

Minutes – PTO Meeting  
March 2, 2015, 6:30 p.m.  
Manhattan Middle School Library

Those in attendance: MaryKay Cicio, Shannon Collier, Joanne Corson, Mary Dineen, Amy Evans, Loli Hudson, Erica Johnson, Peggy Livingston, Michele Marshall, Paula Moseley, John Riggs, Carla Roitz, Marni Shykmus, Stephanie Spencer, Karen Urbanowski, Shawna Warner, Amanda Wember, and Jamie Zimenoff.

**I. Welcome: Michele Marshall**

Michele convened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

**II. PARCC Testing Information: Carla Roitz**

Carla Roitz, who is the mother of a Manhattan sixth grader and a language arts teacher at Fairview High School, spoke about the option to refuse the upcoming PARCC and/or CMAS testing. PARCC testing will be in March. CMAS testing be in April and May. Mr. Riggs said that the earlier tests may be more comprehensive than those at the end of the year.

Carla<sup>1</sup> distributed an attachment (Attachment A) and reported that this year more time will be spent on testing. Previously, each piece of the school's curriculum was impacted equally. This year, LA teachers will be proctoring, and the testing will impact teaching LA more than other subjects. Math will have the second most reduction in teaching. Mr. Riggs said that the additional time is due to the new tests being administered on computers. There are not enough computers for all students to take the tests simultaneously.

Someone said that there is no law requiring children to take the tests, but the law requires the school to administer the tests. Schools have told that if they have under 95% student participation in the tests, they will lose funding. Carla said that this consequence has referred to in the past but has not occurred. She said she is fairly confident it will not be enforced. A task force for standards and assessments in Colorado recommended that the sanctions not be enforced.

Someone asked why so many hours are devoted to PARCC and/or CMAS testing, when the ACT and SAT college admission tests take only three hours. Mr. Riggs said that for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, there are six tests, and for 8<sup>th</sup> graders there are nine. Each test is 1.5 hours. Last year was the first year of the CMAS test.

For high schoolers, the only CMAS test is for seniors. Carla said that of about 500 Fairview seniors, only about eight took that test. Mr. Riggs said that so far about 40 students of the 550 at Manhattan have opted out. At the high schools, the opt-out rate may be closer to 50%.

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<sup>1</sup> In keeping with my practice to refer to parents by first name and teachers/staff by title, I am referring to Carla by her first name, because at Manhattan she is a parent, not a teacher.

All of Mr. Riggs's time on Friday and the day of the meeting (February 27<sup>th</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup>) was spent on work relating refusals for the testing, including communicating with teachers.

Some parents raised questions of privacy and the extent to which scores are associated with named students. Mr. Riggs said none of the middle school standard test results will follow students or have any impact on college admissions.

### **III. Treasurer's Report: Erica Johnson**

Erica distributed a treasurer's report. See Attachment B.

The PTO's finances are in good shape. We have \$22,000 in cash, including \$10,000 from Whole Foods. February is a light month for fundraising. We have distributed \$28,090 from Magic Phoenix funds. Each class received \$1,000 from the PTO for field trips.

Michele said that we are waiting for word from the theater and music departments about using money for an improved sound system.

Mr. Riggs said that when he arrived as a new principal, there was about \$25,000 in unspent PTO funds. For the Magic Phoenix, 12% of the proceeds used to go to the PTO.

The suggested donation for parents at the beginning of this school year was \$50 per student, as compared to \$120 per student in prior years.

For nonprofits with under \$25,000 in net income, the IRS has streamlined reporting requirements.

### **IV. Principal's Report: John Riggs**

#### **A. More on Testing**

Mr. Riggs said that the highest PARCC refusal rate was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and that the best way to voice opinions about testing was to contact their legislators. Before February 26<sup>th</sup>, there had been six refusals at Manhattan; as of the date of the meeting (March 2<sup>nd</sup>), there had been 40. Parents have the right to refuse testing. There seems to be more opposition to testing than before.

