

Minutes
Burnley-Moran Elementary School PTO
September 13, 2011

I. PTO introductions, welcome

PTO co-chair Kristen Suokko called the meeting to order and welcomed returning and new parents/guardians. After briefly defining the PTO as a collaborative, non-hierarchical organization where everyone is welcome, Kristen stated that PTO meetings usually are organized around a particular theme and feature a guest speaker, with business matters left to the latter part of the meeting. The 9/13 meeting, however, the first meeting of the school year, was to be strictly a planning meeting, she said.

Kristen introduced the elected members of the PTO (co-chairs, treasurer, and secretary) and then yielded the floor to BME Principal Dawn LoCasale. Dr. L. thanked everyone for their support and welcome, expressed her excitement about the way things have started this year at BME, and stressed the importance of having everyone work together throughout the year.

Dr. L. gave a quick update on grants/donations: speech pathologist Amber Handon was awarded a "sensory grant" of \$5000; and teacher Kristen Meyer and parent Bonnie Gordon received a donation of \$10,000 for an after-school outreach program with the community at Westhaven (a public housing site).

Dr. L. also mentioned staff changes and said that despite recent changes, she and all faculty and staff are working to make sure the needs of all students are met.

Assistant Principal Juanita Eddy then introduced herself, said she was "blown away" by the community of parents and the family atmosphere at BME, and said she was excited and grateful to be at BME. She noted that she and Dr. L. have an "open door policy," and that parents/guardians should feel free to meet, call, and email if they have something they wish to discuss with them.

II. PTO Mission

PTO co-chair Dee Cogill explained that the PTO's mission goes beyond fundraising to include:

- 1) Supporting teachers and students by helping them achieve what they need to achieve and by helping ensure that all students have equal access to opportunities at and through BME.
Examples of PTO-sponsored initiatives: improved the teachers' lounge; supplied stipends for each grade level group; organized teacher appreciation lunches; supported class field trips primarily through funding buses; supplied books for students in the summer and during the winter holidays; funded enrichment activities like Kid Pan Alley, a songwriting workshop; funded a present-giving project over the holidays; contributed to the after-school program at Westhaven; successfully applied for a grant from Whole

Foods to fund the Fruit and Veggie Bar; organized other health and wellness programs such as the Walk to School days. (Dr. L. noted that the children love the Fruit and Veggie Bar.)

- 2) Acting as a community portal for the Charlottesville City Schools – the Central Office contacts the PTO when it wants to reach out to the parents of the BME community.

III. PTO Fundraising

To support PTO initiatives, fundraising activities are limited to three major pushes: 1) the Attractions guide, currently underway; 2) the cookie dough sale in the winter; 2) the flower bulb sale in the spring.

Kristen added that boxtops have also proved to be a good funding source for the PTO and asked that parents save and send in boxtops (there should be a collection box for these in every class).

Other sources of fundraising:

Grocery store cards – for more information about this parents can ask at Back to School night and/or can contact Nickie Schoolcraf

BME t-shirts, which should be available for sale by Back to School night.

Eating at Raising Cane's – the first Thursday of each month from 5pm-8pm. When you place your order say that you're there for BME, and a percentage goes to BME.

IV. Title I representative

The need for a Title I representative was described – that need has already been met by a volunteer.

V. PTO Budget

Kristen informed the group that the PTO budget is on a January to January calendar. Budget is on track, and they've raised about half of what they hoped to raise. Estimated expenses are on track. Budget will continue to be tweaked and evolve as needs present themselves. At the November PTO meeting there will be a discussion of how and if the PTO should expand or evolve in its mission and how budget might play a part in that.

VI. PTO Communication

- A. Newsletter – Lori Lawson coordinates the newsletter, which is distributed monthly in the communication folders that students bring home and also via PTO email and the official City of Charlottesville BME website (the PTO section of that site, <http://www.ccs.k12.va.us/schools/burnley/pto.html>)
- B. Two emails a month from the PTO co-chairs, one before each PTO

- meeting and one after. Also a reminder email with agenda before each meeting and occasional emails as needs present themselves.
- C. Facebook page – search in Facebook for BME and you should find it. This page can become a place where BME community can post articles of interest, share information, get ideas – the hope is that this page will become a well-used communication tool for the BME community.
 - D. The BME PTO email address is: burnleymoranpto@gmail.com, and Kristen and Dee urged parents to contact them with concerns, questions, etc. They also mentioned that if email isn't convenient, you can also leave comments/information for them at the PTO mailbox at the front desk. They encouraged people to also check the PTO bulletin board in the hallway just before the main entrance to the library.

VII. PTO Current Activity: What's happening and how to get involved

- A. Kristen explained that there are several ways to volunteer to help BME via the PTO, and noted that if people didn't feel able to sign up for something that night, they could always contact Melanie Miller, volunteer coordinator, or Dr. L. or the PTO co-chairs.

