BSI PTO General Meeting Minutes for January 25, 2016

- The meeting was called to order by the PTO President David Orsolino at 9:15 AM. There were 28 members in attendance. The minutes for the December 2015 meeting was read and they were unanimously approved by the attending parents. Thank you to Willow Lawson for taking the minutes and Nick Kremer for capturing the video.
- Principal’s report presented by Donna Taylor [video]:
  - Parents don’t really understand violin and how the program works. Kids work with a box and a bow at first so that they don’t break the real violins. Currently, half of the violins are broken. This year is the first that a K class hasn’t dropped a violin yet.
  - Not sure we’re doing violin next year: depends on whether parents want it.
  - SLT: the body that gets together and creates the comprehensive education plan each year. 5 teachers and 5 parents. The SLT works on the CEP (Comprehensive Education Plan): state mandated document that outlines what the school is working on. Every year, we’ve been working on similar goals. Not that we don’t reach our goals, but we deepen them. One of the goals is communication and family involvement. We’ll always be working on that.
  - I don’t know if you realize: but I’m never leaving. (Laughter) You’re stuck with me.
  - These Family Days are an effort to share with families. Even in a snowstorm, we’ve had a tremendous turnout. SLT continues to devise ways that we can expand communication and family involvement.
  - Donna asks Tricia to talk about what SLT has been working on this year.
  - Tricia Ragone: There were concerns in 4th grade over communication. Things have started to improve. Lunch clubs came out of discussion about what 6th graders would do when they go out to lunch. School-wide problems is what the SLT deals with. Particular problems with one teacher are usually not under the purview of the SLT.
  - This week we will officially hire Anna Moshura as Assistant Principal.
○ CEP: is online. Go to DOE website for BSI, you can read it.
○ I understand that we need to do a better job of posting the SLT minutes. We are behind on that. But anyone is free to observe the SLT as an observer. You can’t speak, but you can observe.
○ Tricia: The SLT meetings are always at 3pm. Please come by. It sounds mysterious, but it’s not.
○ If there’s something that isn’t happening that you feel should be happening, please let us know and be a part of the solution.
○ Regarding the High school application search: Joy Nolan mentioned this morning that there are 100s of excellent high schools in NYC. We really need her input in the high school process. And we need other parents to help us in other areas, sharing their expertise.
○ We’ll be having field trips to high schools for 7th graders. Anyone who would like to serve on the graduation committee, please let us know.
○ 7th grade teachers (Brian and Mia) will be staying in place. Hiring process for 8th grade is underway. We have someone who has taught high school who may come teach 8th grade. That’s a win-win for us.
○ Spring break is very late this year, after all the testing.
○ Another Family Monday and PTO meeting on 2/29
○ 4th grade trip is cancelled. We think the kids aren’t ready for it.
○ Standardized tests: less and less emphasis on the tests. Teacher evaluation is still tied to these tests. We downplay them, but have mock tests so that kids aren’t freaked out the first time. Other reason: we take data from these tests and figure out what kids know and what trends there are in the grade. Allows teachers to compare their techniques as well, if one class does well and another doesn’t.
○ Test count for 4th and 7th grade the most for kids who are applying to other schools.
○ Question: not doing SHSAT prep. It’s really expensive at $500 a kid. At least 15 percent of the kids won’t be able to take part of a parent-funded course. If parents want to raise $25,000 to pay for the prep, parents should talk amongst themselves to organize.
○ We want parents to know that there are a lot of great schools out there that have nothing to do with taking a test.

• President's report was presented by David Orsolino:
  ○ Cathy Joseph is still working to push for BSI busing for 7th graders. Cathy is writing a letter based on benefits provided to Mark Twain students.
  ○ Nick: heard from a neighbor that busing is only available to students that live in the district. Not sure if that’s true.
• EVP report was presented by Celeste Ivers:
  o It may seem early, but there will be openings on the PTO board. We’d love to tell you about the positions and encourage you to reach out to us. If there’s a fundraising initiative that you’d like to chair and oversee next year, let us know.

• Treasurer's report:
  o $257,000 in the bank.

• Fundraising report:
  o DA is active until 6/30.
  o Camp auction: still looking for day and sleepaway camps and any items that may expire before May 13th.
  o 2/7-2/22 is the date of the camp auction.
  o Skating: February 7th. Deadline to buy tix is February 6th.
  o Chess event: coming in March.
  o Middle School movie night is 2/26. Details to come.
  o Tricia: June 19th is Cyclones. 4pm on a Sunday. It’s Father’s Day.

• PACE report:
  o None.

• SLT report:
  o None.

• Question: how do we get the test prep initiative on the agenda?
  Answer: Need to talk to Donna about what it would entail as this is the first we have heard about the course and our school. And whether we’d like to have it every year because it would be a recurring budget item.

• Meeting adjourned at 10:15 am