

Claremont Immersion School
PTA General Membership Meeting
April 5, 2016

PTA President Introduction– Amber Dungan

Amber began the meeting by reminding everyone to take the Enrichment survey.

The first week in May is Teacher Appreciation Week. One of the events that week is Fiesta Friday (held on May 6th). All of the teachers go to library for a catered meal. Parents are needed to fill in for the teachers in their classrooms. Jessica decided that classes will stay in classrooms instead of going to the playground. While there is a history of bringing them outside, it had been hard to bring them back inside. Teachers will have to leave a mini lesson plan for the volunteers, and the kids will not attend specials. There will also be a day when kids are asked to bring a flower or a note for teachers.

Nominations for next year's PTA executive board are coming up. Susie Wallin will present the slate of nominees. If anyone wants to nominate someone else (that is present), they can. At the next meeting, those present will vote. If there is more than one candidate, then there will be a separate vote. Also, if additional nominees are proposed, they can be made in between this meeting and the next. Or, they can be nominated at next week's meeting.

Susie Wallin then read the list of next year's candidates and nominees:

President- Jorge Figueredo (currently serving as President-elect).

President-elect: Melissa Schwaber.

Treasurer: Beth Addington

Membership: Lyzbeth Monard

Communications: Marjorie Araya

Social- Melania Saraniero

Education and Green Initiatives- Amy Oldham

Secretary- Maggie Colston

Fundraising- Still searching, but temporarily Amber Dungan.

Susie then discussed the ongoing need for committee chairs. One of these is the room parent hospitality liaison- Lily has done that for some time. Susie will compile some of the open chair positions and distribute them.

VP Fundraising – Melissa Schwaber

Melissa began by discussing the upcoming auction, which Amber is co-chairing. It will be a hybrid auction, which will look different on the computer. Bids can be placed all week long, and the system will send the bidder a text alert if you've been outbid.

Parents can also come to the social event this Saturday, where they can bid on auction items as well. The event is more of a social one, and bidding will not be pushed too hard given the success of the Read-a-thon. Tickets are \$10 for a single attendee, or \$15 for a couple. The cost includes heavy hors d'oeuvres and snacks for kids, catered by Hard Times Café. Melissa asked that parents please register children for babysitting. There are four extended day staff scheduled right now, and they can extend that up to five. Children that participate need to be over three years old and potty trained. The drop-off starts at 6:30 PM, and pick-up ends at 9:30 PM. The childcare is located at the school, and the auction itself is at the Fairlington Community Center.

Almost all of the students' classrooms have an item you can buy. They are teacher experiences, for example you can make an apron, draw with a teacher, etc. Since the teachers have donated their time for these events, please make an effort to bid on these. Amber mentioned that two years ago, her child was 'principle for the day,' and really enjoyed it.

Melissa and Amber then began the discussion about CIS's significant financial needs. The Read-a-thon was very successful, grossing \$37K (\$28K net, after costs). We will discuss and decide how to spend these funds within the next two meetings.

Principal's Update: Jessica Panfil

Jessica thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She explained how important it was to discuss how to effectively use our resources, and asked that we get to know each other as well. She then began to explain some of the resources and programs that CIS receives. One example is the FACE Grant, which supports family and community engagement.

She then discussed some of the recent and upcoming events. One was SPARK, which some parents were able to join, and at which 40 artists are honored and have their art shown. There was also a great 2nd grade musical. In April, the Lean, Green, No Screen Week event is held. Parents will receive a flyer for child to pledge no screen time for a week. On Garden Day, 10 winners will be drawn for a gift card to Barnes and Noble. There will also be an Academic Achievement Breakfast held for grades 3rd through 5th. Families can attend as well. Later in April, the Spring Book Fair is held, as well as the Dia Del Idioma full assembly on April 22nd. Following this is museum night, when the school is turned into a museum of what the students do every day. Parents are not only encouraged to go to their classrooms, but to go to the next grade level.

Jessica then began the discussion of the school's top needs. She explained that she first took this subject to the staff and asked them what they could purchase more of if they could. She also explained what Title 1 funding is- it is funding that goes to schools that support children in need. 40% or more of a school's student body needs to self-identify as being eligible (based on income) in order for a school to receive the benefit. CIS currently has 37.5% of its student body identified. Therefore, CIS is not eligible for Title 1 funding, even though we know we closely serve a community that needs those services. CIS feels it is their obligation to have to resources available to this community. With Title 1 funding, CIS could buy additional instructional resources and provide additional professional development. One of things she explained that she appreciates is the way the CIS community gives back- examples are the Giving Tree project and the Arlington Bookshelf. But, CIS still has significant needs. This year, for first time, CIS had

an English Language Arts consultant visit. They highly recommended that we have more books in the classroom, which would be a three to five year effort. The challenge lies in the purchase of Spanish books- they're more expensive and harder to find. Staff said the same in multiple ways- that the schools major need is about books, particularly books in Spanish.

