

## CHMS PTO General Meeting Minutes September 12, 2018

Meeting was called to order at 1:07pm

### Presidents' Report (Lisa Romberger & Theresa Gannon)

- Members of the PTO executive board were introduced.
- The PTO bylaws were outdated, so they were updated to accurately reflect what is being done in CHMS PTO. No significant changes were made. Proposed changes to the bylaws have been posted on the PTO website and can be voted on after 30 days. To view these changes go to PTO website or to this direct link - <http://www.chmspto.org/wbcntnt3236/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CHMS-PTO-Bylaws-Revised-7.12.18-.pdf>
- Lisa Romberger updated the PTO on the long-range projects that were completed over the summer. She shared before and after pictures (which will be posted on the PTO website as well). Families, administration, and staff have had positive feedback on the updates made to the staff workrooms, the gym, and the entryway. Teachers state that the staff workrooms are an oasis. They use this space to meet as a team or to plan. The staff are also eating together in this space more often. Dr. Brown thanked the PTO on behalf of the staff. Other highlights are a working scoreboard, one consistent eagle mascot, and the cleanup trophy cases. The Clarendon Courier is going to do a writeup on our muralist, who worked hard to complete our project underbudget.
- My School Anywhere Online Directory will be ready for use within the end of the week. Families will receive an email to confirm their information. The email will clearly list the steps to take, which include opening the link, making changes, and then saving the information. Families will be able to use this online directory immediately following this confirmation. The PTO apologizes for the delay, which was caused in part by the many new families to CHMS. The PTO is looking into the cost for printed directories. Many parents in attendance were interested in purchasing a printed directory. Theresa Gannon explained that families can also print the online directory at home, sorting by grade and "favorites". Please note that some families opt out of having their personal information included in the directory.
- The PTO presidents attended the September Presidents Meeting. With a new superintendent (Dr. Garcia) and a new assistant superintendent of learning (Dr. Robinson), the district is still in assessment mode. The district is looking at forming district guidelines so that there is consistency among the different schools. Some policies have been updated (i.e. D181 Food Allergy Management Plan) and others are still be worked out (PTO expenditure allowances and district STEAM plan).
  - D181 Food Allergy Management Plan: All families have received an email that directed us to Skyward to read and sign off on the new food allergy management plan. There is also a one-pager that highlights the policy for both the elementary school level and the middle school level. Dr. Brown stated that the new policy gives schools clarity on how to proceed with this safety issue based on the different age of the students and the different environments that the students encounter.
  - The district has put a pause on PTO spending while they evaluate what the district should provide and what the PTOs are allowed to purchase. The goal is to have equity among all schools, especially within the core curriculum. There is a green light for spending towards school culture and clubs. There is a yellow light for spending toward building enhancements (i.e. painting, gardens). There is a complete pause/halt for curriculum spends. There has been very little guidance in the past with PTO expenditures. D181 admin shared that the district will be responsible for all core curriculum and that the PTOs will be able to help support optional enhancements at some level. The specific policy going forward will be established by February 2019. D181 administration also acknowledged that some of the elementary schools are further ahead with STEAM opportunities than the middle schools. They will be looking at this issue too.

- With the D86 Referendum approaching, D181 administration reminded the PTOs that, as a 501©3 that we cannot take a political stance/support either side. As a PTO we can provide opportunities to educate and encourage people to learn more by taking a tour of the school and attending meetings.

#### Back to School Update (Dr. Levi Brown)

- Overall the first couple of weeks have gone pretty well. One positive change has been changing the master plan to accommodate 2 team planning periods per day and no gym classes during the middle of the day (which allows students to use the gym during lunch times when the weather is poor).
- Bus Update: Dr. Brown acknowledges that there have been some bus issues, especially with bus #1. He has been working closely with his rep from the bus company to finetune the issues, as he realizes that any issues can impact safety and education. The goal is to get all students to school on time, safely. Some buses have been coming to the stops early. Dr. Brown suggested that all riders get to their stops five minutes early. He will send out an email "Tips for Taking the Bus" to all families with bus riders, emphasizing the need to build in a buffer time in the morning in case the bus arrives early. Parents asked for text alerts when buses are late, instead of or in addition to the emails that we receive. Dr. Brown said that we will have the option to opt in to text alerts. If parents are concerned about the location of their child's bus stop, please direct these concerns to Ms. Renwick (student services secretary).