A parent recommended against leading the protests to stop with test refusals. Someone suggested allying ourselves with other PTOs. One parent said 9<sup>th</sup> graders were spending 27 hours in testing this year.

#### **B. Teacher Evaluations (and Testing Again)**

Mr. Riggs said that there is now a new system for evaluating teacher performance. The state allows districts to base 0% to 50% of each evaluation on test scores. BVSD chose 0%. In the future we will not be allowed to use 0%, but we may be able to use a District aggregate figure for this factor.

**V. Teachers' Report: Libby Black, Stephanie Spencer and Meghan McCracken**

Ms. Black was not present.

**A. Field Trips**

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade is seeing the movie Selma on a field trip.

**B. More on Testing**

Ms. Corson said that to help prepare students for PARCC tests, teachers were giving students practice tests emphasizing critical thinking and were showing them relaxation exercises.

**C. African Dance and Drumming Club**

Ms. Corson and her husband, who is from Togo, are organizing an African dance and drumming group. It will meet on Mondays from 4 pm to 5 pm in the school's dance studio. There will be a fundraiser for the club at California Pizza Kitchen on March 5<sup>th</sup>, with a performance at 6 pm. Ms. Corson suggested that a 12-inch drum would be a good size for students. This size retails for \$300 to \$350, but she can get them for \$150 to \$160.

**VI. Volunteer Opportunity for MMS: Jamie Zimenoff**

Jamie has talked to Boulder Parks and Recreation about volunteer programs. The program for Boulder Creek is full. The park immediately to the south of Manhattan and one at East Boulder Recreation Center are available for adoption by groups of volunteers. This could include maintaining the flowerbeds at the EBRC. Students would need a release signed by a parent to participate. The release is good for five years. Parks & Rec keeps track of volunteers' hours. Mr. Riggs asked Jamie to email Mr. Feeney about volunteering.

**VII. Manhattan Palooza: Meena Keuer**

Meena was not present. The palooza is set for April 28<sup>th</sup>. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. There will be a jazz concert. Proceeds benefit Manhattan's music program.

**VIII. Committee Reports**

Michele prepared an attachment (Attachment C).

**A. Trip Trackers: Trina Faatz**

Trina was not present. Michele said that at the end of March we will get an email asking about the number of trips students have not made it to school without being driven in cars. Next year, we expect fewer schools to participate in the program, due to lack of money. We do not know which schools will continue.

**B. PEN: Trina Faatz**

Manhattan is hosting a body image program on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**IX. Other Comments or Questions –open time for anyone**

**A. Friday Newsletter**

The Friday newsletter is switching from email to a blog.

**B. Gymnasium**

Michele has been asked to spearhead a movement about the shortage of gymnasium space at Manhattan. There have been questions about why Manhattan is not receiving bond money to expand its gymnasium.

**C. More on Testing**

Someone asked about distributing flyers about the option to refuse PARCC testing; Mr. Riggs suggested not doing this.

**X. Upcoming Events**

March 5<sup>th</sup> - Community Dinner at California Pizza Kitchen for Manhattan's Newest Club  
West African Drumming and Dance (there will be a performance @ 6pm)

March 10<sup>th</sup> – Orchestra & Choir Concert

March 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> – School Musical

March 17<sup>th</sup> – Band Concert

March 23<sup>rd</sup> through 27<sup>th</sup> – Spring Break

March 30<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Field Trip to Eldora

March 30<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Field Trip to Fiske Planetarium

April 1<sup>st</sup> – PEN Event: Developing a Positive Body Image

April 15<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Play

April 28<sup>th</sup> – Manhattan Palooza

**XI. Next Meeting**

Our next scheduled PTO meeting will be on Monday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30-8 pm, in the MMS library.

**XII. Attachments**

A: CMAS and PARCC Information for Manhattan Parents (one two-sided sheet)

B: Treasurer's Report (five single-sided pages)

C: Committee Reports (one single-sided page)