

## **Parent Team Meeting**

**February 29, 2016**

**6:00 pm**

Meeting began at 6:01pm. There were 18 people in attendance, including three parent team officers (Diane Erickson was absent), the director, the staff of the Science Department, Joell Pundsack, Mona Hayashi as BOD liaison, and 7 other parents.

### **Presentation by the Science Department**

In the interest of time and the convenience of our assembled Science Department teachers, Steve Pullar called the meeting to order and began the Science Department presentation.

The Science teachers were introduced: Steve Pullar, Cheri Howe, Jeana Albers, Mark Greseth, and Alouisa Thames.

Mark Greseth teaches 6<sup>th</sup> grade Life Science and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Physical Science.

Cheri Howe teaches 7<sup>th</sup> grade Earth Science. The Eagle's Bluff trip is transitioning to a 6<sup>th</sup> grade trip instead of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade trip it has been.

Jeana Albers teaches 9<sup>th</sup> grade Biology, AP Biology, and Anatomy & Physiology. The AP Bio test is May 9<sup>th</sup>.

Alouisa Thames teaches 10<sup>th</sup> grade Chemistry and AP Chemistry. Most schools require general Chemistry as a prerequisite. Of all the AP tests, the Chemistry test is the most challenging.

Steve Pullar teaches CIS Physics, Physics by Inquiry, the Rube Goldberg course, and the Flight course. Both classes of Physics are University of Minnesota courses, and are taught as such. CIS is geared toward science majors and is algebra-based. Steve is retiring at the end of this school year, so a replacement Physics teacher is being sought. Teaching the CIS class requires an extensive background, including a Master's degree in Physics or a Master's degree with 18 credit hours in Physics. If the new teacher doesn't have the qualifications, the Science department will revert to general Physics and AP Physics.

A parent asked about the middle school science classes: are science projects included in the curriculum? Mark and Cheri answered. Mark includes an activity or some sort of project with every unit. He also likes the students to give presentations. He estimates the students complete one to two activities per unit outside of packet work. Cheri's classes complete a lot of labs.

The same parent asked about science competitions. Cheri mentions the middle and high school Science Bowl competitions. She's looking into doing an engineering science fair within her class as a before-school activity.

A parent asks about when the department will know what science classes will be offered next year. Steve said they will know by the end of the year.

Steve outlined changes for next year involving AP Chemistry. First, it will not be available for all 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. He feels strongly that it is torture and child abuse to have a 10<sup>th</sup> grader go into AP Chemistry without any previous Chemistry experience. Therefore, AP Chemistry will require General Chemistry as a prerequisite. Also, a student must have achieved a B- or better in General Chemistry.

A parent asked if AP Chemistry and Physics can be taken at the same time. Steve said yes; also both Physics levels can be completed at the same time. Steve highly recommended that some kind of science course appear on the 12<sup>th</sup> grade transcript (as well as math), lest colleges question the rigor of a student's program of study. Jeana Albers suggested AP Biology as a 12<sup>th</sup> grade option.

A parent asked if tutors are available. Steve said tutors can be arranged. All science teachers are available early in the morning and are very approachable.

The Science Department presentation was concluded.

### **Welcome and Introduction of Parent Team Officers by Sharon Huntley**

The bulk of the Parent Team meeting began at 6:30. Sharon introduced the Parent Team Officers. Then she turned over the floor to the director to discuss elective course offerings for next school year.

John provided handouts listing 2016-17 elective choices for Middle School and High School, and a handout listing possible new elective choices.

John is planning to poll students in the coming weeks to see the interest level for the possible new electives. The possible new electives were classes requested by students and/or subjects that weren't offered this past school year. Not all of the possible new electives will be offered.

John said the trend is for more high school juniors and seniors to stay at MSA instead of leaving for PSEO. MSA needs to offer more choices to continue this trend, which is a positive one. John feels that PSEO can be a tough route for students, since MSA cannot address struggling grades and cannot counsel students in their college classes.

Once the interest survey is complete the schedule can be set up. Classes are filled top-down (from seniors on down) in order to ensure that seniors get what they need for graduation.

John gave a shout-out to Joell for her hard work on information gathering and scheduling.

### **Treasurer's Report by Holly Jones**

The current Parent Team balance is \$10,049.69.

Sharon discussed that it is the Parent Team philosophy that it is best to spend the Parent Team donations during the actual year that the money is donated. Considering our current budget, the Parent Team is looking at approximately \$3000 left over to spend this year.

Some major ideas for the money include landscaping needs, technology team needs, and physical education/sports team equipment needs.

A parent suggested money for books and/or teacher libraries. Sharon indicated that there is already money set aside for teachers and classrooms. Mona agreed that money is allocated in the general fund for these items, which do not go through the Parent Team.

John said he has a plan to ask each department for wish lists, including “pie-in-the-sky” items, so that someday when extra money is lying around, some of the fun stuff can get funded. This is valid, too, since sometimes businesses like to donate. The lists will not be compiled this year.

Sharon referred to the big MSA sign on the side of the school as an example of things the Parent Team has done in the past.

