

# PTC President's Meeting

November 23, 2009

## Minutes (Elementary School PTOs)

Nine elementary schools were represented by one or both of their PTO presidents (Hart, KT Murphy, Northeast, Rogers, Springdale, Stark, Stillmeadow, Toquam and Westover).

Look for the newly revised Parent-Teacher Council website to be up and running in the next few weeks ([StamfordPTCouncil.org](http://StamfordPTCouncil.org)).

### Information from Central Education Office (downtown)

There is a new Connecticut state law that requires all school volunteers to complete a form that will be checked against the state's sex offender list. **Building principals** are required to make sure every school volunteer is registered and their information cross checked – volunteers include **every adult** coming in to the building to work in a classroom or at a school event (i.e. reading tutors, media center helpers, bingo volunteers, party helpers, school stores, etc.) Once completed the volunteer is okay for the rest of this school year. As this is a new law, logistics are still being fine-tuned, but every principal has been advised, and has been given a form that can be modified to best reflect their individual school events.

In case you have been hearing of missing health forms, apparently students' completed health information was sent downtown first, and then returned to individual school nurses. Some of these forms have not found their way to their rightful places yet.

### Budgeting for activities

As expected, this is a challenging year for fundraising. One school reminded us to always ask about **corporate match** donations. Many organizations have this program and all parents should remember to check into it. Many families like to make flat donations instead of participating in fundraiser after fundraiser. A flyer going out advising that flat donations are always welcome (and check with your employer about corporate matching funds) is a good approach.

Many grants for non-profits are available – some are lengthy applications, others have only a few questions to complete. Just Google and see what might apply for your school. Try to get funds for programs that the school does every year (i.e. Nature's Classroom).

Donor's Choose is another on-line vehicle to secure funds. For example, a music teacher can put in a request for new instruments, and parents can contribute directly to that program.

The PT Council is looking into getting one movie license to cover all of our Stamford public schools. In this way individual schools would not have to foot this cost every year to comply with licensing regulations.

## Increasing Parent Involvement

PTOToday.com has many ideas on how to get more parents involved at schools. One idea is the 'Two Hour Power'. PTOs can send out a flyer at the beginning of the year saying that each parent should contribute just two hours of their time at the events of their choice during the school year. Try to get every parent to put in some volunteer time somewhere in the school.

Send out letter at the beginning of the school year with a 'menu' of fundraisers for the year. This lets folks know what to expect, and what they can volunteer to help out with, or contribute to.

To increase attendance at PTO meetings try to incorporate something in the meeting to attract more people – such as an everyday math presentation. Or, have the meeting just before another event so parents can attend two things the same evening.

Having a Family Fun Night? Include the PTO meeting within the "fun" evening. Make PTO announcements in between activities.

Welcome Back Breakfast can be combined with a volunteer fair and signup sheets.

Have your school's Parent Facilitator at all PTO meetings to translate. (Note: parent facilitators' hours have been decreased to ten hours at each school this year, due to budgeting. If you think this is a vital addition to your school you should advocate for an increase in next year's budget.)

Meet and Greet: Many schools have found that an informal get together in the playground in August before school begins is a great way to get the new parents to volunteer. Bring those signup sheets!

## Good Fundraisers

Krispy Kreme. Take advance orders. Parent volunteer drives to nearest Krispy Kreme and has orders back at your school for pick up between 7:30 to 10am. School that did this made \$600 this year!

Walk-a-thon or read-a-thon. Take sponsorships.

Half day movie afternoon. Sell popcorn and juice or water. Schools send out a behavior contract for students/parents to sign beforehand. Need parent volunteers to keep order and bring children to the bathroom. Parent pick up at end of event.

Fifth grade funds. Have the fifth graders responsible for running a bake sale at every school event during the year. The funds raised go towards their special end of year activities.

Most schools hold a big fundraiser every other year. Parent donations are heavily relied on. Raffles for baskets can be sold at every school event up to one month prior to actual auction evening. Parents who will not be at big fundraising event can still buy chances. Winning name is chosen at silent auction evening, but winner does not have to be present.

Holiday fairs are popular.

Novel idea: have a photographer (or talented parent!) come into the school and take candid photos of kids throughout the day. Waivers must be sent out before hand if parents do not want their children included. Choose around 12 photos with one child, or a small group. Match the photos up with school philosophies (responsibility, respect, etc.) Enlarge and frame – then auction off with intention that the photos are to be donated back to the school to be displayed on the walls. If there is more than one child in the photo it opens up the bidding because parents will bid against each other.

Work with a photographer – charge sitting fee of approximately \$35 which will come back to the PTO. Family arranges location and time slot directly with photographer.

Fun parent/child classes: hold two hour class to make holiday centerpiece, or birdhouse (for example). Charge money to cover materials and mark up and have florist or parent instruct class.

Roller skating at Old Greenwich rink.

#### Working with School Staff

Ideas for staff appreciation: Donate a vacation home, or large basket of items, or massage/spa time, etc. For \$1 you can buy chances for your teacher to win.

KT Murphy's PTO wrote a sweet poem that outlines an item for all students to bring in each day during staff appreciation. Monday – flower, Tuesday – piece of candy, Wednesday – fruit, Thursday – something, and Friday – homemade card. This way everyone can contribute for a nominal cost and the teachers make out big time!

Angel Fund: Parents donate something that a teacher could use. It is then put in a specific location at school for your staff to choose what they need.

#### Other Business

State Gaming License must be taken seriously. The IRS does visit schools to make sure the event complies with their license requests. For Bingo Nights the caller must be a registered bingo caller, all guidelines must be adhered to (entrance fees, prizes per game). There are two different permits – one for PTOs as a non-profit event, and one for true fundraisers.

By-laws: Every school should review their PTO by-laws. If outdated, perhaps they should be rewritten. The PT Council has a sample template (will be posted on website) with guidelines on what MUST be included, and suggestions on what CAN be included. Each school must create a document that creates the type of PTO they want in their individual school. Once voted on and approved, please send final copy to PT Council for their records.

We all agree that it is vital to get *The Advocate* to cover good school events, not just problems. Consensus is that the Stamford Public Schools need more positive reporting.

Dr. Starr stopped by to talk about the budget workshops he is giving this year. The SPS budget will be extremely difficult and the more knowledgeable parents there are who understand the various needs, the better. If interested in attending the two hour workshop please contact PT Council.

In general Dr. Starr recommends that each school have three designated parents to go to budget meetings – the Board of Education, Board of Finance and Board of Representatives will all have their own process. There should be one parent per school at each meeting – if there are three people to rotate this responsibility it won't be as daunting.

At this point the SPS budget is at bare bones. There is no place to cut other than teacher positions.

The PT Council will start mobilizing parents for the budget season at our January meeting. Stay tuned!