#### Treasurer Report (Julie)

The final year-end report for 6/30/2018 was presented and will be posted on the PTO website. For the current fiscal year, a P&L was presented for 7/1 - 8/31/2018. Revenue was collected for PTO Registration, School Supply Kits and Graduation fees. For expenses, a few Back to School Day expenses were posted.

#### Fundraising & Activities

- Curriculum Night for seventh and eighth graders is 9/13. Parents of band and orchestra members will meet at 6:30 in the gym. The general meeting for all parents will begin at 6:40 in the gym.
- Clubs and Activities Fair: The fair will take place after school until around 4:00pm on Thursday, Sept 27<sup>th</sup>. The design of the club fair will change a bit this year. The fair is for students only. Popcorn will be provided; however, students will not be able to bring this popcorn out of the cafeteria. Students will be able to take the late bus home. Karen Dean is looking for volunteers to help pop popcorn during the day (2 hour shifts between 9am and 2pm). All clubs are "drop in", which means students can attend as often as they would like. Clubs offer an opportunity to get to meet kids from other grades.
- Devorah Heitner, author of *Screenwise*, is giving four presentations on October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>: 1) training with middle school staff, 2) parent presentation, 3) CHMS student presentation, and 4) HMS student presentation. The parent presentation is titled, "Raising Middle School Children in the Digital Age". The staff will have a 30-minute debriefing session with the students in advisory, following the student presentation. The presentations are funded by the CHMS PTO, the HMS PTO, and the D181 Foundation.
- Eagle Café is back. The one-time sign up will take place in the next couple of weeks. Families can pick and choose which Eagle Café lunches they want to participate in. This is a PTO fundraiser. There are opportunities for parents to volunteer.

#### Endless Appreciation

- Thank you to Committee Chairs, Lana Ferren and Nicole Kubesh, the Executive Board, CHMS staff and all the parent volunteers who helped make Back-to-School Day a huge success.
- Thank you to Committee Chairs, Laura Miller and Marcie Purcell, and the Teacher & Staff Appreciation Committee for providing a picnic-themed welcome lunch for the staff on Friday, August 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Thank you to Bridget O'Meara and Julie Boruff for updating the PTO website and finetuning the weekly newsletter process.

## Middle School 101 Presentation (Dr. Brown)

- General Takeaways
  - This is Dr. Brown's third year at CHMS and he welcomes families to reach out to him and introduce themselves. He is open and transparent and welcomes parents' concerns and comments.
  - He places an importance in relationships: 1) relationship between Dr. Brown and his staff, 2) relationship between Dr. Brown and the community, and 3) relationship between teachers and their students. "Teachers teach *KIDS* math, science, etc."
  - Dr. Brown also is pushing the concept of kindness this year. He has stressed the importance of being kind with the students and has been working with the social workers and staff members about keeping the idea of being kind at the forefront of their interactions with the students. Staff are having "kindness chats" with students, asking them, "Was your behavior kind?"
- Emotional, Social and Physical Development
  - There are many changes taking place for students in middle school (chemical, physical, mental). These changes happen at different rates for each child and can lead to tough moments.
  - Students need their parents to be sounding boards to them and for us to be level-headed, not to ride the emotional roller coaster with them. They have a lot to manage as they navigate the social dynamics, including the natural changing of social groups as three feeder schools become one middle school.
  - Students will be encountering challenging classes, sometimes experiencing failure for the first time. Stress a growth mindset where it's ok to make mistakes and normal for them to not master material right away (power of yet).
  - SEL (Social Emotional Learning) is a huge piece at CHMS and makes up a full third of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). This program is headed up by the social workers, who meet with Dr. Brown once a week. As part of the SEL program, parents, staff and students will hear presentations by Devorah Heitner. Middle school is a time to learn to balance the students' social emotional wellbeing with their academics.
  - Middle school is a time to begin to look at the future. This starts to happen developmentally for the students, but there are also projects and activities to help this process along. Clubs and ENCORES are opportunities to begin to explore different interests.
  - The grade level social worker is the primary contact for parents with any social emotional concerns. They are a great first stop. The social workers at CHMS move with the students from fifth grade orientation through the transition to high school.
- Curriculum at CHMS
  - Students take eight classes a day (sixth core classes plus PE/Health and exploratories).
  - There are different levels for LA, math, world language, and social studies. Families/staff need to take an individualized approach for deciding course levels, based on student interest and student strengths.
  - The LA grade will only show up once on the transcript but will count twice in the GPA (because of the double period).
  - Each class will work on the students' executive functioning skills.
  - Parents need to educate themselves but not stress out; things will be OK. We need to enjoy the middle school time.
- Day to Day Information
  - Doors at CHMS open at 7:30am (students can study in the MRC or get help from individual teachers). Students should email their teachers to let them know that they would like extra help. If students are

uncomfortable with this, parents can help them write the email but then gradually back off and help their children become self-advocates. Many students take advantage of getting extra help. Seeking extra help is not perceived as negative among the CHMS students.

