

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

March 24, 2010

Meeting Purpose:

Upcoming Events, General Business, Issue Discussion

Board Members Present:

Larry McGrail, Jennifer Conroy, Teresa Ketron, David DiPippa, Cynthia Washington, Melissa Baker, Deborah Ball, Coleen MacKay, Nancy Wiegand, Mary Knapp

Welcome, Opening Prayer. Larry McGrail called the meeting to order at 7:20pm and welcomed all present. He reviewed the agenda and announced length of time revisions for several of the agenda activities. He then led the group in an Opening Prayer.

Upcoming Events, Events in Progress.

- Larry noted that the March 20th Ice Cream Social/Media Sale was very successful and specifically thanked Teresa Ketron, Julie Clinch and Michelle Baldacci.

- Regarding the Golf Tournament, Larry mentioned that Tom McGovern was doing a good job contacting potential sponsors. The Tournament will be on the first Thursday in October (Oct. 7, 2010) at Westfields Country Club.

- Larry reminded everyone about the Dining Out fundraiser at Fuddrucker's for the Basketball teams.

- Regarding the Carnival:

- Scheduled date is May 22, with a rain date of June 5.

- Both older and younger children's activities and a Dunking Booth.

- Since this is our first time hosting a carnival, he is hoping we will have a good turnout and make this an annual event.

- Presale tickets will be \$10/person; at the door, \$15/person. Or, individual tickets per rides.

- Red Hot & Blue and Chic-fil-A are both possible concessionaires.

Question: Is this activity open to the public?

Answer: There is no way to control access, so anyone can participate.

Question: Is this a PTO event?

Answer: Yes.

Modifications to the By-Laws. Larry stated that the revisions are being made to bring the By-Laws up to date and to reflect reality. Significant changes deal with the composition of the board and the elections. (See Summary sheet attached) At the PTO March Board

Meeting, the Board passed the revised By-Laws by vote and forwarded the document to both Mr. DiPippa and Father Whitestone for approval.

Question: Article IV, Section 6. Is the web site the only means of publicizing the minutes?

Answer: The web site is specifically part of the process. We may also update the process.

Question: Art. IV, Sec. 9. Has the room parent program always been under the PTO or separate from the PTO?

Answer: The room parent program had been independent, but will be brought into the fold of the new Director of Volunteer Activities responsibilities to get more help. Mr. DiPippa added that in the past the school has had a volunteer offer to coordinate the room parent program for which he has been grateful.

Comment: The PTO helped secure volunteers and left it up to the room parents to collect funds for class activities. The money flow needs to be clarified or left separate.

Answer: The intent is to coordinate things better and to keep everyone in the loop. Teresa Ketron added that the PTO has been asked to supplement support for the room parent program.

Question: Will room parents be under the Volunteer Coordinator?

Answer: Yes.

•Mr. DiPippa noted that the timing of the upcoming election is very close (Art. VI, Sec. 1).

--Larry said that the call for nominations was opened at the last meeting, with the deadline being April 9. Ballots go out on April 15 and are due in by April 23. Results will be announced by April 30.

Question: How are the ballots being sent out?

Answer: Oldest and Only. Mr. DiPippa offered to attach the ballot to the electronic newsletter and to post it on the web site.

Vote on Proposed By-Laws.

--Motion made and seconded to vote on the passage of the revised By-Laws.

--Revised By-Laws passed with unanimous vote in support.

Board Member Nominations.

Jennifer Conroy – President-Elect

Nancy Wiegand – Volunteer Activities

Larry McGrail – President

Julie Clinch – Fundraising

Teresa Ketron – Community Needs

--Any from the Floor? None.

Spanish Program Committee Report. Kim Faunce presented (Kathy Johnson and Julie McDonald were also in attendance). At the last General Membership Meeting the topic

was raised and referred to a newly formed committee. The committee met two times. First, focusing on the goal of the committee: Upon graduation, we want our students to pass the High School exam and be ready for Spanish II.

Points of consideration:

--The curriculum is spread over three years, so it would be logical to break the curriculum into three sessions, with an assessment after each year to give feedback to students.

--If resources are available, the curriculum should be taught on separate tracks like the Math program.

--Students need more feedback in a timely fashion, i.e., weekly.

--If possible, modify the schedule to give more time and make comparable to other core classes.

--Try to incorporate the Audio Library purchased by the PTO into the curriculum.

--Logistics. No dedicated classroom. Could the school use a room in the Parish Hall? This would allow for a permanent place for materials, records, etc. It would convey a seriousness to students.

--Looked at the Diocesan curriculum. It is under review.

--We have two Spanish teachers. Can we switch course loads?

•Mr. DiPippa thanked the committee for their work. He felt they had presented lots of good ideas which are all welcome since we all want the Spanish program to be the best it can possibly be. He mentioned:

--Five years ago a review of the program was made. The minimum/maximum time allowed was determined. It is time to review the program again as part of the self-study/accreditation process.

--We don't know whether the Diocese will split the curriculum into three sessions.

