

TCGIS PTO Meeting Minutes October 5, 2009

Attendees: Nicole Grenz, Ursula Hargens, Leslie Watson, Kami Blackwell-Kinney, Molly McBeath, Gina Vader, Heidi Zimmermann, Rebecca Johnson, Sue Burke Westacott, Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh, Kim Kompel, Liane Gale

Location: TCGIS

The meeting was called to order by PTO president Leslie Watson at 6:37 p.m.

Call for New Business. Leslie Watson requested more time for committee reports, as the Education Support Committee had only met the Friday before and had not had time to submit a final report. Another change was requested by Gina Vader to add a discussion about Great Gatherings to the agenda.

Approval of Agenda. Gina Vader moved to approve the amended agenda; Heidi Zimmermann seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of September Minutes. Gina Vader moved to accept the September minutes, Nicole Grenz seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report. The checking account balance is over \$8,000, though the vendor of the TCGIS merchandise/clothing still has to be paid (~\$1,000). The total profit out of this sale is expected to be \$50 to \$100. So far, 36 Blue Sky Guides have been sold. As the anticipated 4th grade field trip was cancelled, the \$600 that was allocated for this trip has not been spent, but it is also not being un-allocated. Coffee sales are on track, the outcome of the bulb sale is currently unknown. Very few teachers have used their allocated funds (\$100) to date and only receipts totaling \$26 have been submitted for re-imburement. Hunter Goetzman is being encouraged to spend his allocated funds for recess material, as a definite need exists. Campbell soup label points are also earmarked to support recess supplies. Michelle Nellis supported allocation for English teachers according to percentage students, but a decision regarding classroom support for English teachers is still needed. This could be an agenda item for December. Molly McBeath mentioned that the ELL (English Language Learners) specialist does not have a specific allocation. Leslie Watson replied that the ELL teacher could apply for general funds. A lockbox (\$40) was being purchased to safeguard payments to the PTO. The PTO is short \$40 from the Blue Sky Guide sale. A short discussion ensued about the Blue Sky Guides. We expect to sell 60 guides, but we don't have to sell them all, though incentives are given if all are sold.

School Board Report. Kim Kompel, TCGIS School Board member and their parent liaison presented a synopsis of the September (9/24/09) School Board meeting. This was her first official School Board Report, which is being added to the regular PTO agenda. A summary of the Board Meetings will also be available in the Elternbrief, one week after the meeting. An important board issue is to make a decision on the third language, which will be introduced in 6th grade. A previous parent survey favored Chinese and Spanish, though another parent survey will be conducted within the next two weeks. Two new policies were approved. The first was in regards to the schools' policy regarding the Pledge of Allegiance. The policy was amended to indicate that the Pledge of Allegiance and other patriotic exercise will be taught once English instructions commences (3rd grade). The second approved policy was a Volunteer Code of Conduct that is being put together by Kim Kompel. The document, which has not been finalized yet, will need to be signed by volunteers with student contact (e. g. in-classroom & library volunteers, chaperones) and will specify rules and expectations with regards to e.g. emergencies and privacy issues. Short discussions ensued regarding implementation specifics and exactly who would need to sign the document. Kim Kompel also reported that a strategic planning process has been initiated. TCGIS is applying to a group within the Carlson School of Management that provides free consulting for non-profit organizations. The strategic planning process could start this year and will involve a broad range of stakeholders. A consultant would also help with initial planning and goal setting. The final output would be a Guiding Document that will define who we are, and

will provide a summary and guideline of our vision, priorities and goals. The process and document will also assist with day-to-day decisions.

A final and non-board issue that was addressed by Kim Kompel was the "Outdoor Plan". At the last meeting, she had hoped that we would have final city approval by now, but the plan has not even been submitted yet to the city of St. Paul, as the landscape architect was concerned about the amount of dirt which would have to be moved according to the existing plan. Though Kim Kompel has identified a volunteer coordinator, who could move the dirt with the help of his company and volunteers, it still would cost \$2,000 just to move soil out of one area. Kim Kompel will meet again with the landscape architect with the goal of developing a simpler outdoor plan.

