

Burning Tree PTA Meeting Minutes – December 9, 2008 at 7 pm

The meeting was called to order by President Lisa Sanfuentes. The October 7, 2008 meeting minutes were approved.

President's Report (Lisa Sanfuentes): Thank you for: Beautify Burning Tree, Walk To School Day, Sally Foster Sale, International Night, 2 cultural arts assemblies, Dine Outs, Halloween parties, DC Food Bank Collection, Staff Appreciation Lunch, lobby renovation including the tile logo, Broad Acres Clothing Drives and the Book Fair. The Audit Committee met two weeks ago and certified that our financial books for last year are in perfect order! Book Fair feedback – teachers and staff would like the book fair to be held in the school. It is a more enriching experience for the children. We would set it up in the library and it could be held over 2 days. The teachers feel that not everyone from BTES can make it out to Barnes & Noble and if the book fair is here, they would help children get excited about books, create wish lists and bring the children through the book fair. We used to do it at the school and we stopped because it was so labor intensive. If someone is interested in helping to hold the Book Fair at the school, please let us know. Carderock Elementary and Bethesda Elementary are having book fairs next week in their school (they are both in our cluster). Junior Great Books is an ongoing program that uses a variety of short stories to teach children about reading and literacy. It's an emphasis this year from MCPS. Is anyone trained in this program? If anyone is interested in training, please contact Mrs. Richter. A parent volunteer would facilitate a discussion in the classroom because students would break up in small groups. There are daily reading initiative blocks that don't have volunteers and need them. Please contact Mrs. Richter if you can volunteer. Reading Initiative is for 1st and 2nd grades only. BTNET – only for official school communication, not if you lost an item, and for very short thank yous. Please keep it informational. For example, with the Book Fair we mentioned on BTNET how well the event did and overall thanked the volunteers, but not by name. Skate Night will be held on Feb. 20 at Cabin John Ice Rink. FUNdraising party will now be held on March 14th instead of March 21st.

Treasurer's Report (Lisa Norwalk): we front loaded our fund raising this year. Teachers will need to be paid for after-school programs. Obligated funds are sales taxes due. Under Expenses we will be spending a lot, but haven't spent yet. Every classroom teacher gets \$100 check for additional supplies; those who give receipts and spend up to another \$100 can get reimbursed for the 2nd \$100. Some staff members have their own budgets. At holiday time, we give a gift to those staff members (\$50) and others who don't have classrooms or their own budget. We also buy new materials for classrooms for indoor recess because the games get used a lot. Staff Development occurs throughout the year and we have a big budget for that. On the Wish List are some projects that we will pay for. White boards are all ordered. Mr. Tark said that the \$2,000 earmarked for whiteboards will give us 9 whiteboards but won't convert all of the classrooms to whiteboards.

Mr. Tark: - the Digital TV is all set up and BT News teams are starting to use it. It is new to Ms. Hurowitz and Ms. Burstyn are learning how to use it. We will get them more training.

Treasurer's Report: we paid for the colored tiles in the hallway and it's a great idea. The students really walk on the tiles. The BT Frog logo is a gift from 5th grade classes of 2008 and 2009. The science equipment and books involves buying new microscopes. The children are doing informational writing and we'll purchase books on topics that kids are writing about and that we don't have books for (for example, bioluminescence of jelly fish). Any extra monies we have at the end of year will go to funding the wish list items. We can carry over about \$20,000 from one year to the next to help with start-up costs. The Kindergarten blacktop is not in such a bad condition that the county will pay for resurfacing it. We will have to pay for it, and Mr. Tark will get a quote for it.