Other needs include professional development for teachers, so that we invest in our teachers. This means conducting training such as teaching teachers to develop reading in certain ways, and having a consultant come to CIS to work with the school specifically. A question was raised as to whether CIS is given anything by the county for teacher development. Jessica explained that the amount is very low- under \$2000. In the past, teachers have gone to responsive teacher training, but this means that teachers need to be willing to go on their own time and cover their own travel costs. Having someone work at school with the teachers is much more expensive. For example, another school has been working with a consultant and it is \$22K-25K a year.

Another question was raised as to whether these trainings could be shared with the Special Education PTA (SEPTA) community so that they could benefit. They also may be able to find a way to get the training at a lower cost. Jessica explained that APS does support professional development, and they have sent people to SEPTA focused training.

There is also the need to focus on the outdoor space. The construction had a huge impact on the outdoor space, and there is only one standing tree remaining from the construction. The school raised some money from the Corredores, and is investing in picnic tables so that it is more of a seating area. The outdoor classroom is also used and could use an investment in its upkeep.

Another professional development related question was raised, regarding whether there were anything parents could offer, for example, skills they had that they could teach. Jessica explained that the teaching staff has two days during the month that are staff meetings and which run after school. They can offer courses on those days, and teachers that can attend can, and can then offer that expertise to others. They have done things like this in the past with subjects such as conscious discipline, writing, etc. This would be a great way for parents to be involved.

An attendee asked how much of the funding from the Read-A-Thon would be needed to support books. The answer is approximately \$5K per classroom would support three to five years of books. CIS will also willingly take books from those that visit other countries. Another attendee asked if it would be possible for the teachers to create an Amazon wish list by classroom- teachers could set up a list of their preferred donations.

Jessica then explained that APS recently went through a two year process to adopt a new language arts program. With a new language arts program comes a selection of books that accompanies it. Best practices in this area say that students need choice and also need to be held accountable for their reading. CIS has materials from 10 years ago from when they adopted the current APS reading program, but have not updated those books since then. Another option would be to get an allocation for instructional resources every year that allows them to purchase the guided readers. The issue is that APS gives CIS the same amount of funding that it does all other single language schools. Last year, CIS bought \$5000 of just

Spanish guided reading books, but they also need choice books. The need is mostly choice books in English and Spanish, as well as guided reading books in Spanish. CIS also pays for the Raz Kids subscription because they offer Spanish reading resources.

Melissa then discussed the Read-A-Thon itself, how it worked, and its surprising and great success. Out of the approximately \$38K that was grossed, CIS will receive 75%. 15% goes to reader prizes, and 3% goes to credit card fees. 7% goes to company that held the Read-A-Thon. The host company sent out all of the information for the school. Due to its great success, the PTA decided that they didn't need to do Artware, and could scale back the auction.

The decision now is to how to spend the funding this year, so that they can raise the funding for next year. Melissa described that she learned what other PTAs fund. For example, Tuckahoe Elementary spends \$25K on their grounds, and \$10K on professional development. CIS now has the opportunity to spend the same amount as Tuckahoe to improve the school.

There was then some discussion as to how to best communicate this funding decision. Some attendees suggested the need to spell it out and be very transparent about the funding that is needed at CIS. They can explain exactly how much is needed and maybe even escalate the issue to the school board. Another suggestion was that someone from facilities come to see the grounds.

Someone asked how many parents are involved at Tuckahoe and what their PTA's engagement is like. They stated that the CIS population is different and therefore hard to compare. Someone else said that they work in the DC public school system, and that the upper class make the decisions for that particular school. They do a good job in soliciting people to show up to PTA meetings. Another person asked why teachers are not more involved in the PTA. Maybe there are ways to make it more accessible- for some it is too hard to come at 7 pm. The commenter stated that the EB should think about some of the barriers to parent engagement in the school.

Another suggestion involved using technology better- possibly filming the meetings and posting them online. The discussion then turned toward PTA participation and engagement, and how to better communicate PTA matters to the school and encourage turnout. There was a suggestion that a special event be arranged, focused only on CIS monetary needs. Amber brought up the fact that technically you cannot vote on a matter if you are not a paying PTA member, but the CIS PTA has never enforced that. The group then discussed volunteers, and that the same group of people volunteer for everything-the PTA struggles with how to recruit new people. Someone brought up the National PTA School of Excellence program, which apparently addresses these sorts of issues, and might be something worth exploring.

Jessica explained that at the next PTA meeting, she provide concrete numbers, and we will vote on how we will spend the money. A parent asked if the PTA could send an email before the meeting announcing that it is going on. They suggested a Monday night reminder, and to maybe make the topic of discussion communicated. That is already done, but Jessica and Amber agreed to send another communication out on Mondays when possible.

Finally, Jessica reminded everyone that summer school is here and will be held at CIS. Parents have until early May to enroll their children.