- Announcements are made in advisory
- Advisory is five minutes (short advisory) three times a week and 25 minutes (long advisory) on Wednesdays and Thursdays. The purpose of the advisory is for students to build a connection with an adult in the building (who is also always one of the student's teachers) and a connection with a smaller group of students. Advisory provides a quick check in where staff can notice the students' moods. The advisory teacher is also an additional resource for the students. The SEL program is run through the advisory.
- Lunch is 30 minutes. After the students eat and wipe down their tables, they can go outside. The gym can be used in bad weather.
- Students can ride the late bus after clubs and activities. This bus leaves around 4:10-4:15.
- Resources for parents
  - Homework websites by grade level (can be found on PTO website)
    - 6<sup>th</sup> grade: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NkOtdHguetOF-otrzdLggDocg0pwB2VP-KkJdaIUfU/edit>
    - 7<sup>th</sup> grade: <https://sites.google.com/a/d181.org/7th-grade-clarendon-hills-middle-school/>
    - 8<sup>th</sup> grade: <https://sites.google.com/a/d181.org/8th-grade--chms/home>
  - Skyward (to check grades, schedule, add money for lunch)
  - [www.chmspto.org](http://www.chmspto.org)
  - [www.d181.org/chms](http://www.d181.org/chms)
- Forgotten items (lunch, instrument, laptop, assignment) can be brought to school and placed in a grade level file cabinet outside of the main office. Students will be notified (for lunches there is a large whiteboard with students' names listed by grade level). If anything has not been picked up by the end of the day, the students will be called down to Student Services to retrieve items brought in.
- Middle school students are always working on their executive functioning skills. Ask your child what their system is (for homework, morning routine, etc.) and then help them revamp their routines, as needed.
- Hidden Curricula/The Gray Area of Schools
  - Size – CHMS is three times larger than the elementary schools that the students attended, which takes some getting used to.
  - Bus – Mr. Jones helps out in the afternoon. Contact him if you have any concerns.
  - Cafeteria – There is hot lunch and a microwave that students can use.
  - Social issues are magnified in middle school. Best friend groups can change and this can become a challenge. If your child is having a social issue (bystander, bully, victim), notify the office. Students are encouraged to say something if they see something. There are a lot of things in place at CHMS to help students navigate these social issues but the school needs to be aware of the issues to address them. Students will learn more about this at safety day.
  - Dress code – Bodies are changing as will the wardrobe choices. Deodorant is necessary.
  - 1:1 technology and cell phones – Students have access to the entire world. There are parent apps that can monitor children's use. Parents may want to establish a night-time routine for storing devices in a

certain spot at a certain time. Upcoming speaker, Devorah Heitner, will discuss some of this on October 4<sup>th</sup>. D181 tech department has been thoughtful about what sites to block on district-owned laptops. School administrators are notified when students go to inappropriate sites. Students do not need cell phones. There is a red phone in the lobby for student use.

- High School Placement
  - High school placement is done by the high school that students will be attending. D86 will look at fall MAP scores, world language placement, and current courses, as factors in class placement.
  - The CHMS PTO will bring in speakers from the high school and D86 has a transition night that is informative.
  - CHMS will help with paperwork for high schools other than D86 too.
  
- Other Comments/Questions
  - Each grade level has a monthly student recognition program. The grade level teams meet one time every day.
  - CHMS has a 1-5-9 program where each staff person chooses one student to check in with five times a week for nine weeks. This is an effort for all kids to feel connected. Every Wednesday, teams talk about kids and how they can best support them.
  - There are two different types of parent/teacher conferences – team meeting format and individual teacher conferences. These conferences take place the Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving. CHMS encourages parents to bring their kids to the conferences (helps with self advocacy). If a family has concerns throughout the year (issues at home or in a class), a meeting can be schedule at any time.