

Claremont Immersion School
PTA General Membership Meeting
November 3rd, 2015

PTA President Introduction– Amber Dungan

Amber began the meeting by discussing the Giving Tree event at CIS, which will begin on November 17th. Each year during this event, the PTA asks the school community to assist any family that is in need of winter coats, toys, etc. Families in need make requests, and their request is placed as a leaf on the tree. Parents can select what they would like to donate by taking a leaf off of the tree, and items are wrapped and distributed.

Amber then thanked the Fall Fest volunteers and participants, including Courtney Holmes and Sarah Bohl. An additional mention of thanks was given to the parents that participated in the Halloween class celebrations, as well as to Linley Mancilla for managing the hospitality aspect. If there are any comments or suggestions about the parties, please speak to Amber or Linley.

Amber also gave an update on the sibling preference issue. She explained that James Lander is the CIS liaison to the school board. At last school year's June PTA meeting, there was a discussion on CIS policy. A vote was taken and the board decided that they would send a letter to the school board advocating for sibling priority. The school board received the letter, and there has been some discussion from parents about that issue. James Lander is holding open office hours this coming Monday and will be discussing the issue with fellow Claremont parents. You can contact the school board in writing or via email individually about this issue.

VP Fundraising – Melissa Schwaber

Spiritwear is in full swing, as CIS is starting 'Spiritwear Fridays.' Friday is the deadline for all orders. Orders are trickling in, and those that have ordered should receive those items before Thanksgiving.

School photos should be out by Thursday and in backpacks by next Tuesday. Re-take day is scheduled, but can be pushed back if the photos are not distributed on time.

Melissa asked everyone to please continue to donate books to the Arlington bookshelf. If parents would like to re-donate the books, you can bring them back to the CIS bookshelf. Volunteers are always welcome.

A question was asked about how the students are using the bookshelf. Teachers bring the kids during different times of the day to utilize the shelf. Jessica mentioned that they could do another school wide communication about it. No religious books or books that are torn can be accepted.

VP of educational and Green Initiatives: Susie Wallin

Two weeks ago, the PTA delivered funds to majority of the teachers at CIS via a \$2700 budget allocation, to provide some cash to teachers as a thank you. Full time teachers received \$40 and part-time received a pro-rated amount. Many teachers joined the PTA, and were very appreciative of the distribution. Susie also mentioned that the Green Kids club will be starting its meetings soon.

Treasurer: Beth Addington

The PTA is in the process of uploading the monthly treasurer reports. They show the beginning and ending balances, expenses, etc. For example, for October the Fall Fun Fest currently shows \$318 more income than expenses. Other expenses were for the teachers' fund.

The PTA's taxes are due on November 15th, and Caroline Butler has drafted them. The Executive Board has approved that those be sent on to the IRS. In addition, the past two years of audit materials will be sent on VA PTA.

We have received a tax bill from IRS for 2013 filings. An unintended misfiling caused this, and that came with a penalty. The PTA received two notices and sent in two of the required documents, but the IRS still asked that the penalty be paid. In order to stop the accrual of interest, the PTA sent in the funds. Now the PTA will be getting legal and tax advice in order to send in a correct response and get the penalty refunded.

The Hoffman-Boston PTA has been in the news recently regarding some alleged discrepancies with their Executive Board's management of their budget. The CIS PTA wants to be financially transparent with the school community, and invites any parent to come and review the books. The PTA will also post the monthly reports to the school website.

Beth then reported that the PTA currently has more than \$40K in funds in the bank, and that at the present time we have \$9500 in available funds to spend for the PTA.

Melissa Schwaber: South Arlington Working Group (SAWG) update

Melissa gave a brief update on the SAWG open forum that she attended. The group is recommending that the new elementary school be built on the TJ site, and that Patrick

Henry students move over to that site. Montessori would then move over to Patrick Henry. A third immersion school is in discussion as well.

The next step is to finish writing the proposal, and put it in front of the board before Thanksgiving. Because it is a recommendation in favor of the TJ site, the county board would have to vote on it.

