December PTO General Meeting
12/16/16

- PTO President Misha Ratner called the meeting to order 8:15am and introduced Principal Donna Taylor

- Donna had three announcements:
  - 5th Grade will have an overnight trip at the Museum of Natural History. The date and particulars are still being worked out. In the past, the 5th Grade trip happened in May.
  - After many interviews, Donna has hired a new TA for 202. Angelique will begin shortly. “She's a keeper.”
  - Donna hopes people already heard from the State of the Union: Grade Level Parent Meetings will begin next year in January. They'll usually be on Tuesdays when teachers have time to attend for a bit. All parents in the grade are invited. The meetings will be announced and be on the master calendar. The reality of a commuter school makes connection more challenging and we're trying. Grade Level Parent Meetings are in addition to Parent Engagement Time on Tuesday mornings. Teachers are also flexible since not everyone can make it in. They schedule in-person and call meetings at other times. “We're available and all that's here to stay.” Next year we want to start Grade Level Meetings earlier in the years so we have more than one per grade.

Parent Question: Can 4th Grade go on trip?

Donna: It's nice for 5th Grade to have their own thing. We think the overnight at the Museum will work out nicely and we'll see. Fourth grade is still young for overnights.

Parent Question: When will trip happen?

Donna: The trip will happen late in the year. The 5th Grade trip to D.C. was aligned with a government study unit that we no longer do. A trip to D.C. didn't make sense this year. A trip to the Museum of Natural History Museum would work well with this year's curriculum.

- Misha President's Report
- We've been doing really well on events. We're getting 25% of $11,000 from B&N Bookfair. We made $2,000 more this year than last.

- We'll have a workshop in Jan or Feb on school budgeting. It'll be institutional knowledge on how budgeting is done.

- Annual Ice Skating Event is Friday, Jan 27, 6pm-8pm. You'll hear more. We'd love volunteers to hand out hot chocolate and sell BSI Apparel.

- Trying to plan a middle school only event. Anyone from 6, 7, 8 here? We want middle school parents and kids to help plan an event they'd like to attend.

- One flag for us: although we're doing as well our better on fundraising events like Harvest and B&N, we're running more than 45K behind in DA (Direct Appeal) contributions. We need to get more corporate matches and more contributions. Give as much as you can.

- Parent Question: I'm new. I'm not getting a message about DA. Do you send?

  Misha: We send many by email. Email execbd@bsipto.org with you contact infor if you think you're not getting emails from us. We also backpack flyers home and you'll be hearing from us a lot this month – emails, cards, flyers.

  Parent Question: Can you introduce Board?
  Misha: Introduces himself, Allyssa: Exec VP, Rosemary: Co-VP of Comm, May: Co-VP of Parent Involvement, Carlie: Co-Parliamentarian (other board members arrive later: Oksana, Co-VP of Parental Involvement, Leslie: Secretary, Daniel: Treasurer)

  Misha: I sent my first President Message by email. I'll do that each month.

  Parent Question: How does Gala fit into the 45K behind?

  Misha: Gala is May 13. The numbers are compared to what we had earned and in the bank during same time last year.

  Misha: Camp Auction is coming. We need parents to ask camps to donate. Auction is open to all parents and outside of school.

  No real SLT update because last meeting was interrupted by the school “smoke incident” fire alarm.
Parent Question: Are we having movie nights?

Misha: Yes. We have a license. We need volunteers. We'll start in the new year.

- Daniel Treasurer Report
  - about 130,000 in all bank accounts
  - More than 30% behind last year (more than 45K...close to 50K behind)
  - Your DA donation is tax-deductible. Make it by the end of the year.
    - Online is best. If you want to send a check, don't wait. It takes us a while to get and cash checks. If you want the tax deduction for this year and want to pay by check, do that as soon as possible.
- Misha makes important reminder. If you're doing Holiday Shopping on Amazon, use the special BSI smile link. Don't just go to smile. Smile alone is .5 % and our link is up to 7% donation. Shop through bsipto.org Amazon link and then bookmark.

Parent Question: Do you have a view of why we're so behind in fundraising?

Misha: Good question. Hard. Corporate Matching is definitely an issue. We need to match whenever we can. But let's be honest, there are some growing pains around the TA situation last year and some negative talk on unofficial FB pages. Parents start to question things. But, we've seen it over again that when we talk about issues we work it out. We can't influence curriculum. But say, last year, for example, Donna's new plan didn't include TAs for this year. We talked and met and we have extra adults in K-3. This year, we're new, we're trying, we're only volunteers, but, the Grade Level Meetings are a positive outcome. The school is responsive. We have an active parent body trying in a positive way. Our voices are being heard. And all this is for all the kids. Right?

Misha turns over Mic to Ms. Griner and 4th and 5th Grade Classes who perform. (editor's note: the kids are awesome!)