Sharon mentioned the spring clean up activities the Parent Team has set up in the past, and recognized Jodi Miller for all her hard work on the grounds up-keep and landscaping. Sharon asked Jodi to outline her thoughts about funding for the landscape work.

Jodi explained how the grounds have been reworked to specifications planned along with Cheri Howe to use the grounds for teaching. Each area is a designated biome. In the past, grounds clean-up activities have actually ripped out important plants since they looked like weeds. She diligently placed paint stick signs at each type of plant in order to identify it. She also added biome signs so passersby could know what they were seeing. The grounds are currently planted on a grid system. Each grid square includes at most 4 or 5 plants to make upkeep easier.

Jodi explained how when the Parent Team asked if she had budgeting needs, she was drawn to the idea of installing rain barrels at each downspout. The school has 15. The rain barrel effectively slows the rain flow down, so that the ground in the area doesn't have to absorb it all at once. This can prevent storm damage.

Another idea Jodi had was installing a rain garden. She feels the best location for this would be south of the Great Hall. The size and/or design can be determined by the amount of money anyone wants to spend on it. She mentioned a student who was interested in working on the project with her. Concerns were raised about the location, since the area is heavily used by lunches and by classes, including phy ed.

Jodi also mentioned that the deciduous forest could be expanded by adding more trees.

A non-landscaping idea Jodi had was to have the art department design and produce window cling signs to place in the gymnasium windows in lieu of a lit sign, since they would be backlit by the gym lights.

A parent asked if students have been/are allowed to be helping with the landscaping duties. Jodi said all the information they need is charted. She basically assigned grid squares to the students

who attended grounds clean-up with the intention that they would rework the same grid squares at the next grounds clean-up. She has also requested help from Jeana Albers and Earth Club.

Sharon clarified with Jodi that the motivation behind obtaining rain barrels was environmental, not aesthetic. Sharon said that 15 rain barrels represented a significant cost. The Parent Team is not prepared to make any big money decisions tonight. Sharon asked if just a few barrels would be useful. Jodi agreed.

A parent indicated that this may be a good area to consider some kind of corporate donation or sponsorship. Another parent asks if a mass rain barrel purchase could be offered as an investment for parents to donate to the school. Or perhaps parents could also purchase a rain barrel for their own home use, like the city of Woodbury did a few years back, in order to reduce shipping costs for themselves.

Jodi agreed to look into these ideas and spearhead a rain barrel campaign.

The assembled agreed that 4 rain barrels was a good start. Jodi said she will plan for the barrels to arrive for spring clean-up.

Mona, as the BOD representative to the Technology Committee, outlined the problem the technology team is having with the current computers at the school. The laptops are in desperate need of an upgrade. The technology team is planning a technology drive, but would like to request \$2000 or \$3000 (as much as \$5000) from the Parent Team to help make up any shortfall from the drive.

The Technology Committee is planning a roll-out of the technology drive in the next week.

A parent stated that they feel Parent Team money should go for technology, so that parents won't be asked for more money. Mona indicated that parents would be asked for money regardless, since the Parent Team money would potentially only cover the shortfall.

Another parent recalled that MSA used to have a technology drive every year.

A parent asked if everything in the Parent Team budget has already been accounted for and funded. Holly reiterated that the estimated \$3000 surplus is on top of already funded activities. The problem lies in potentially not being able to roll over surplus money to next year's budget. The Parent Team generally plans to keep around \$2500 in reserve unless we cannot roll the money over. We'd like to have a buffer so we aren't required to cancel programs next year if donations fall below expectations.

Sharon indicated that, as the meeting seemed to be running late, we may need to call a special meeting to approve spending decisions.

A parent asked if we can just take the \$3000 and split it evenly among the three main ideas.

Another parent wanted to know more about the Technology Committee's request for money. What happened to the money raised during Give to the Max?

John explained that the Give to the Max money was designated for security changes throughout the school. The system will be complete by July and all the money will be spent. The security upgrade was required in order to keep the school open.

Mona explained that the Technology Committee did not know they needed the money back in the fall when Give to the Max was happening. The technology upgrade will make standardized testing much faster. The biggest complaint from the teachers is that laptops take way to long to start up.

In the interest of time, Sharon tabled the budget discussion for now, indicating that budget decisions will be made allowing for input from all.

### **Volunteer Activity Update**

Sharon outlined volunteer activity in place of Diane, who was absent due to illness.

Healthy Snack Day coordinator has changed since the previous coordinator and her students have left MSA. The coordinator is now Claire Jensen.

Pi Day is coming up on March 14. Amanda Stout is coordinating.

Grounds Clean-Up is planned for April 15 and/or May 15. The BBQ is planned for the May date.

Teacher Appreciation still needs a coordinator.

Box Tops seems to have made no progress. Mona agreed to sort the collected Box Tops.

A parent mentioned Tyson Chicken and Country Hearth/Village Hearth bread as possible labels to collect. Coordinators would be needed.

Next meeting is April 11<sup>th</sup>, 6:00, Great Hall. No teacher group presentation is lined up yet. Also, Parent Team officers will be handling the Board of Directors election coming up.

The business of the meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15.