V.P. Fundraising (Ellie Abramowitz) – the Book Fair was great. We had 200 books from the wish lists that were purchased and 24 books from the Broad Acres list. We made \$600 from the Dine Outs at Mama Lucia's and Cosi. We don't have #s from Baja Fresh yet. Cosi gave us 15% of all their sales from that night. The one day event worked out well but teachers felt that not as many kids were there for the readings. Fill Our Pond - a 2nd request letter was sent to families who haven't donated yet and we have received donations already. Our next mailing will go out in time for the party on March 14th. We are looking for 100% participation rate and we have about 30% participation rate. We have raised about \$23,000 (**Lisa, should we mention this #**)? Sally Foster – we made a little over \$5,000. Spring Fair – we want to do something different because we need a lot of volunteers – about 200 volunteer hours during the event, not counting the time it takes to plan the event. We looked at having bigger rides (such as a Rock Wall) and getting business sponsors. But we haven't had a response from the business community. We are now considering a Mini-Fair with a movie night starting at 5:30 pm. We are looking into the cost for renting the movie. We would still have Cake Walk, Bag-O-Mania & other popular games from Spring Fair.

MCCPTA (Darrin Hartzler) – we met in October to set budget priorities. No school on inauguration day.

School based (Lisa Sanfuentes on behalf of Karen Van Loon, Katerina Papaioannou and Vicki Herson) – Science Fair is coming up. Katerina and her team will talk to the classrooms tomorrow. We need new scientists to come to the classrooms during lunch. If anyone knows a scientist who can come in and talk, contact Katerina. The Broad Acres Halloween drive was very successful. We are holding a book drive for gently used kids' books. On December 19th we'll have a read in for 15 to 20 minutes and the whole school will stop and everyone will read. Our PTA Membership is up 5% from last year so we received a certificate from the County.

V.P. Volunteers (Elissa Ginsky) - Volunteers need to sign in and out at the office so we can capture the # of volunteer hours. I'm just guessing that our volunteer hours are down versus last year. We need a way to capture the hours that people spend volunteering outside of school, for example, planning for the Book Fair. I will look into this.

Mrs. Erdrich - thank you for the lobby furnishings, front garden, book fair, good will, after school programs, cultural arts programs. Every child will do a research project

(including Kindergarten). Our next parent coffee is on Jan. 21st. We will discuss writer's workshop because writing is a process and we'd like for you to learn what that process is. We'll move the Class of 2006 bench into the KG playground so it's a good place for parents to sit while waiting for your child to come out or when they're on the playground playing. Last Thursday, we got an email about things we couldn't do and monies we can't spend. Right now, any classroom teacher vacancies we have to hire their replacements as long term substitutes (so there will be no benefits), and we can't get substitutes for staff development time. We'll look into whether we can do teacher training after school hours. We basically can't spend monies on anything other than the bare necessities. Special Education teacher positions are not frozen. The 2nd/3rd grade Learning Center class is very large now with 16 students. I've met with the Department of Special Education and Dr. Stetson (community superintendent) and we've requested another teacher. I haven't heard yet. 35 kids were absent today. Please do keep your child at home if he/she is sick. However, we need an attendance of 96% to make our AYP (annual yearly progress) #s. It doesn't matter if our kids can answer every MSA question correctly if we don't have the attendance #s. If we don't make AYP, we get bad publicity and this affects our home values, and other important things in our neighborhood.

Mrs. Granof - thank you for the books from our Wish Lists at the Book Fair. After school programs are going very well. They're well attended. Mrs. Salcetti will teach yoga and her class is full. Cultural arts assembly was great. We had a great lunch on Nov. 13th. Feb. 10th is Family Night at the Air & Space Museum. We'll only have 100 seats and anyone from the 4th & 5th grade families can go. School buses leave at 6 pm from the school and the whole program is free. We return around 9 pm. This year it's only for 4th and 5th graders (and their siblings) because we have 5 elementary schools in our cluster going. We are studying eco-systems in the Chesapeake Bay in 4th grade. Guest speaker next week will come in and talk about how to keep our oceans clean to all 4th graders.

Illisa Flamm & Lisa Norwalk for the Environmental Committee - we have 8 people on the committee. We're considering doing an Earth Day assembly, recycling information, Tree program, Green network by National Parks Service and the Audubon Society. We will also look at the curriculum, school events, outside of school activities, staff and teacher training, community events, parent outreach, etc. And we will get more information on each of these areas and show kids how to make a difference.

Respectfully submitted
Surya M. Shah, Recording Secretary