

3/18/10 6:40-7:45 pm

Attending: about 37 parents, including from the executive committee: Tilda Doscher, co-President; Kristian Larsen, co-vice president; Adam Schechter, treasurer; Lydia Gaston, co-secretary; Julie Triedman, alternate reporting secretary. Representing the school: Dan Rubenstein, Rachel Beerman, Penny Marzulli, Caroline Michael.

OFFICIAL PTSO BUSINESS:

Nominating committee: **John Adler** was selected by Dan Rubenstein to lead the nominating committee for the PTSO executive committee positions for the 2010-2011 school year. It was deemed appropriate that the current class should elect a president, vice-president, treasurer and secretary, and that the incoming class should select the co-positions for each post after they arrive next fall. Adler described the job of the nominating committee, and volunteers for the two other spots on the committee were solicited. Three volunteered. Though only three are needed under the bylaws, a parent made a motion to increase the size of the committee to four this year. All but one parent present voted to increase it. All those who volunteered, including Ted Deignan, Nat Moss, and Liz Helbraun, were named members of the committee alongside John by unanimous assent.

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS BY THE SCHOOL:

Fund co-chair **Adine Schuman-Pusey** said the school has received 33 gifts totaling \$8,500 so far this year. The school's target is to receive at least double that by the end of the school year. Some grandparents of current students and a company with a matching plan also donated, which is encouraging.

TREASURER'S REPORT/PTSO FUND- AND FUN-RAISING EFFORTS:

Adam Schechter gave the Treasurer's monthly report. He said the school T-shirts were a huge hit and have earned \$456 in revenues for the PTSO. More will be ordered for future school and PTSO events.

Other revenue-getters: Some 76 families bought school photos, with the amount of funds going to the PTSO not yet determined.

Liz Scheines gave a report on the ice skating party. It raised \$352.42 for the PTSO "which we didn't expect to do." There were around 38 students and 150 participants in total.

UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS:

Ruth Wilner talked about the upcoming annual *auction-cabaret*. It will be at Union Temple, uniontemple@org, at Grand Army Plaza, on June 3. (There will be no homework that night, the school promises!) There will be food, dancing, a DJ, and entertainment provided by parents and other volunteer performers.

Ruth is looking for assistance and a captain of the food committee and a captain of the auction committee. The food volunteers will find sources of food, make up the menu, do the logistics. The auction committee gets the donated items, does the paperwork, writes up the catalog, and runs the logistics of the auction. There will also be a 'basket raffle' from each class.

Lydia Gaston is asking for parents or relatives of students to contact her about contributing to the entertainment (music, vocals, comedy, dance, you name it.) You can contact her at lydiagaston@hotmail.com.

Tilda Doscher announced there will be a *Scholastic Book Fair* the week of June 7 when there are Parent-Teacher conferences. Volunteers should contact her at tildabeth@gmail.com.

NEW HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE:

Co-vice president **Nina Flores** has been spearheading an effort to establish a safety committee. She is working on the effort to bring a crossing guard to the corner of 35th and 4th Ave. and to bring the police precinct liaison in to speak to parents at a future PTSO meeting. **Mike Wilner** will head up the new committee, which will be broad in its focus, including both safety and health issues and will be ongoing.

ADVOCACY DAY IN ALBANY

Nat Moss reported on the trip Feb. 2 by members of the school community to advocate for more support for charter schools and to lift the state cap on their numbers. Roughly 8-9 students and their families went up and had a meeting with state Sen. Velmanette Montgomery. She opposes lifting the cap, which is at 200 currently and has remained there for a few years. State legislators failed this past winter to vote on a bill to double that number in New York. Nat said it is critical that all BPCS families consider writing a letter to Sen. Montgomery asking her to support lifting the cap and to bring parity to charter schools; for more on that funding imbalance, see <http://www.brooklynprospect.org/node/784>. A template of the letter of appeal to the Senator is also on our website at: <http://www.brooklynprospect.org/parents>

CURRICULUM REPORT:

Ms. Carolyn Michael described the math curriculum at the school. She began by showing some examples of student ‘pi-kus,’ which were written around pi day last week and have three lines, the first with 3 syllables, the second with one syllable, and the third with 4.

Why is pi

So

Irrational?

Pi Day's here

Sigh

Not good at math

You math geeks!

