

Hastings PTA Meeting, January 8, 2008

Attendance:

Sharon Kendall, Jane Hundley, Shannon Kreytak, Kristine Arena, Steve Adler, Christine Escala, Lisa Soulier, Cindy Carter, George Psychojos, Adam Smith, Jessie Steigerwald, Ilene Benghiat, Carin Casey, June Hsiao, Rod Cole

Thanks to Steve as he plans his next steps after his announcement that he will be leaving in June

teacher thank yous for Dec. Luncheon sponsored by the PTA were expressed

mini-grant thank you: 1st grade team—extra books for their classrooms

LEF thank you for Hastings Team participation in the Trivia Bee

special thanks to SK & SK for the bylaw work: special 5 parents who worked along with them and to those who contributed, we now have PTA updated By Laws

vote on the By-Laws—need to have enough people
last updated 1999, nat'l PTA dictates that they must be reviewed and updated with their template every 3 years

major changes:

lower voting from 15 to 12 members

change fiscal year to end July 31st

we won't pay dues to a Lexington pta council

some more specifics about some dates

the by-laws have been posted on line for public review since November
They must be submitted to Nat'l for approval

J.S. made a motion to vote to accept bylaws- every one in attendance voted to adopt new by-laws

No one has come forward to participate on the nominating committee for next year's pta exec board (we would like them to start them working now) one more vice-president, and to look for all committee chairs for next year Sharon K. will be part of this committee, she needs 2 more members

Technology in schools in Lexington

Currently the PTA presidents from all the schools are working together to discuss the potential to accelerate updating of computers and software.

Number 1 area for improvement in parent/teacher survey is technology Also discussed in all the other schools at this time (ongoing w/elementary, middle school and high school) concerns in equity, both parents & teachers (2 new schools vs. 4 older)

Superintendent central office: Maryann McKenna's plan for capital budget 2 schools (new) ahead of the other 4

one school has money from PTA, other has a donor interested Dr. Ash brought it to the attention of the other PTAs that these conditions exist (what does that mean ? we should all be fundraising ? what about grant writing ? what about foundation money, corporate donations ?)

Could the 4 schools get together and ask permission to raise money to improve technology in the elementary schools from the school committee ? (what about the entire community ? there are 9 schools in town—the more you ask, the more you may receive)

Steve Adler: all contingent on school committee's approval is there a possibility of accelerating the improvements by raising \$\$\$? no question that the Hastings school is significantly behind other elementary schools, concerns for all other older elementary schools

Christine Escala, Deb Crasnow, Shelly S. are some of the teachers who have been on the technology committee 6 years at the Hastings School **Christine E.** gave us some info as to what is now the current state of technology at Hastings; the following is a summary of her presentation of

the state of technology at Hastings:

All classrooms: one computer with OS 9.2
lab has 25 computers

3 support people used to exist to support teachers, (this is related to the over ride not passing 2 years ago) now there are **NO** support personnel

3 projectors, 4 laptops now exist

Janet has gotten some help, get more training and support--
more staff development so teachers can help themselves

Possible ideas from a school survey on technology:

Laptops for all the teachers

How is this possible ?

In use in the classroom, laptops can be hooked up to projectors to demonstrate for all the class (however, the projectors are expensive, lamps and parts replacements are expensive)

Classrooms used to have 5 computers, shift to lab changed that
Computers need OS 10, then support for teachers to get used to the new software

Improving the lab—town server needs to be upgraded, as internet use from our lab is difficult

Change is hard—OS 10 on a laptop vs. OS 9 in the computer lab
immediate vs. longterm support

some teachers are bringing in their own computers, sometimes helpful, sometimes not

just donating computers is not enough, there must be sufficient budget for personnel (tech support) and curriculum development

Ms. Escala taught Lexplorations at Fiske last summer and commented how wonderful it was to use the new technology there

Needs and Improvement:

Ms. Escala noted that if there were at least 1 projector per grade level, and training to let teachers know how to operate them, we would have significant improvement

How are kids using computers ? Kids less, teachers more

Ms. Escala is the only teacher to have her own website
all her classes homework is online: link from the library
/~cescala (use sch.ma.lexington link)

(One current problem: when kids in the computer lab are trying to use the same website simultaneously, all the computers freeze, a result is that classes are not using the lab as much) (Problems with town server)

Teachers used to have lots of workshops and training together, this no longer happens

When a computer with OS9 is trying to access internet websites, half the websites they want to use may need flash, which does not exist for OS 9

Everything has changed some much in 6 years—Ms. Escala is happy we are trying to get back something that has been lost

Capital request is **only** about hardware—***hopefully this will include the professional development, which should be included in the regular budget***

some curriculum development specialists still do encourage certain web connections and links

teachers have a hard time keeping up their own skills

are there goals for students and teachers ?

what are goals/guidelines ?