Events needing volunteers include:

- 1) Back to School Night (calendar event), September 20 -- A couple of people are needed to help set up the potluck, to sell t-shirts during the event, and to put things in order after the event.
- 2) Fruit and Veggie Bar (ongoing event) -- Kate Bennis asked for volunteers to help with the Fruit and Veggie Bar, which is available for students in grades 2-4 on T, W, and Th. One parent is needed for 1 hour and 15 minutes to help set up, monitor, and clean up the salad bar. Kate described how gratifying her Fruit and Veggie volunteer experience has been and urged parents to consider helping with this effort.
- 3) Walk to School Days (ongoing event) – The first Friday of every month students and their caregivers are urged to walk to school and to head to the track in the back of school to do a few laps before school starts (bus and car riders are encouraged to head to the track too). Volunteers are needed to stand by the track greeting students (at around 8:05am) and making sure they get into school on time (by 8:25). Parent volunteers might also help get reminders to students on the Thursday before the Walk to School Fridays.
- 4) Teacher Appreciation Lunches (ongoing event) – Volunteers are needed to help supply food for these lunches. Stephanie Bolton coordinates these events.
- 5) Sock Hop, November 11 (calendar event) – volunteers are needed to help organize the concert (which takes place in the auditorium) and the refreshment part (takes place in the cafeteria) of this fun, annual event. Also needed is help with the class-basket raffle – each grade level puts together a basket based on a theme, with parents and

teachers donating creative items for the basket. This volunteer gig requires a good amount of effort and organization.

6) Holiday help (not on the calendar but a one or two-time event) --- volunteers are needed to help with the Toy Lift (organizing and wrapping presents) and with Thanksgiving gift cards and outreach.

7) Kid Pan Alley (annual event, February) – this songwriting and performance workshop, run by two local songwriter/performers benefits from the help of volunteers who work in the classroom transcribing students' song lyrics and photographing/documenting the workshop itself. Volunteers are also needed the night of the performance.

8) Spring Fling (calendar event) – Kristen said that this was a labor-intensive volunteer gig but an important one. Spring Fling is a fun outdoor event that offers various booths and games, as well as refreshments and raffles, all coordinated and manned by volunteers.

9) Fundraisers (ongoing) Regarding the three main PTO fundraisers -- the Attractions guide, the cookie dough sale, and the spring bulb sale - - Darah Coyte stressed that parents/guardians should NOT feel pressured to do participate in all of these efforts. She suggested that families pick one that seems to work for them – and if none of the three efforts appeals, then parents/guardians can always “stroke a check” made out to the BME PTO, and can be assured that the donation will be appreciated and put to good use.

10) Outreach (ongoing) – Bonnie Gordon said that volunteers are needed to help with programs that take place in the public housing communities where many BME students live. Helping after school, around the holidays (Thanksgiving dinner), and at other times during the year – Bonnie Gordon and Kristin Meyer can give interested potential volunteers more detailed information about outreach needs. Kristen also noted that in general at BME, parents/guardians with language skills are needed to help families for whom English is not a first language.

Kristen and Dee pointed out that each of these event/activity committees has a chair, someone leading the effort, so the volunteers who do step forward don't have to worry about leading the whole thing. As a side note, Dr. L. said that she hoped students could get more involved in the planning and execution of some of these events, perhaps with students taking photographs or even writing articles for a BME newspaper, should a volunteer want to help coordinate such an effort.

B. Upcoming events of interest – no volunteering! Just attending.

1) The UVA Marching Band will dedicate its evening practice to BME and invites BME community members to attend practice (bring a picnic, enjoy the music) from 6:15-7:30pm at the field on the

corner of Emmet and University (parking available at Culbreth).

- 2) Pastries for Parents (ongoing, dates TBA) – this is a monthly informal gathering for parents, an opportunity to share coffee and a pastry in the morning after drop-off. Details TBA.

C. BME After-school clubs

Mary Esselman described an effort to revive BME’s after-school clubs program, for students in grades 2-4, to be held after school from 3pm to 4:30pm, with buses available at 4:30 to take students home.

Clubs could be offered on anything of interest to the parent/guardian volunteers who would be willing to lead them. Some ideas include drama, cards, walking, nature, dance, Legos, chess, technology, yoga, gardening, cooking, QuickStart Tennis, art, and music. We are open to suggestions! BME would provide materials for the club (to the extent that it could), and club size would be limited to a manageable number of no more than 12 students per club. Students would sign up for their top three choices of clubs, and organizers would do their best to place students in a club of their choice.

The time commitment for a volunteer club leader would be once a week from 3pm-4:30pm for approximately six weeks. We would plan to start the clubs in early October and end them in late November.

Those interested in leading a club should notify Mary by Tuesday, September 20th via email at messelman@embarqmail.com or (hard copy to Mary’s attention) via the PTO mailbox in the front office. Please give your name and contact info, the name of the proposed club and a brief description, list of materials needed, proposed class limits, and any other concerns or suggestions regarding after-school clubs.

VIII. PTO Upcoming Meeting Topics

Next meeting is 10/18.

Kristen asked if attendees had particular topics in mind for future PTO meetings and mentioned that testing was a topic of interest. A suggestion was made to discuss the City School Board, how it works, what the upcoming election is all about, what the candidates have to share with the BME community. Another suggested topic was technology and how it works in the schools, the debate about its usefulness. A parent noted that a new math program is in place for Cville City schools and said that a Math Night might be helpful, to get parents up to speed on what the new math curriculum is all about. Dr. L. said that she would like to devote a meeting to discussing how teachers and administrators choose to place students in their assigned classes – she wants families to know more about the careful process they undertake in placing students each year.

IX. PTO Thanks and See You Later

Kristen and Dee thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting; attendees signed up for committees/activities, and the last Pepperidge Farm cookies were gobbled up as people headed out the door.