Teacher Check-In. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh was present as the teacher representative. Liane Gale asked whether there is a school-wide policy regarding the use of the informal addressing of adults "Du", vs. the formal addressing of "Sie" within the school community. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh agreed that it would make things easier if there was such a policy and indicated that this issue would be discussed among staff.

PTO Board Report and Standing Committee Updates

PTO Board Report. The PTO Board and committee chairs met to discuss questions and requests for the PTO. Items discussed were a request for committee chairs to submit a written report to keep the agenda on task, the addition to the regular agenda of a School Board Report by the Parent Liaison, the establishment of a Paypal account, which allows for accepting online donations, payments for purchases of merchandise & ticket payments. An expense of 2.2% plus 30 cents per transaction with no monthly fee would incur. The Board decided that the fees will be passed on to customers when ordering online. The previous TCGIS volunteer coordinator Sylvia Oxenham stepped down from that position. Leslie Watson updated the volunteer pamphlet at the beginning of the year, but does not want to fill the role of volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinator streamlines volunteer opportunities at TCGIS, identifies needs, fills requests, develops job descriptions, estimates time commitments, and develops a standard way to recruit volunteers. Gina Vader volunteered to take on this role. The job duties of the PTO historian, which is being held currently by Nicole Grenz, were discussed. She will conduct follow-ups after events to establish volunteer lists, so that volunteers can be acknowledged. Together with event organizers, she will also develop how-to manuals for the various activities. "Tanz in den Mai" discussions were deemed necessary to see whether this event fits the PTO or the school.

Classroom Support Committee. Kami Blackwell-Kinney asked whether there were any questions related to activities from this committee and a definite question was "Where does the cake come from?" The Sunshine Committee, a.k.a. Nicole Grenz did provide cakes for teachers' birthdays, but was not sure whether she should continue to bring in treats. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh responded that it might be a better idea to bring treats to the faculty meetings, as otherwise the birthday person might miss the treat. It was mentioned that the Classroom Parent training session was very well received. Kami Blackwell-Kinney responded that it generated many ideas.

Education Support Committee. Lisa Friedman, Liane Gale, Leslie Watson, and Ursula Hargens met with director Annika Fjelstad the previous Friday to redefine the role of this committee. The director currently does not know about any plans regarding field trips and Annika Fjelstad was planning to survey the teachers for their thoughts, ideas and plans regarding field trips. Lisa Friedman has started to collect information on previous field trips and intends to survey teachers on field trip plans, and how they tie-in into the curriculum. The committee will pass on this information to the director, so that the school can then determine the number and type of field trips per grade. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh then provided a history of Culture Weeks at the school and provided an update regarding the future of Culture Weeks that resulted from faculty discussions. Social studies standards of Minnesota require the discussion of different types of family life in three different places. The various Culture Weeks are now assigned to the different grade levels. The Kindergarteners will discuss native American culture, 1st grade will immerse themselves into Chinese

culture, 2nd grade will learn about African culture, 3rd grade will study native Americans culture again, due to its importance to Minnesota heritage, 4th grade will probably study Hispanic culture and 5th grade will receive an introduction to world history. Overall, the Culture Weeks would appear more like a Culture Theme, and the individual grades can determine themselves how to integrate them into their curriculum. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh clarified that the state requirements are to learn about three different cultures between the grades K through 3. Another set of requirements includes grades 4 through 8. Leslie Watson also mentioned discussions within the committee about the cultural ramifications on how and which holidays are celebrated in the school. Ursula Hargens contributed that it is important to get feedback from teachers and other critical people within the community. Currently, German and American holidays are celebrated and it remains unclear whether TCGIS considers itself a German school or an American school. A goal could be to include a page in the "Parent Handbook" regarding holiday specifics. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh mentioned that Halloween policies have been established and will be published in the next Elternbrief. Kim Kempel added that the question of identity "What/Who are we?" that encompasses whether we are an American or a German school will be a topic in the Strategic Plan Process.

