

**New Hope-Solebury Elementary School
Home and School Association
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 29, 2009**

Call to order:

President Beth Keating called to order the regular meeting of the New Hope-Solebury Elementary School Home and School Association on Tuesday, September 29th at 9:37 a.m.

Roll Call

The following persons signed in as present: Liz Kistler, Mary Dupont, Erika Peterson, Paula Saxton, Jennifer Primavera, Marlene Panzica, Tracy Keyes, Susan Atkinson, Michelle Summerson, Joanne Reszka, Mary [not sure of last name], Brenda Taylor, Denise Kruse, Amishi Castelli, Donna Peiffer-Both. President Beth Keating, LES VP Donna Zakweski and Secretary Ann Leveille were also present.

Introductions

President Keating gave a short introduction, and introduced the 2009-2010 HSA Executive Board.

Approval of June Minutes.

There were no June minutes to approve.

Principal's Reports

President Keating shared that UES Principal Amy Mangano and LES Principal Ken Silver intended to be at the meeting.

Calendar

It was announced that there is no full calendar for the year yet. There was a list of 2009 – 2010 events and all known dates as a handout at the meeting. President Keating stated that more events would be added. She also noted that all positions that still need to be filled are listed on the sheet.

Informative

The next HSA meeting will be held, as now scheduled, on October 27th. The meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of each month. All will be held during the daytime. President Keating did share that there was some discussion about keeping night meetings, but it was decided that due to low attendance, meetings would be scheduled during the day. Meetings will be supplemented with President Keating's monthly newsletter and more regular website updates. President Keating expressed her belief in the importance of communication, and said that if anyone is dissatisfied with the communication of the HSA, or hears complaints about lack of communication, to please contact her.

Newcomers

President Keating thanked Michelle Summerson for running the Newcomers reception. There was a great turn-out, and the presentation was well-received.

Back to School Night

All three Back to School Nights were very successful. We got lots of volunteer sign-ups. President Keating said that all chairs should contact her to obtain the volunteer sign-up sheets for their committee and/or event.

LES VP Juli Vogelsang

President Keating shared that Juli Vogelsang resigned her position as LES VP last week. She got a new job, and needs to devote her time to that. She still intends to be involved with HSA when possible. President Keating thanked her for all her work with HSA.

Survey

President Keating turned her attention to last year's surveys. She praised Joanne Reska for arranging the survey, and noted that there was a lot of participation. Changes have been made based on the results of the survey. Events were ranked by parents/guardians. The most popular event was the Holiday Shoppe, which came in equal to the ultra-popular assembly and Artist in Residence programs. There was a comment that, though the Shoppe is currently only at the LES, the survey was sent to both LES and UES parents/guardians, and there were many comments requesting that the Holiday Shoppe be brought to the UES. Survey respondents didn't like Yankee Candle. Some programs were equally liked and disliked, particularly KidStuff and Sally Foster. President Keating mentioned that there was serious discussion about dropping Kidstuff, but it was brought back because parents/guardians were begging for it. We will discuss Sally Foster further later in the year.

Elimination of Donation

Attendees were reminded that some fundraisers have been eliminated for this year: Market Day, Sally Foster, Yankee Candle. It was noted that Market Day is still available through the Middle School and High School.

President Keating acknowledged that Sally Foster made a significant amount of money, around \$7000, so replacing it with fundraisers is something of a concern. President Keating further revealed that the Yankee Candle fundraiser raised \$3000. It was noted that at the time of the meeting around \$2000 had already been raised in donations. It was also noted that there had only been positive responses to the donation system.

Communications

President Keating told attendees that one of her primary commitments was to better communication with parents, to make their interaction with the Home School Association more personal. To that end, a new position was established for the 2009/2010 school year. Information will be updated on the website. Erica Peterson is stepping up to update the website. The plan is to get forms, the newsletter, and more up on the website.

UES Board

Donna, who does the UES Communication Board, asked what was to be put on the communication board this year. The consensus was that the UES board is cute as it is, but Donna should speak with the UES VPs and UES Principal Mangano about any changes or new direction. Donna asked everyone to email her if there was something they wanted incorporated into the Communication Board. Colleen has stepped up to do the LES Communication Board, which is smaller, and in the office, so more of a place to put papers and information for parents. There was discussion that the 3D nature of the UES Communication Board got kids talking and may reach parents in that way, too.

LES Recess

President Keating reminded attendees that the only recess duty that the HSA is participating in now is at the LES. The program is being coordinated again this year by Paula Saxton. LES Principal Silver asked the HSA/Paula to remind parent volunteers that all paperwork must be in by the end of October. Full clearances will earn a special lanyard. Paula reminded attendees that the HSA has nothing to do with clearances, that all questions or comments about clearances must be referred to the individual Principals. Forms are available on the NHS website.