Shhh

Pi's getting cold

She then described the focus of 6th grade math, which is expanding kids’ understanding of a variety of types of numbers. The kids have moved from fractions and percents to getting comfortable with algebra in the past six months. They are starting to use generalization to use solutions that can apply to a variety of problems. A lot of thought is put into how each

unit can be tailored to the level of each child. Each challenge problem can benefit students at a variety of experiential and educational levels. Assignments are also often given out in multiple levels of difficulty, depending on where a student is. The assignments look the same, but are not.

Though there is still a wide differentiation in math levels, the school is expecting to offer all students algebra I in eighth grade. Some students who score high on the Terra Nova exam and who show high motivation and grades will be assigned to an Algebra I section in 7th grade. The determination will be made later in the spring. The rest will be in pre-Algebra in 7th grade. Students in Algebra I in 7th grade will either advance to Algebra II or to Geometry in 8th grade; the school will determine which sometime in the near future. There are no plans yet to offer a Regents Algebra in 8th grade.

How can parents help their kids with math? Ask them to show their work on loose-leaf paper. If they ask for help, ask them "how would you approach this?" then wait a minute and let them struggle and think it through alone first. If they can't understand enough to do it themselves, have them write a note explaining what they tried and that they couldn't do it. To prep for tests, ask them, "What do you think the teacher will put on it?" And then have them do a few work problems from the past unit over again. Last, celebrate small and incremental achievements. And finally, feel free to contact Ms. Michael at cmichael@brooklynprospect.org. She loves feedback.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:

LaNolia Ufondu said it is vitally important for all families to *fill in the NY DOE Schools Survey* that they will receive this week in the mail. They contribute to our school's grade by the DOE and are completely anonymous. Also attached to that survey is a *re-enrolment form* that you need to fill in and bring back so the school knows how many seats will be available for new students in the 7th grade. The enrolment form, importantly, has a place where you will indicate whether your child wishes to continue Spanish or to begin Mandarin next year. If there is insufficient demand for Mandarin, "then we'll change our strategy," Dan said. The school is interviewing instructors for the Mandarin Chinese subject now. Ms. Zayas will be teaching both 6th and 7th grade Spanish next year.

In other news, the kids took practice Math state tests and are taking ELA practice tests on Monday and Tuesday the 22nd and 23rd. The real exams are in April and May. There is a new advisory unit, "goal setting." As part of that, students identified their strengths and interests and isolated careers they are interested in. Based on those, the school created minicourses. Students sign up for two sequential minicourses on everything from teamwork to public speaking to money management.

Like every school, BPCS expects to be randomly 'screened' by school safety officers at some point in the future. Students may see their cell phones taken away but they should not be alarmed, as these will be given to their advisors and they will get them back at dismissal.

If your child is absent you MUST indicate WHY they are absent IN WRITING. The note can be via email. Phone calls are not enough. This is part of necessary reporting to the DOE.

DAN'S REPORT:

Dan Rubenstein answered parent questions to finish the hour.

Dan said he has been witnessing enormous growth in the school community and student academic and social development. "Students are coming together as a group," he says. And academically "we're starting to have data showing an incredible amount of learning." He urges parents to take the time to connect with him, with LaNolia, with your child's advisor. Or come in and take a tour to get acquainted with the school anew: there will soon be signups for mini-tours for BPCS parents during the school day. See for yourself what's going on here.

Based on parent input, the school brought on a school counselor and a Dean of Students, Mr. Butler. The number of serious disciplinary incidents has dropped a lot.

A parent asked about whether there can be improvements in cafeteria food. Dan says it's mostly through the DOE, but the school will be offering additional salad bar items, water, and more prepared whole foods. Contact Tilda for more info about oversight of the school's lunches.

What about the new building location? Dan can't comment yet, hopes to have that information to us after the lottery in April.

How many students have left BPCS? Three, including one the school supported, and two that were parental decisions.

How will open slots for 7th grade be filled? There is a waiting list. The spots will be filled by a lottery as well.

How are you hiring new teachers for 7th grade? We are not limited to the DOE's previous hires. We are recruiting NY DOE candidates, charter school teachers, and private school teachers for the 8 candidates we need next year. There will be new teachers for the core subject areas, a part-time music teacher, and two special ed teachers.

What's going on with that BAM cultural connection that was supposed to happen? Not enough, but we hope to strengthen that relationship next year.

Will students stay with same advisors next year? No. They will have different advisors, and they will meet in the afternoon because of space issues.

LAST ANNOUNCEMENT: **Becca Gallagher** asks parents interested in having their child in an afterschool course to sign up and bring the sheet and check in this week.