

**St. Leo the Great Parent-Teacher Organization's
Executive Board and General Membership Meeting**

February 18, 2010

Meeting Purpose:

Upcoming Events, General Business, Issue Discussion

Board Members Present:

Larry McGrail, Teresa Ketron, Suzanne Dowd, David DiPippa, Cynthia Washington, Melissa Baker, Coleen MacKay, Mary Knapp

Welcome, Opening Prayer. Larry McGrail called the meeting to order at 7:10pm and welcomed all present. He led the group in an Opening Prayer and thanked everyone for coming. He introduced the board members and explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to present the new by-laws for a general vote. He also emphasized that the PTO is a sounding board for issues but has no authority to make changes and explained that this was the first general meeting in a long time because so few parents had attended in the past.

Upcoming Events, Events in Progress.

- Larry mentioned the Quiz Bowl coming up on March 6th and the Ice Cream Social on March 20th.

- He also discussed the Golf Tournament and explained that the move from the spring to the fall was done to ease the spring calendar for participation and sponsorship. The tournament will be on October 6, 2010. Larry asked all present to consider this opportunity to volunteer and provided them with Tom McGovern's name as the golf tournament chair for further information. All proceeds of this event will go to technology funds.

- Larry discussed some of the recent votes of the board including the vote to purchase new PC Lab computers, and he talked about our efforts to build community relations with area businesses through fundraising events. In particular, he mentioned the recent Red, Hot, and Blue event, Ledo's Pizza night, and the opportunity to go to Let's Dish through April. Suzanne Dowd is responsible for these events and she answered questions regarding some of these opportunities.

- Larry also reminded everybody that the Knights of Columbus run the scrip program and give half of their proceeds from this fundraiser to the PTO and half to a scholarship funds for Catholic high school. He encouraged everyone to participate.

Modifications to the By-Laws. The new proposed by-laws were presented to the group. Hard copies of the proposed by-laws were available at the meeting, and Larry reminded all present that the current by-laws are available on the website. In addition, Larry created a summary of the significant changes to the by-laws for easier reading and these

were also available at the meeting. He explained that the by-laws are being changed because they don't reflect the actual make-up of the board. Once begun, the PTO realized the need to change the by-laws to also reflect the actual needs of the PTO and the school. Larry reviewed all of the proposed by-law changes, and these are included in the attached summary document. He also discussed the need for an interim election process this year in order to maintain the stability of the board. This is also described in the attached document. Larry concluded by stating that this meeting is considered the by-laws proposal meeting and that we will have another meeting in March to vote on the by-laws. Larry encouraged all present to read the by-laws and to help get the word out to other St. Leo families regarding the proposed changes and the voting meeting. Because of the uncertainty regarding church availability, no March general meeting date has been set. If anyone has any questions or comments regarding the by-laws, inform Larry; and any changes required will be made and posted on the website.

Issues Discussion Intro. Larry introduced the discussion of issues by reminding all present that we are here for information gathering only. If we don't have the facts here tonight, we will work on finding information through committees or other appropriate avenues. Larry asked for requests for topics to be on the agenda to be sent to him in advance so that we could properly budget meeting time. He received two topic requests. Other topics may be brought up from the floor if there is time at end of the meeting to discuss them. Likewise, if any discussions run long, they will be tabled for another meeting.

Issue #1: Spanish Program. (Submitted by Dennis Cate) Since Mr. Cate was unable to be at the meeting Larry read his submission. Mr. Cate feels that St. Leo's Spanish program does not properly prepare our students for high school Spanish. He wants the PTO to investigate and get parent feedback. Then, the group should present that information to the administration if they feel that work needs to be done to improve the program.

- Mr. DiPippa stated that every October Diocesan principals meet and focus on all standardized tests.

- All 8th graders take a standardized test for placement (Freshman year). Mr. DiPippa tracks test scores and the 8th grade scores have gone up for the last three (3) years.

- The data from the last two years (77 is a passing grade):

2007-2008 School Year --	67% students passed Diocesan-wide
	69% students passed from St. Leo's
2008-2009 School Year --	76% students passed Diocesan-wide
	85% students passed from St. Leo's

- Parents decide at what level their child will be placed (Spanish I or Spanish II) in High School, provided their child passed the placement test.

- Students from St. Leo's who enrolled at Paul VI averaged grades as follows:

Spanish I	B	9 students
Spanish II	B	7 students
French	A	3 students
Latin	B/B+	2 students
German	B+	2 students

- Comment/question from the floor: The grade for Spanish is weighted the same as other core subjects affecting overall GPA, yet it is not offered every day like the other core subjects, nor does it have space dedicated to it.

Mr. DiPippa responded by saying that St. Leo's (as does all Catholic schools), follows Diocesan policy which spells out for each academic subject the core requirements and minutes allowed per week. He also mentioned that the Diocesan curriculum is posted on the Web. To set aside space for Spanish would require reducing space for other existing uses. Since St. Leo's is not able to expand beyond its existing footprint, one option being explored is converting the courtyard space to usable classroom space.

- Comment from the floor: Since it seems that school parents may have different goals than the Diocese in regard to what constitutes a successful Spanish program/curriculum, maybe the PTO should form a committee to explore the issue.

A motion was made and passed to form a committee to study St. Leo's Spanish program. The objective of the committee is to explore the issue and present findings/recommendations and set of objectives to the PTO at the next meeting (March 10). The following volunteered to serve on the committee:

Kathy Johnson
Kim Faunce
Dana Schindler
Julie McDonald

Issue #2: 8th Grade Activity Fee. (Submitted by Julie Clinch)

The \$200.00 activity fee was requested up front without an opportunity for the parents to discuss or even have any input into options for graduation activities.

That's \$8,800 collected from the students; added to \$2,000.00 provided by the PTO; plus monies donated/collected from other sources, for a total of \$13,400.00 for 8th Grade graduation activities.

The lunch alone is about \$5000.00. Can't we have something less formal?

Why can't the class vote on activities?

• Mr. DiPippa responded by saying that the fee was a consolidation of various fundraisers that were not all that profitable and that he had been approached by many parents asking to write one check rather than multiple checks throughout the year. The parents do meet to decide on the activities.

• Comment/Question from the floor: The process should be clearly defined. Should it be by class vote or should it be more formal and determined by school administrators?

• Comment from the floor: There is always room for new traditions. We might be paying more money than we have to. We should not be forced to pay.

• Comment from the floor: One option should be to allow 7th graders to meet before they finish their year to decide what kind of graduation activities they would like to have the following year, figure out what those activities would cost and then decide how they could raise the money for those activities.

From the floor came various opinions on:

- the cost of the activities
- the level of formality of the activities
- decision makers: School Administrators or Parents
- responsibilities of the students

• Comment from the floor: This issue is an opportunity for us to focus on the culture of the school community

• A motion was made and passed to table the discussion until the March meeting.

Closing Remarks. Mr. DiPippa encouraged parents to take advantage of existing procedures as stated in the handbook and to talk to the teachers and the administration directly if their child needs help.

Adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm.