

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL PTO

Wednesday, January 10, 2023

A meeting of the PTO of Clayton High School was held as scheduled pursuant to due notice on January 10, 2023, 12:00 pm CST, at Meeting Room C of the Center of Clayton and via Zoom conference.

The following members of the Board were present at the meeting: Suzy Oge, Co-President; Jena Schaumburg, Co-President; Joanna Dinsmore, Communications; Dr. Dan Gutchewsky, Principal

The following ex officio advisors and members were present: T'Shon Young, Jenny Abeles, Jane Cai, Tim Schaumburg, Emily Whitney

Present on Zoom: Amy Wilson, Michelle Cissna, Alan

I. Welcome & Introductions

Approval of previous meeting minutes: Tim Schaumburg motioned/Jenny Abeles seconded.

II. President's Report

December Faculty/Parent Book Club: This was well attended, with both parents and teachers, led by Dr. Paul Hoelscher from the CHS Social Studies Department, who facilitated a great discussion. The next meeting will be on February 12, 2024, 3:30–5 pm at the CHS library; continuing the theme of international authors, we'll be reading *Whale* by Cheon Myeong-Kwan. All are welcome!

Incoming 9th Grade Curriculum Night tonight; PTO will be there.

An All in Coalition event for 8th graders is coming up.

Financial report: Suzy for John: We are getting closer to our fundraising target: \$5500 short. Expenses so far (staff appreciation) are on track. We are consulting with Dr. Gutchewsky on awarding Funds for Excellence grants to teachers after receiving the total number of teacher requests from Erica. The way this works is we solicit requests, set a due date, then there's a rolling deadline. Some grants are not approved, as they must fit FFE definitions (if they don't, they go back to department head for funding via other means).

The CHS holiday gift card drive received many generous donations, and all slots were filled. Clayton Cares raised \$3200 for the Zavala-Castrejon family after sophomore Yancy lost her battle with cancer. Sincere thanks to all of our donors!

A video thank you will be posted to show in part what FFE funding goes toward. On Instagram—follow the CHS PTO!

III. Special Guest Speaker: Robyn Wiens, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, and presenter Kate Pavliss, Instructional Coach from the Clayton Special School District (SSD). They work with parents via individual meetings and engagement forums on how to support families of students with disabilities. For schoolwide events, their experiences should be considered.

Sensory-friendly events are welcoming to all. Sensory overload/sensitivity: could be autism disorder or others; lots of kids in the district with these needs. How this can come into play:

- Sound: might not want to respond to speaking; upset at loud noises, or fan in background; responses: cover ears, make own noises
- Touch: may not want to shake, high five, or want a pat on back —be thoughtful.
- Smell: acute awareness: perfume, candle sensitivity

- Taste: often special diet; textures
- Sight: bright flashing lights

Notes for event planning: There is no checklist! But do think about things that can be changed; some can't (buzzer at basketball game stays!) Some ideas to consider:

- Designate quiet/break area to center themselves: dim lights, free of clutter/open, important to include a visual sign indicating where that space is.
- Sensory boxes: every Clayton school has these: fidget toys, heavy stuffies for pressure, sunglasses, earplugs
- Manage expectations: know what event encompasses upfront, including schedule, so families can prepare.
- Adjust lighting when possible: dimmable? blinds? Outdoor: shaded space?
- Reduce noise level, including background noise/music that isn't needed, unneeded loud announcements
- Reduce strong scents, oils; scent-free preferred.
- If a large gathering, could a small subgroup be formed? What role would a student play within a large group?
- Provide choices: let students avoid an activity, provide alternate ways of participating
- Food: have a variety of options; advanced notification for dietary considerations
- Touch: have a choice, e.g., putting on a hat, can decline to participate

Q: What % in HS have sensory issues? Students are not designated via that category. About 11% in district have an IEP, 5–6% have a 504 that might have a sensory need associated with it.

Q: Does SSD have a sensory tent to loan out? Or could PTO fund something like that? Did we just invent that?! Could team up with other PTOs, like for the Back to School Bash. Talk to OT. An enclosed tent might not be best option but we could brainstorm a kit or something. At the HS level, most events aren't PTO-led but this is worth thinking about. Could coordinate with Wellness Center.

Q: Dance Marathon: option for a quiet space? What about at basketball games? Nothing now, but can talk about it. Do families go to these loud events? Depends on the family. At some events kids can be on the periphery. Some students also have orthopedic needs—another thing to be thinking about. Ask questions of vendors about their capabilities.

IV. Principal's Report: Dr. Gutchewsky

Welcome back! Empowerment campus announcement: Exciting news! Dr. Gutchewsky doesn't have the "real plan"—it's all in process. Endless possibilities, such as things that have been talked about for years, e.g., the Catalyst program, which currently rents space in Brentwood, now has opportunities to proceed.

Kids have settled back in. Eighth graders visited (class of 2028): ~180 kids, relatively small class (seniors: large class, 240); numbers fluctuate over the years. They loved the experience! Mascot, cheerleaders were there. Tonight is Curriculum Night for 8th graders, course offerings will be discussed.

Diversity Fair (district-wide) was held, plus CHS hosted 35 schools' robotics kickoff. Musical Sweeney Todd coming up first week of February, all-state for band coming up.

Registration process has started; teachers are making recs, registration starting in a few weeks. Master schedule will be built by mid-February (driven by student requests). New process is thanks to responsiveness of Dr. Gutchewsky and administration to past scheduling problems and is appreciated!

Q: Is this student led? Electives are, e.g., 10 kids interested in digital photo. Try for at least 12 students per section. But some classes will always run, e.g., AP French.

V. Activities Report: T'Shon Young

Junior Class Trivia Night coming up; we have some sponsorships, auction items. Event is for both parents and kids, staff; there are usually some tables of parents + kids.

VI. Committee Reports

Parent Connections updates: seniors will hold an event, not planned yet. Robin Leonard met with Carolyn Blair to coordinate what kinds of informational meetings are needed for each grade level. Grades will choose dates soon.

Jane Cai: ninth grade Parent Connections held an event in early December, 25–30 parents at social gathering. Nice opportunity to meet other parents. Next event can be after spring break.

Emily Whitney: Staff appreciation: Next event is conferences mid-March: providing Dewey's pizzas and salads; staff can grab as they have time. Holiday luncheon was a huge hit.

VII. Other Business

The PTO is always open to speaker requests! Carolyn Blair would like to hold a mini focus group on what parents want to hear at each grade level in spring informational meetings re. transition to college, so please come give ideas!

Q: Freshman with physics interest, interest in starting a club: what's the process? Can come see T'Shon Young. Possible options now. Can get a teacher sponsor.

Q: Lots of negative opinions re. Caleres purchase: We always welcome public input. Next board meeting at the HS library, 1 week from tonight.

Q: What does empowerment campus mean? Empowered learning is part of Clayton's Profile of a Graduate Strategic Plan: Idea of kids having real-life experiences, authentic learning, taking charge of own learning, e.g., robotics, forensics, pre-engineering, Catalyst program. Current programming under that umbrella includes robotics: no practice space, own robotics shop would be great. Other courses include geometry of construction: e.g., building houses, sheds; we don't have a space to do that right now, shop won't accommodate that. Catalyst w/ Ladue: ability to bring on campus would be great.

Q: Could we bring college courses to campus? Possibly; virtual is also an option. Endless options for partnerships. Perhaps a center to host senior internships. Note these are all just brainstorming ideas.

The next PTO meeting will be held on February 7, 2024, at 12:00 pm. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55.

Respectfully submitted,
Joanna Dinsmore, Communications Chair