

# Mesa Elementary School PTO General Meeting Notes

## November 4, 2022, 8:30am

### Attendees

Rosanna Koren, Shayna Linn, Pete Minor, Meredith Gartner, Vanessa Gerhards, Christine Chen, Adi Diner, Susan Traube, Leah Winski, Kirsten Glennon, Megan Monroe, Carrie Simpson, Anna Abboud, Megan Maguire, Paige Leonard, Sunny van der Star, Jill Walter, April Busch (teacher representative), Josh Baldner

### Introductions

- Went around the room and did introductions (where did you grow up)

### Carrie's welcome

- Board Minutes
  - Carrie explained how & why we are supposed to approve the minutes
    - Minutes get reviewed by board first, then sent to Tuesday listserve and finally approved at the next PTO meeting
  - Carrie said we needed to approve September and October minutes
  - Anna made a motion to pass September and October minutes
  - Carrie seconded
  - Susan Traube abstained as she explained she hadn't read them, everyone else voted in favor of passing
- Thrives
  - Carrie announced Mesa had 89% participation for Thrives
    - Mr. Kellogg's classroom had 100% percent
  - Carrie also noted lots of classes had very high rates of participation
  - Carrie thanked Leah and Pete once again, said if anyone had thoughts/comments to please share them at any time
- Halloween
  - Carrie thanked everyone for Halloween, room parents and all the parents, felt like a great celebration of everyone coming together
  - April Busch said it was the best Halloween parade we've ever had

### Holiday Giving

- April Busch explained that she's the coordinator for adopt-a-family at holiday time and this year raising money/collecting holiday decorations for the four fire families
  - April noted she received their approval
- April explained this is not for Mesa parents to participate in, it will not be going in the Tuesday listserve, it's from the staff to these families
- April said they would like to request \$75-\$100 per family from the PTO for the families to use towards a tree, whether it be real or artificial
- Anna ran through the financials and explained that we have the money to cover all our costs and then some based on money we have in the bank and money that we are due to receive

- Carrie made a motion to move \$400 from the PTO to the holiday adopt-a-family
- Sunny seconded motion
- It was unanimous

### Principal's Report

- Josh spoke about being a welcoming school
- Josh switched to Thrives: he was talking to Tanner (Bear Creek principal) and they were saying that some schools that are not as affluent and cannot do direct ask, later get nickel & dined by all the other fundraisers - so he's very grateful for Thrives and out community
- He thanked Leah for the Mr. Andy gofundme, and was grateful for how quickly our community filled it
- Also mentioned how attendance at the PTO meeting is also a celebration, we have a large network of people who are helping Mesa
- He said we live our vision as a welcoming school, daily we think through that lens with DEI community, FET, etc; he really likes how everyone lives that principle
- He took a break and opened the floor to other topics
  - Susan mentioned she was part of SAC (school accountability committee) and wanted to talk about spending priorities for district; she was surprised social/emotional development wasn't on there
  - In response Josh mentioned a few things
    - that previously we didn't have a counselor, but now we do have someone, so it's getting better but it's not enough
    - He explained the state budget formula: taxpayer bill of rights when there is extra money goes back to taxpayers, can't give that extra money to various budgets (schools, transportation). It's a rigid system, so it's difficult to increase funding to schools
- Josh segued to finances specific to BVSD
  - He mentioned that BVSD has the highest property tax payer base, which means the state doesn't have to kick in much money for school budget.
  - Boulder Valley has had luxury of getting big bond issues passed
    - That we'll see how next weeks vote turns out for the latest BVSD bond
- Josh continued onto enrollment, which affects school funding too
  - He is in a committee that looks at enrollment trends
  - State of CO enrollment trend is basically flat
  - 7 out of Colorado's 10 largest school districts are losing enrollment
    - BVSD is losing enrollment at 6% per year
  - Compared to other schools, Mesa does pretty well in open enrollment, not in actual numbers but as a percent
  - We take transfers in from other schools, we don't see transfer outs often
    - Mesa does a good job of retaining kids, although not perfect
  - Roughly 90 students get to choose between Mesa & Bear Creek

