

Ocean Avenue PTO

Engaging People. Building Community.

OAPTO Meeting Minutes

Date: Feb. 26, 2015

Time: 6:00pm-7:30pm

Called by: Nanette Dyer Blake, OAPTO President

Number in Attendance: 20 OAES community members

Location: OAES Library

I. Welcome/Introductions/Overview (Nanette Dyer Blake, President)

- Nanette welcomed everyone and invited OAES staff, PTO board members and community members to introduce themselves
- Nanette discussed the following PTO business:
 - Most information comes from our PTO meetings but we also send out a weekly email blast and a monthly newsletter – talk to Katharine, our Communication Director, if you are not receiving them
 - Board email addresses are listed on our website at oapto.org
 - The Annual Appeal is part of our fundraising mechanism and it's an easy way to give in any amount – you can go to the website and use your credit card or send in a check with your child
 - The PTO recently gave Music Director Dr. McGovern \$600 to purchase a world drum set which will enhance the music curriculum
 - We are in our nominating season which is an important PTO process – the nominating committee is currently working on staffing our board for next year:
 - You don't have to sit on the board to participate in PTO leadership – there are committees you can serve on as well as support positions that are critical to the organization's success
 - The next PTO meeting is scheduled for Wed. March 18th

II. Approval of the Minutes (Erica Sabatino, Recording Secretary)

- OAES community members voted to approve the January 2015 PTO meeting minutes

III. Staff of the Month (Julie Lannon, Nominating Director)

- The PTO recognized Brenda Murphy, Brenda Gushee, Mary Linneman, Nancy Hess and Cath O'Connor who are all part of the ELL (English Language Learners) team at OAES
- The team administered the ACCESS test to over 100 students who speak another language at home
- There are 4 sections to the test – reading, writing (including a 5-paragraph essay), listening and speaking – each section has to be carefully planned for and administrated
- In addition to teaching, the team does a lot of coordinating and supports parent/teacher conferences as well
- Thank you to these ladies for their dedication to helping our students succeed!

IV. Guest Speakers: Physical Education and Wellness at OAES (Carolyn Cohen, OAES Physical Education Teacher, and Molly Collin, OAES Parent)

- Carolyn Cohen, OAES Physical Education Teacher, discussed the physical education program and demonstrated how she teaches different skills to students
- Mrs. Cohen bases her curriculum on the Maine State Learning Results which is focused on three key areas:
 - Movement skills and knowledge – agility, speed and balance, manipulative skills needed to use balls, hula hoops and jump ropes
 - Physical fitness skills and knowledge
 - Personal and social skills and knowledge – lots of partner and small group work and cooperative games – emphasis is on working together and sportsmanship
- The curriculum does not focus on teaching students how to play different sports or the rules for different sports – it is focused on teaching fitness skills, particularly lifetime fitness
- Mrs. Cohen does introduce lead-up games for soccer, basketball, etc.
- There is an emphasis on safety rules which are different from rules in a game
- At the elementary level there is no formal fitness testing
- Mrs. Cohen does some assessments but she doesn't keep track of scores
- She teaches health-related fitness components and feels that the most important thing to focus on is what kids need to do to improve their skills
- Mrs. Cohen demonstrated how she incorporates the IB Learner Profiles into the curriculum – she encourages students to be reflective about what they did in class and how they can take some of that learning back to their classroom
- In a cooperative game called Peaks to Portland, students are asked "how can I use my thinking to solve problems in different ways? Can I be fair in how I solve problems?"
- Thank you to Dr. Coursey for getting snowshoes donated from LL Bean – all of the classes will have a chance to use the snowshoes

- Molly Collin, Physical Therapist, UNE Faculty, OAES Parent and former OAPTO Board Member discussed 5210 Goes to School
- Let's Go! 5210 was started by a physician in Maine and is now a nationwide program
- OAES adopted Let's Go! 5210 when we opened our doors in 2011
- The initiative promotes physical activity and healthy eating in the school environment
- Molly recently attended a 5210 conference as a parent representative where she was asked to look at what our school is doing right to support healthy eating and promote physical activity:
 - The PTO introduced the Watermelon Welcome which is a healthy community event – other schools in Portland have since adopted this approach to welcoming students back to school
 - Girls on the Run program promotes fitness while building healthy relationships
 - Monthly Walk and Roll to school
 - Walking Program for students and staff
 - Adopting a wellness policy that discourages food as a reward and encourages non-food celebrations
- Being a 5210 school has allowed us to access grants which have funded:
 - A mini trail around the playground
 - Recess rack that is portable for teachers and students to have mini-breaks during the day
 - Activity boxes that teachers can sign out for activity breaks (i.e., birthday hike box or nature detective box)

- Teachers are using gym during indoor recess whenever their schedule allows
- Mrs. Cohen's Running Club has over 40 students in 4th and 5th grade
- Molly suggested that parents check out the new Portland Public Schools website because our wellness policy differs from the PPS wellness policy

V. Portland Public School District Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Toolkit (Nanette Dyer Blake, President)

- OAES parents and staff watched the Portland Public Schools video about the budgeting process and then discussed the below questions highlighted in the Toolkit
- Below are the comments that were captured by Erica Sabatino, OAPTO Secretary, and forwarded on to Superintendent Caulk

1. What do you consider the most important parts of our core academic program?

- Reduce class sizes for grades K-3 to 14-17 students per classroom
- Core subjects like math and reading that prepare students for success in life
- Literacy and early intervention – ensuring that all students reach the benchmark of being able to read at grade level by 3rd grade
- Providing extra support for reading and math in the form of math and literacy coaches
- OAES families would like the district to protect our current academic offerings which include International Baccalaureate (IB) programming, art, music, physical education and Spanish as early as second grade
- Expanding physical education to more than once a week, especially given large class sizes and cold winter months
- A science curriculum that promotes inquiry-based learning both inside and outside the classroom

2. How can we best stimulate progress for struggling learners, high-achievers and those in the middle?

- Unfortunately, there was not enough time to discuss this question

3. What innovative programs in the district do you value most? What new programs should be added?

- Student learning at OAES has been transformed by the International Baccalaureate (IB) program
- Parents and staff feel it is critical for the district to make a formal commitment to funding and sustaining the IB program at OAES, specifically as a discrete line item in the budget
- Is there potential for the IB program to be introduced at the middle school level for learning model continuity such as what has been done with expeditionary learning within the district?
- Support for teachers who seek training in their fields and beyond (i.e., OAES Kindergarten teacher Lisa Crowley participated in the University of Southern Maine's Maine Elementary Sciences Partnership and was trained in Talk Science; she has since trained the entire OAES staff and plans to do more training)

- Expand Let's Go 5210! to all schools – promoting physical activity and healthy eating at school has transformed OAES into a positive and healthy learning environment and trickles down to home life
- Continue to expand public Pre-K in order to reach more Portland families

4. What infrastructure improvements do you consider most important?

- OAES parents would like to see a clear plan for capital expansion/build-out of OAES to meet the demands of increasing school enrollment

5. Given funding constraints, how can we reallocate resources to best meet the needs of our students?

- Resources and staff to support ELL students is paramount to student success at all Portland schools
- 30% of OAES students are ELL students; OAES has an additional half-time ELL staff person this year but that funding is not guaranteed for next year
- The district needs to address existing inequities in the budget – a disproportionate amount of funds is being allocated to middle schools and high schools when the majority of students attend elementary school
- OAES parents feel strongly that the OAES budget should not fall below \$6,500 per student

6. If we have to cut the budget, where should we start?

- Unfortunately, there was not enough time to discuss this question

VI. Adjourn