

**PTO Meeting
December 8, 2008
7:00pm
Blessed Sacrament School Library**

Present at the meeting: Jennifer Dougherty, Eileen Joransen, Kimberly Soutuyo, Michael Haas, Anne Hoffman, Nels Benson, Mary Gately, Mary Lee Charles, Maude Ruesch, Michelle Payne, Stephanie Hurd, Valarie Warburton, Madeline Mitchell, Jack Stephens, Missy Wocjiak, Myleen Lankford, Valerie Garcia, Kelly Brinley and Joe Ferrara

Meeting was called to order at 7:10pm by PTO President Joe Ferrara with an opening prayer by Valerie Garcia.

Principals Report – Presented by Valerie Garcia

- St. Nicolas Day was celebrated at the school and the kids were thrilled to receive blue candy canes
- A big thank you to Kim Soutuyo and all the volunteers who made the Fall Festival such a success despite the bad weather
- Thanks to all those who helped with the reception for Blue Ribbon Week
- Thanks for Nels Benson for organizing all the publicity for Blue Ribbon week. An article appeared in the Alexandria Gazette
- Thanks to Valarie Warburton for organizing the spirit wear
- Two Christmas programs are coming up (K-2 program on Tuesday, December 9th at 7pm and ECC program on Wednesday, December 10th at 9:30am)
- Father Cregan and Mrs. Garcia have made the decision not to have school on Inauguration Day on Tuesday, January 20th. This is a change to the original school calendar so please be sure to make a note of it. The Diocese of Arlington left it up to each school to make their own decision about whether or not the school would close.
- The 8th graders have been busy with confirmation, high school placement tests and are now in the process of filling out high school applications. Please keep them and their families in your prayers

ECC Report – Presented by Valerie Garcia (for Kelly Brinley)

- The Thanksgiving program went very well. The kids made bag lunches for 100 needy people and were then delivered to Christ House. It was very meaningful to the children.
- The Christmas program is Wednesday, December 10th at 9:30am.
- The Santa Secret Shop is getting organized. All money will be donated to charity

- There is a concern about the ECC playground. Because of the constant addition of mulch on an annual basis, it is getting to the point where it is going to have to be dug out. The ends of the slides are practically touching the mulch.

Approval of Teacher Christmas Bonuses – presented by Joe Ferrara

- It is proposed that the teachers received a modest \$75 bonus for Christmas for a total of approximately \$3500
- Joe asked for a vote from those present at the meeting and it was unanimously approved

Diocesan PTO Update (Mary Gately)

- The meeting was held on Saturday, December 6th.
- The next meeting will be held on April 4, 2009 and they are asking each school to bring their treasurer along with them to the meeting so that they can discuss streamlining PTO books in each school
- Enrollment management was discussed and there was a 1.75% decline in enrollment in Diocesan schools. $\frac{3}{4}$ of schools lost students for a total of approximately 300 students
- Most of the losses were seen at the high school level
- There was a discussion about Pastoral support at the schools. Bishop Loverde is in full support of catholic education and wants lots of follow up with regards to the decrease in enrollment and how to get it back up
- He wants all principals to put together an enrollment team
- The VA Catholic Conference is being held in May and they would like PTO's to send parents to the conference
- One initiative that was discussed was textbooks and the rate that Catholic schools were paying for them versus public. It was determined that Catholic schools are getting the same rate as public schools
- They are also looking into public versus private foundations
- The Commonwealth of Virginia did approve that localities may transport private school students but they had the final say as to whether or not they would do so. Localities are not willing to do so because of financial concerns.
- Each principal is to appoint a liaison to the VA Catholic Conference

Debrief on Fall Festival – presented by Kim Soutuyo

- The festival went great despite the weather
- The festival committee has not received any real feedback yet
- The final numbers are not back yet
- They are in the works for planning a day in the spring for the spring amusements.

Review of Budget (Maddy Mitchell)

- Still waiting for final numbers on the fall festival. Because of the rain date, it is hard to determine what the ticket sales will be like versus last year and what the final number will be in comparison to last year
- Gift wrap sales are showing a decline from last year but Internet sales have not posted yet
- There is an overall decline in other donations as well
- There is talk of having another used uniform sale sometime in May.
- They would like to have the sale during the kindergarten orientation as well as another day before the kids get out of school (maybe field day?).

Auction Planning (Jennifer Dougherty)

- 65 donations have been received thus far
- We are in need of a parent who would like to be the auction chair next year. Jennifer would like this person to be able to shadow her now so that it will make the learning process that much easier for them next year.
- The Merckles are well on their way as far as food preparation

Playground Update – Presented by Joe Ferrara

- The Community Day is planned for Thursday, January 8th. Learning Structures will meet with the students and the teachers during the school day and then it will be the parents and others in the community turn at night. Attendance is so important at this event so that Learning Structures can get a good idea of what everyone is looking for.
- A place will be set-up on the web site to post playground information and updates as well as playground committee information
- A vision statement was created to let parents know what the overall goal of the project is and how we intend to get there. The vision statement will be posted on the web site.
- A meeting was held with someone from public works from the City of Alexandria. The retention pond does serve a public works function. Removing the retention pond may not be as feasible as first hoped.
- Members of the parish will be made aware of the planning day through the bulletin
- Members of the community will be made aware of the process as things progress.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm by Joe Ferrara