Priority ?

lab, classrooms, teachers, library ? a lab on wheels (known as cows)
survey was done for the classrooms, what did teachers want ?

#1)one computer per teacher

#2(lab improvements (new computers there)

teachers need to feel more comfortable in order to teach the kids

is there a choice or a more important goal for what kids need ?

we really want kids to do their own access as the ultimate goal

The Lexington district does have a model (which is based on Harrington and Fiske)

At Hastings we are anticipating 30 new machines, hopefully that means laptops for teachers

an internal network upgrade and server upgrade is something the town must provide

Maryann McKenna is the district contact on technology, has prepared the plan and is in charge of this project

Without a technology person full time in the school, it is impossible to have full use of existing technology

District goal: by 2011 no computer older than 6 years

what if we had different technology(cheaper) so that a 3 year cycle would be possible ? (One parent questioning cost of new system—it seem very high)

PTA question for tonight:

4 schools “behind” within the plan, each of the schools are getting 30 machines to be equitable between each other

Jessie made a pro/con goals for fundraising

Just Hastings vs. Town wide

Pro for Town wide: the real definition of public education

cons for Hastings: tapped out of giving from playground fundraiser

other pta presidents will continue to meet on this issue—all together on Monday, January 11th, 2008

What does Hastings want? before next Monday we need to know how would parents would want to fund technology in all the schools—or have a sense if the community would want to contribute to the existing budget of \$600,000

Parents and the community can't change the plan—because it exists, we can only accelerate the existing plan

There is an operating plan that coexists to support staff along with capital plan

There is a perception that raising money for individual schools may not be the best approach, and is contrary to the purpose of public, equitable education. School committee should provide guidance on this issue.

sources of money:

townwide money

pta

lef—(C.Escala did write a grant and submitted to the LEF for “smart boards” 5 years ago—she was not granted it)

who wants to be emailed on tech talk update:

could we update our own website: (?)

maybe this should be on the listserv (?)

We heard strong feelings from parents on a townwide fundraiser

not supportive to green light individual schools to support their own fundraisers, perhaps a townwide effort for all the schools would be more beneficial and promote district equity

Other Business:

So far Emily L. is the only parent involved in ACT, she could use help !

Bayside skippers are performing tomorrow, 1/9/08—great achievement for one parent coordinating this !

Multi-cultural Potluck supper: parents are meeting 1/9

date is most likely March 6th

ideas surround cultural diversity and perhaps not so much emphasis on food as it becomes very hectic

Family Math Nights—still in need of 2 volunteers, so far enough volunteers to have 4 nights—anyone who says yes could dictate what they want to do

School budget hearings: next Tuesday, 1/15 is first budget hearing one item on the supplemental budget is the potential for full day kindergarten; grant possible from the state—planning grant to get it started—many advocates feel important for young children, Lexington is one of the few towns in the state that does not have full day kindergarten (Dr. Ash reported the 70 % of cities and towns in MA do have full day kindergarten)

Goal setting meeting on Saturday, January 12th , parents are invited to attend with question, please also email the school committee

Spring Fair committee: March/April possible date

Recess helpers: new programs for 1st and 2nd grades Karen Manning was the parent who started it

Volunteer training—teachers want to move toward making it mandatory (rather painless) We have at least 140 parents who are now trained !

New principal search: Search committee will probably be 2 parents,
probably 2 teachers
jobs posted in Globe this Sunday, interviews hopefully after February
vacation

Dr. Ash not sure if there may be more informal meet and greet

If one is interested to be on the search committee, you must be available
every day between 3:30 and 6 the week after vacation (Lexington has not
traditionally promoted from within)

Do we need more parents to help support the old software ?

The problem is having someone on call

Special thanks to Christine E. for coming to the meeting and presenting
her teacher perspective, and for working as the “defacto” IT manager for
Hastings. Meeting adjourned at 8:55.