Open Forum: Amber Dungan

Amber introduced the Peachjar project. CIS is one of five schools participating in a pilot program to move communications from a paper process to electronic one. Starting November 17th, parents will only receive flyers from the school, APS, the PTA, and outside groups electronically, unless they have requested to their child's teacher to receive them via paper. The PTA will be asking for feedback at some point later in the process. We can continue after the pilot program has ended, and at this point the PTA and CIS would like to. Through Peachjar, you can sign up for things directly via the links in the electronic flyers.

A question was raised about whether backpack mail for class parties will exist after Peachjar. The answer is that it will for some families that want paper copies. The CIS goal is that everyone has the information coming from the school. Right now, teachers gave a list to Nadia Vasquez of the families that requested to continue receiving paper copies, and she makes the copies for those families. They are hoping in the future to help families feel comfortable enough to use just Peachjar. An FAQ document will be sent home shortly.

A comment was made regarding previous messaging from the school that parents should distribute party-related information in English and Spanish for homeroom parties, as these copies can be costly. Amber explained that in the future, a paper copy will be sent home for only those parents that requested paper copies. Parents can ask the office how many are needed, and parents can photo copy at CIS for free.

Another attendee commented that the Peachjar info is hard to read via the phone- an application to assist with this would be helpful.

A question was asked as to whether Peachjar differentiates between grade levels. The parent explained that they are getting an overwhelming amount of information and much of it is for other grades, and not applicable to their child. The comment also stated that some parents might not be receiving the messaging because they are feel overwhelmed by all of the communications, and tuning out the messaging. Amber explained parents can change the settings for Peachjar so that they receive the messages about the flyers less frequently.

Another attendee asked a question about adding additional email addresses to the distribution and about the process for including extra flyers. Email addresses can be updated via ParentVue, and additional email addresses entered there will be included in Peachjar. Other flyers from outside non-profit organizations must go through APS community relations. SEPTA related flyers go through the CIS PTA. CIS will still need to make special considerations, because we are piloting the process. Often there will be multiple uploads of flyers because some of those are coming from APS.

A question was asked as to whether the information could be funneled back to the CIS website, making the website will be more useful. Someone else recommended that they be layers of information from different senders or grade levels. Another attendee commented that the specific class level information be sent via the principle's messaging, or via APS school talk. They suggested that removing the marketing flyers would reduce the volume of flyers. Amber explained that is not possible because businesses pay to have those flyers included and that is how Peachjar is funded.

Principal's Update: Jessica Panfil

Jessica began by re-capping Bike and Walk to school day. It occurs in the Fall and Spring. They recorded the number of cars that came to school for the first occurrence this year, and want to try to lower it in the spring. It was recently also Hispanic Heritage Day. A poet joined from Puerto Rico. The Halloween parades then took place- they are a lot of fun, and they had the Wakefield band present. This year's band is the largest band ever, and they have a new band director. 'Spritwear Fridays' will start this coming Friday, and information on all of the dress-up days goes on the school calendar.

There was recently a professional learning day at CIS- the teachers were at school thinking a lot about instruction. Every year the school sets goals- last year those goals were met, and CIS wants to do that again this year.

We are heading into the second quarter. During the month of November, there is only one week with a full five days of school. Some grades will be going swimming, and CIS will be passing out I pads for third graders. Family day is also approaching, and CIS will send home information about it, which will occur during assembly time.

Linley asked if there was any feedback on the classroom parties. The comments received so far were positive regarding the request for healthy food, and teachers were appreciative.

There was some discussion about parents that want to have special treats for their child's class after the party occurs. There was a feeling from some parents that this was not allowed. Jessica and Amber explained that this was not the intention of standardizing the parties. The ultimate goal behind the change to the class parties was to have a level of consistency within the classrooms. Previous years showed that some

classes had great parties with an abundance of treats and activities, and others had very little. Parents can contact the grade level PTA parent about arranging for a special treat. The planning was very compressed, so there was additional discussion about improving the communications. This is a new process, so there will be some working through of the planning and communications in the year ahead. Lilly took on an action item to set up a meeting about the upcoming winter celebrations with parents.