.

This will replace the SchoolKidz school supply boxes, that didn't work well this year. The PTO will not be doing it anymore.

Parents suggested alternatives for buying school supplies:

- Partnering with Amazon to buy directly from their website
- Partnering with the local Staples store, and try a discount

The PTO invites parents interested in pursuing those ideas to work with us.

5. Nominating Committee Needs and Volunteers

Tracy Carroll (not here today) is the nominating committee chair. To comply with the PTO by-laws, we need parents from the 4 feeder schools to join the nominating committee and find the parents to volunteer to PTO positions next year.

Tami Ireland volunteered to be the Lincoln-Eliot co-chair. Regina Sullivan volunteered for Underwood. We still need a volunteer from Ward and one from Mason Rice.

Volunteer opportunities are always open at the Bigelow PTO. Please check at the [Bigelow website](#).

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6. Creative Arts and Sciences 2017-2018 Schedule

Jennifer Weber, PTO co-president, also runs CASC for Bigelow (and did it for Ward). Middle school chairs meet a few times a year. Each grade has two presentations per year and there's an additional concert for the whole school. [CASC presentations for this year are posted in the PTO website.](#)

We may get a NASA astronaut for 8th graders this year too.

CASC programs can be found in a resource guide, pre-approved by the coordinator of the program city-wide.

CASC is the most important item funded by the PTO, with a budget of U\$10000. But we've usually come under budget.

The PTO also funds the [One Book One School program](#). Miriam is going to be in the committee to choose next year's book and the PTO will suggest that the committee consider the cost of the author visit as one possible additional criteria.

7. Open for Questions and Comments.

Regina Sullivan:

Families Organizing for Racial Justice is a group started by some Newton families. The founder was recently hired by the Newton Public School District to implementing programs in the city.

The idea is to create chapters in each school in order to engage students, parents and the community in general. Regina wants to form a chapter at Bigelow and find support, to have more parents involved, She will send more information so we can post on the website and share in the newsletter.

Todd Harrison:

Bigelow has a Peer Leaders program focused on anti-bias education. The ADL program has 30 students from 7th and 8th graders. After their training (5 full-day workshops), they will lead discussions in the advisory classes. Khizr Khan came for the [Anti-Defamation League's annual youth congress](#) last year; Bigelow students were there. [More here.](#)

Bigelow also does training for the staff.

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Miriam Alandydy:

GSA is an organization about gender and identity at Bigelow, led by Mr. Burtch, which work to create an environment of tolerance in the school. At this age it's good for kids to figure it out, with school support. [More here](#).

Jessica

The [Bigelow Outreach Club](#) is led by Mr. King. It hasn't started yet this year. He needs time to get the group running. He is trying to grow this group.

Monica

Why is copy of materials of the 8th grade sex education only available only in the front office at Bigelow Middle School? Can we have online access to it?

Todd: I will need to find out details. It's mainly to have some control over who's seeing it.

Joana

We still have some copies of the Bigelow Directory available, e-mail BigelowBulldog@gmail.com.

All school and PTO events, including performance arts and sports calendar are available at the [PTO Website](#).

8. Next PTO meetings

Winter Meeting: 01/11/18

Spring Meeting: 04/04/18

Annual Meeting: 06/06/18