Leslie Watson continued with the "Greening Initiative" that was started by a small group of parents in a preliminary meeting. Leslie Watson took the next step and found out that recycling pick up is already arranged for the building. Rebecca Johnson mentioned that a friend of hers was a recycling coordinator and that she could easily organize recycling bins for the classroom. It was mentioned that the science teacher, Cornelia Fritsche is open to integrating greening efforts in her curriculum. Kim Kempel mentioned that the PTO could get the parent volunteers involved but that the teachers would have to get the classrooms involved, which means that Annika Fjelstad has to take this issue to the teachers. Leslie Watson interjected that the director is very much in favor of greening efforts, but that she does not take the lead on this, due to time constraints, so that the Greening Initiative will be driven by PTO efforts. This effort could start with simple things, e.g. by providing recycling bins, fliers to encourage double-sided copying and $\frac{3}{4}$ " margins. Ursula Hargens was of the opinion that a TCGIS greening effort will only go underway if the PTO is active in that respect. Marcy Zachmeier-Ruh suggested that the TCGIS curriculum meetings on Wednesdays that have an agenda would be a good venue for the Greening Initiative to present its vision for the school. Liane Gale suggested to compile lists to summarize what is expected from students, staff, and teachers regarding greening efforts.

Fundraising committee. Leslie Watson talked about the new fundraiser EqualExchange Chocolate, Nuts and Teas, which could make a good test case for online ordering, which as an added benefit would be an almost paperless fundraiser. A coordinator is needed. Leslie Watson has been asking whether a fundraising overload is perceived, but apparently this is not the case. So far, only 22 tickets for the "Auflauf" event have been sold. To break even, we need to sell 100 tickets. A discussion ensued on how to appeal to more people to buy tickets for this event. CPs could be involved for advertising the event and also to communicate better that this event does not require the preparation of a dish. The Community Craft & Bake Sale, which is being organized by Heidi Zimmermann and will take place Nov. 21. A Ruhland Strudel coordinator is needed.

Gina Vader has stepped down as the main organizer for "Tanz in den Mai". In the absence of a replacement for Gina Vader, a discussion about the future of this event took place, and in addition to its relation to "Field Days". Gina Vader summarized the event as "A lot of work not to make any money". For example, with the Ruhland Strudel fundraising sale we made \$465, compared to the \$250 that was made by "Tanz in den Mai". Liane Gale suggested that we could present it as a "May Fest", a potluck event, just to get to know families, especially the incoming Kindergarten families. Molly McBeath mentioned that there are already events at the school planned for incoming Kindergarten families. Kim Kempel contributed that events like "Tanz in den Mai" bring families together and allow to build relationships, which is important, especially to feel the sense of community. Ursula Hargens differentiated between events that are meant for fundraising and events that build communities. The "Tanz in den Mai" discussion ended with Gina Vader wanting to talk further with Office Manager, Stefanie Berres about this event, as "Tanz in den Mai" originally started out as a school event. Gina Vader presented the next topic "Great Gatherings", with Beryimar Funk offering a Latin Dance Class November 15 between 3-5 p.m. Though April Pearson was interested in a Great Gatherings knitting class the same week, November 10 and 12. To avoid a conflict, it was agreed to ask April if she would be willing to offer the class in the spring or as part of Maskenball auction.

2009-2010 PTO Meeting Topics/Speakers

Leslie Watson put forward the idea of inviting Neely Crane-Smith, Program Director of MN Energy Challenge as a speaker during a PTO meeting/or another public school meetings. The question then arose whether TCGIS has access to a larger meeting place, e.g. the Central High School Auditorium. Rebecca Johnson mentioned that a recycling/greening/composting event for the whole school would be a great idea. Other ideas for speakers were: brain development, parenting, world-citizenship.

MollyMcBeath moved to adjourn at 8:19 p.m., which was seconded by Ursula Hargens.

Submittted by Liane Gale, Secretary