- Various factors play into decision, and not all factors have to do with the actual school, ie where are my neighbors going? Josh has tried to figure out why people make the choice they do
  - Historically of the dual enrollment families, 60-65% go to Bear Creek, 35-40% go to Mesa
    - If those numbers would flip, it would help both schools. Bear Creek gets two big classes each grade because it does not get enough students to get to 3 sections, meanwhile Mesa is scrambling to get two classes per grade
- Since enrollment in BVSD as a whole is dropping, all the schools are fighting for a limited number of kids, it's a free for all
- Shayna asked if we could host dual events with Bear Creek so that the families can get inside both schools, have events for current students but also perspective students. Her feeling is that once you are inside Mesa, you will choose it
- Christine wanted to know if the 65/35 was consistent? Can we do preschool outreach? Carrie said that it is already being set up
- Pete asked if we have a one pager of talking points for promoting Mesa
  - Paige said we need to update talking points, and having a bigger presence of parents at the tours/enrollment nights, get more welcoming parent faces at those nights
- Susan suggested doing a kindergarten transition night hosted by teacher/expert, the more you can get people in the door the better
- Rosanna suggested to write reviews on GreatSchools
  - Carrie mentioned that we are already looking into Greatschools
  - Josh said he already saw some recent posts and thanked people for writing them
- Shayna pointed out they chose Mesa because of the smaller classes
- Sunny asked if there is going to be a preschool here?
  - Josh said the state approved universal preschool, now school districts are waiting for state to give their plan
  - BVSD is working on it, won't have plan until Jan at least. Josh thinks Mesa will have it, but nothing is definite
- Megan Monroe is in Bear Creek neighborhood now; mentioned she didn't realize how early open enrollment started
  - Said people with only preschoolers don't know how early enrollment starts, she suggested yard signs saying it's enrollment time
- Someone suggesting inviting all families to coffee cart, it's about community
- Adi, a happy parent can get their kid happy about school, continues theme with community
- Josh says when he's asked about Bear Creek versus Mesa, there's a self fulfilling prophecy

- Mesa has the image of being the community school, social/emotional school and Josh leaned into that, that's how we've branded ourselves; we care about the whole child and we have really good test scores.
- Bear Creek was a focus school for math/science 15-20 years ago, still has reputation it's the academic/high achieving school, they always do a little bit better on state tests/state metrics than Mesa, most people choose Bear Creek for academics. Tanner has to keep saying we do care about community and the whole student
- Everyone in the room (and all parents) are the brand of Mesa
- Carrie told Josh how his leadership is a key element for how this school feels safe and connected

### DEI Report

- Anyone interested in DEI can come to the next meeting, December 1, 3pm, school library
- Christine Chen gave a detailed description of the DEI
- General information
  - Diversity, equity, inclusion in all the facets
  - DEI committee set up 3 years ago, amazing to see how it's grown
  - Not just for parents, staff too are encourage to attend
  - DEI does not only focus on kids, but parents/caregivers, community, staff
  - Christine Chen & Sarah Thomas are the co-chairs
  - Next Meeting is Thursday, December 1, immediately after school
    - Christine emphasized that everyone is welcome, even if you can't make every meeting
- Consultants/speakers/programs
  - Brought in consultant first year for staff professional development - race, gender diversity
  - Had some guest speakers over zoom
  - Have had book clubs in the past - for parents and for kids
  - Brought in YMCA reading to end racism last year (RER)
    - RER was a parent led initiative, now a staff led initiative
  - They aim to have two speakers a year
    - Have invited BVSD youth equity council to speak this fall
      - Will have high school students from youth equity council speak to parents about their experiences
      - Students can share what has worked well, when have they felt marginalized, etc
    - In spring hoping to bring in a speaker to talk about neurodiversity
- Current initiatives
  - Parent volunteer is building a buddy bench
  - Have materials for a little library, DEI focused
- There are also district led councils too, various DEI focuses (Equity Council, Parents of Color Council, new BVSD hiring for equity)

- Working on creating bias protocols; how school can handle it when bias situations arise
  - Work is going on at the district level
- At the state level, Mesa has been a founding school in the NAACP DEI collaboration
  - DEI committees from BVSD and St Vrain come together and share ideas
- Per Christine, next week the state government is having a discussion about standards around social science teaching, would place restrictions LGBTQ, race, culture
  - Some people at state level trying to restrict conversations about diversity/inclusion
  - Josh spoke neutrally about other states changing their standards recently; the changes include list of things you don't talk about versus the idea of teaching kids about everything
- Josh said Mesa aspires to have a theme each month, then to have every teacher talk about the theme, with the themes covering all aspects of diversity
  - September's theme was neurodiversity, October's theme was bullying
- Information about DEI activities, meetings etc
  - Paige asked where DEI information lives. Christine explained it is currently in Google docs
    - Carrie suggested having a DEI corner on the PTO site
- Multicultural Event
  - Carrie mentioned that we want to plant the seed of a multicultural event;
    - Possibly in the evening, in the spring, with CUBS, FET, DEI, PTO, to get a lot of voices
  - PTO/DEI want to get a planning committee together, if you're interested we will get info out there for you sign up

### Final Updates

- As we were pressed for time, Carrie said we will communicate the other items from the agenda to everyone (Check the listserv and [PTO website!](#))
- Leah made a plea for yearbook help
- The yearbook deadline is typically March
- This is Leah's last year, would be great to have someone help and shadow Leah this year