--He thinks we will see more time allotted for Spanish next year. A change in the schedule. This may affect other things—need to achieve balance.

--Over the Summer they will work on the 5-year plan and solicit input from the teachers.

--In response to the Committee's report, Mr. DiPippa said:

--He looked at the Parish Hall option for space. There are safety concerns with walking students back and forth across the parking lot between the school and Parish Hall.

--He said that a lot depends on the schedule, i.e., class time as well as assessments. He would like to have separate tracks, but we don't have the facilities. He may share/split course loads between the two teachers, but again, this depends on the schedule.

8th Grade Activity Fee. Ginny Cate presented. After the last month, she was asked to coordinate a survey of rising 7th grade parents. She noted that this is one of the largest 7th grade classes in recent years. She addressed the misconception that the fee is new and said that it is not. There have been fees collected in past years, but for separate events. To make it easier on the parents, the fees were consolidated into one fee.

•Survey results on the fee:

--35 responses received.
--30 parents agreed with the concept of a flat fee. This provides capital. (2 –No; 3 —Undecided)

--Parents were divided on the class trip.

The fee will be lowered to \$175.00 and collected at the beginning of the year. The class trip will be optional.

•Survey results on the luncheon:

--27 parents support. 6 parents do not support. 2—Undecided.

--It is the last gathering event as a class family. Gifts are given to teachers which can't be done on a regular class day.

•Cathleen Gormley, Chair, 8th Grade Graduation Committee, made the following comments:

--The one event that can be dropped is the class trip because of the cost for buses, the liability issue, etc.

--Her class parents voted to consolidate the fees.

--Very hard to hold fundraising events.

--Luncheon has turned out to be very nice.

•Mr. DiPippa thanked Cathleen and Ginny. He said that the survey results show that they got a majority. He made the decision to lower the fee from \$200.00 to \$175.00 and to make the class trip optional. A meeting is scheduled for May for the parents of rising 7th Graders.

Issues Discussion Intro. Larry reminded everyone about the protocol for issues discussion (see back of Agenda sheet).

Issue #1: Early Dismissals. Submitted by Ana Navarro and others. (See March Discussion Topics)

Comment: Varying dismissal times are confusing and it is hard to keep track of rotating schedules. Proposed the same time for all early dismissal days.

Comment: Teachers seem to be having difficulty in accomplishing curriculum goals with less class time. Sees less religious instruction.

•Mr. DiPippa responded by saying that this is his third year at St. Leo's and in looking back saw that St. Leo's used to follow the County and have early dismissal every Monday.

--Mrs. Drews ended the Monday early dismissal because of conflicts with Daniels Run, even though it was helpful to CCD to have better/longer use of the school building on Mondays.

--When the new, block schedule was put in place, it added 10 minutes to each day. With early dismissals, 28 hours is lost. But, with the additional 10 minutes, 30 hours is gained over the course of the year. On early dismissal days, teachers/administrators have the opportunity to attend meetings and devote time to professional development, which is essential, and will ultimately trickle down to students.

--As part of the 5-year plan effort, they will look at the issue of additional time. The goal will be what is ideal for students, parents and faculty. They will look at what the Diocese recommends and what other schools do. For example, St. Mary's has added 15 minutes per day, and has early dismissal every Wednesday. Mr. DiPippa said that next year we will have the allocated 11:30am dismissals and he will look at the schedule of the following year.

Comment: Concern about the increase in hours lost by early dismissals. Feels St. Leo's should follow the Diocese's recommendations. 3 hours or more counts as an early dismissal. The 12:10pm dismissal time gets around that stipulation.

Issue #2: Middle School Science Program. Submitted by Kathy Johnson and others. (See March Discussion Topics)

Comment: 6th Graders were given a 12-page test split over the Thanksgiving holiday. And, tests were split again with snow days. Also, when taking notes during power point presentations, there is no time to ask questions or even absorb the information.

Comment: On the Volunteer form, this parent checked off helping with experiments, but has never been contacted.

Question: Can we hire an instructional aide, or use a volunteer?

Comment: Science is on the schedule just once, but Social Studies, Language Arts and Math are all on the schedule twice.

Comment: This may be something the Volunteer Coordinator can help get a handle on.

•Mr. DiPippa said that he is looking into some internal measures to support the Science program (as he does for all programs/departments). It is hard for 1 teacher to be responsible for 6 classes. The previous teacher also had religion instruction as a responsibility. There may be too many assessments which does require a lot of paperwork.

--He asked parents to help keep their children focused for this last quarter to help them get ready for the transition to High School where there will be no allowance for late submissions or missed assignments, etc.

*Several parents raised the issue of the 8th Grade Fee again. They objected to the fact that Mr. DiPippa had lowered the fee and decided that the class trip was optional before the survey results were discussed at the upcoming rising 7th Grade parent's meeting. They assumed that there would be discussion on survey results before any decision would be made.

Closing Remarks. Larry summarized the meeting, noting that the By-Laws had been passed; nominations accepted; the early dismissal topic awaits finalization of the new schedule; and the Science program may gain help through the Volunteer program.

Adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 9:08pm.