There was some discussion about clearances. There was a note that if you had your clearances done for another reason, they were only good for six months for the school's use. There was a comment that the clearances are only necessary for recess volunteers. There was some discussion about who else would need clearances – unnecessary for substitute volunteers, etc. There is no favoritism for clearances.

President Keating reminded all attendees that the point of the clearances is to protect the children, and that the HSA meeting isn't the appropriate place for discussion. She reminded attendees to direct all questions or comments to the school principals.

Paula closed the discussion by reminding attendees that the schedule is okay, but volunteers are always welcome.

UES Principal Entrance

President Keating took a moment to introduce UES Principal Amy Mangano to all attendees.

Yearbook

It was announced that this year the HSA will only be responsible for the LES yearbook – the UES will be running their own yearbook. Susan Atkinson will be taking the program over at the LES. It was revealed that the company used for the program will probably change. The new program is the one that the Middle School and High School use, and it not only looks good, but they offer a good price.

Family Fun Playground Day

HSA has been working with LES counselor Pam Lang, who feels that the Peaceful Playground, while a great program, isn't being fully utilized. Her idea is to have a family fun playground day, on a weekend day, where families will come and learn the rules and specifics of Peaceful Playground. Leslie will be in charge, and if you want to volunteer please contact her.

Holiday Shoppe

President Keating announced that this year there is a possibility of a Holiday Shoppe being offered at the UES, in part because the HSA survey results. It was commented that we don't have a chair for this event yet, though there is a lot of interest.

There were caveats:

The Shoppe cannot be held during school hours -- instructional time may not be used for such a reason. The tentative idea is to hold the Shoppe during Parent Teacher Conferences, with the Book Fair. It was suggested that instead of having it at the same time as the LES Shoppe (around the winter holidays), perhaps instead having a Father's Day/Mother's Day or Spring Shoppe.

The Shoppe must be inclusive -- whatever company supplies the Shoppe must be inclusive of all celebrations. (If around winter holidays.) There cannot be discomfort for those kids who celebrate different holidays, or who celebrate no holidays at all.

It was commented that parents could come and shop with their children, but it was also argued that holiday shops generally provide kids with an opportunity to shop for their parents. It was suggested that the music groups from the High School could provide music.

Some suggestions were: dollar vouchers for every child, running the Shoppe at a loss (for the kids, not a fundraiser). Some attendees wondered if a spring Shoppe would hit tapped-out parents, and wondered if a holiday shoppe at conference time would allow siblings to shop as well.

There was some discussion about the fact that the UES and LES have been working on clear divisions for the kids over the past couple of years. Kids in K-2 and kids in 3-5 are very different, and there are differences in what's age-appropriate.

President Keating finished the discussion by asking that all interested parties contact her to help plan or volunteer to help at the UES Holiday Shoppe.

Correspondence

There were lots of thank you notes at the UES and LES, most of them from teachers.

LES Vice President's Report

Picture Day: A volunteer request letter has gone out, and a sign-up sheet was at the HSA meeting. One attendee suggested using a different picture day company. UES Principal Mangano mentioned that picture company choices are administrative decisions, not decisions made by parent groups. It was mentioned that there are monetary benefits to using the Lifetouch company. Principal Mangano assured that money received from Lifetouch goes directly back to the students. She also said that she'd take the idea to the administrators.

Yearbook: On the agenda, but this was already discussed.

UES Vice President's Report

Trunk or Treat: Tentatively scheduled for Friday, the 30th of October. Chris Antell is chairing the committee. There was a comment that the date may have to change to avoid a conflict with LES events, as was done last year. One parent noted that some notification has gone out about scheduled celebrations. Principal Mangano commented that she'd work with Principal Silver about the date. A brief description of what Trunk or Treat is was given for an inquiring attendee.

Principal Mangano commented that there are several school-wide parties, and that Trunk or Treat is the first of the year. The goal of the school-wide events is to give the children a chance to celebrate with their entire class, not just their classroom. Parents are welcome to attend school-wide parties. They are: Trunk or Treat (Halloween), New Year's, and End of the Year. These parties allow parents to watch their children, not necessarily interact with them, as children in the 3-5 age range often want to party with their friends.

It was shared that volunteers can volunteer their cars, and provide lots of treats -- not necessarily candy. President Keating encouraged volunteers to be creative. Also, attendees were reminded that there was a canned food donation station last year. President Keating shared that the Trunk or Treat

event got great reviews on last year's HSA survey, though there was a comment about too much candy. It was suggested that the focus should be on the atmosphere and the prizes, not on the food items. It was also commented that bobbing for apples was considered last year, but the idea was discarded because of hygiene concerns.

Treasurer's Report

We have a current balance of: \$24,398.68 in the bank. It's a healthy balance, but Treasurer Reszka suggests that there should be some discussion about how much of a balance the HSA should be carrying. Treasurer Reszka commented that it will be important to see how the donations figure into things first, but the budget size should be discussed at the end of the year. Treasurer Reszka also commented that a copy of the monthly budget was available at the meeting, and that if anyone ever had any questions to please contact her.

It was noted that the budget for Helping Hands had been increased at both schools for the 2009-2010 school year.

President Keating noted that in the handout packet at the meeting, there was a list of what HSA funds. She noted that most money goes to the schools, especially through Field Day, Assemblies, school discretion money, Artists in Residence, etc. She noted that some funds, like Science Day, are given (or will be given) some money to run events.

UES Principal's Report

Principal Mangano commented that this year saw the smoothest transition for the incoming 3rd graders that she'd ever seen.

Working With HSA: Principal Mangano responded to some HSA concerns about the place of the HSA and HSA parents in the UES. She stated that she'd met with HSA President Keating, and she will be meeting with the UES VPs. She sees the focus of HSA parental involvement to be experiences with parents and educational opportunities. Science Day was used as an example of a great idea. She suggested that a good time to get involved would be during lunch recess, and suggested that parents consider proposing clubs or groups (examples were book club, craft table). There must be a commitment to attend on a consistent basis, however, as the kids really come to expect club and group offerings. She suggested parents get creative to get involved, and think beyond parties. She also said that some evening opportunities might could be worked out, like a gym night or a family fun night.

PSSA Month: April is a heavy testing month. Principal Mangano said that she likes to schedule "lighter" activities and field trips after testing mornings, to avoid burning the kids out. There are opportunities there. Principal Mangano reiterated that the events should be different from LES events.

Bus Rules: Enforcement of 'no riding home with friends' on the bus policy is in force. Principal Mangano said that they could work with parents who were having their kids watched while out of town, or parents dealing with some emergency, but buses are not to be vehicles for playdates. This is especially important this year as the buses are very crowded. One attendee asked if it was possible for parent volunteers to ride the buses. She was informed that parents aren't supposed to set foot on the buses. Principal Mangano commented that she'd been going over bus rules with the kids, and emphasized that it was up to the kids to behave themselves. Bus drivers, it was explained, are able to report problem children, if the situation warrants it. It was commented that the buses

should wait until all children are seated to move, Principal Mangano suggested that any parent with concerns contact Jane at the bus company. The rule of thumb for seating, it was explained, is three kids to a seat. It was unclear if that included the middle and high school buses.

Discussion

Fundraising Opportunity: One attendee brought up the Peddler's Village fundraising program. The participating organization picks a week, and 15% of proceeds, from participating stores, would be sent back to the school. There was a question about what sort of proof would need to be shown at the stores. The attendee who suggested the fundraiser was asked if she wanted to run the program.

Various Fundraising: It was commented that we need (or may need) a new big fundraiser to take the place of the Sally Foster program. It was commented that Card Art would be coming back, as a spring fundraiser. It was suggested that the Box Tops fundraiser be spurred on by a competition, where the class that raises the most box tops receive a pizza party. It was commented that we do participate in the Genaurdi's script fundraiser. More information will be going out in the future. President Keating asked that any parents who have fundraising ideas, questions, or concerns to please contact her.

Kidstuff: President Keating announced that the HSA will be doing Kidstuff books again for this school year. Her suggestion: If you want to buy it, buy it. If you don't want to, don't. One attendee said that "you'll make your money back if you keep it in the car." It was commented that new stores would be added. President Keating said that though it was seriously considered to cut the program entirely, a lot of parents really wanted the fundraiser again. Kidstuff books made \$3500 last year.

Event Suggestion: An attendee suggested a Back to School dance or similar event, taking advantage of the good weather, and to celebrate the beginning of the school year. Some ideas suggested were: Library night, dance, heritage night, cinco de mayo, etc. Attendees were reminded that Principal Mangano had said that the facilities could be used after school. One suggestion was a family game night with a donation at the door. The point of the event would be to get families involved, and to bring the community together. An attendee did volunteer to coordinate the event.

Pizza Bingo: President Keating said that though the dates hadn't yet been decided. It was suggested that they alternate LES Pizza Bingo with a UES evening family event. LES Pizza bingo is tentatively scheduled for November 13th.

Question: An attendee asked how long it typically took for an event to be "turned around". President Keating commented that last year's Trunk or Treat event was turned around in three weeks.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:42 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ann Leveille, Secretary