

Westlake PTA Meeting
September 18, 2014

Board Members and Teachers in attendance:

Clyde Curley, Principal

Jen Fritzsche, PTA President

Tim Madsen, PTA Vice President

Mel Sweet, PTA Treasurer

Anna Turner, PTA Secretary

Papaya Van Dyke, PTA Parliamentarian

Terry McInerney, PTA Arts Co-Chair

Sufi Fox, PTA Arts Co-Chair

Kristen Lenz, Teacher

Julie Nolte, Teacher

Approximate Attendance: 35

Meeting called to order at: 6:40pm

President, Jen Fritzsche, opened the meeting and called for order.

Review of Last Minutes by Anna Turner

Secretary, Anna Turner, reviewed the minutes of the last PTA meeting, which was held on May 29, 2014.

*****MOTION**

Motion to approve the minutes was brought by Lucy Navabpour

Motion was seconded by Sufi Fox

Minutes were approved as presented unanimously

Treasurer's Report by Mel Sweet

Mel reviewed the budget report from the 2013-2014 school year and a check register, which includes checks written from 5/28/14 to 9/18/14. Copies of both documents are attached. Dorothy Franks noted that there was a typo in the heading of the budget report, and that it should read "2014" instead of "2004."

Mel noted that the large number of checks dated 6/24/14 on the register were written to cover the list of unfunded items requested by the principal and approved at the 5/24/14 PTA meeting.

*****MOTION**

Motion to approve the budget from last year and the check register from 5/28/14 through 9/18/14 is brought by Terry McInerney

Motion was seconded by Sufi Fox

Motion was approved unanimously

Mel reviewed the proposed operating budget for the 2014-2015 school year, a copy of which is attached. Mel gave a brief explanation of how to read the report, in terms of the "income" vs. "expense" lines. A parent questioned the layout of the budget report. Tim Madsen responded that the detailed layout was chosen to maximize visibility of PTA funds and expenditures.

Mel reported that the Direct Appeal fundraiser was currently at \$24,000 (last year at this time, it was at \$25,000). She also highlighted that the online school supplies ordered this year had generated about \$2000 (compared to \$450 last year), partly due to signing up for this service at an earlier date.

*****MOTION**

Motion to approve the operating budget for 2014-2015 was brought by Terry McInerney

Motion was seconded by Sufi Fox

Motion approved unanimously

Principal's Report by Clyde Curley

Mr. Curley thanked all those in attendance for being there, and encouraged everyone to keep attending PTA meetings throughout the year.

Mr. Curley announced that the Walk to Read program would be starting the week of September 22nd. This is the second year this program has been utilized at Westlake. Students meet in small, targeted reading groups four days a week for 40 minutes at a time at various times of the day (depending on grade level). The program is starting earlier this year than last, and the faculty is trying to ensure a smooth transition for all students. Letters will be sent home in homework folders indicating each student's Walk to Read teacher and where/when each student will be participating. Feedback on each student's Walk to Read progress will be given at parent-teacher conferences, which are held in November.

Highlights of the Cool Cats Program: it is in full swing, with the goal of trying to positively reinforce good behavior for Westlake students. Follows the 5:1 ratio – five positive comments/gestures are important to balance out every one negative redirection. Mr. Curley showed the large jar of cool cats that students have earned so far this year; when the jar is full, there will be a celebration. There is also a drawing every week per grade level for various prizes to keep students motivated and excited.

Mr. Curley also discussed professional development. Westlake teachers are conducting student assessments in math already, and professional development is happening in response to these assessments. This pattern will continue throughout the year. Teachers have been asked by the school district to focus this year on algebraic thinking – which often looks very different for Kindergarten vs. 5th. Research has shown that algebra becomes a common pitfall for schoolchildren throughout the country; earlier exposure leads to later success, and algebra is a gateway for later advancement. Teachers are being encouraged to figure out how algebraic thinking can be used in class, with adjustments being made depending on grade level.

Mr. Curley highlighted two upcoming Westlake events, and encouraged all to participate: playground painting, and the Back to School BBQ.

Tim Madsen asked Mr. Curley what the current student population was at Westlake. Mr. Curley responded that we are at approximately 630 students currently.

Gains/losses in population even out over the year, and the current number is about the same as last year.

Life Lab Update by Jane Forbes

Jane began by encouraging all Westlake parents and students to come visit the garden any time. She also reviewed how often each class comes to the garden.

Regarding the garden cart: this year, she will be doing things a little differently. Instead of having items for sale at the gazebo on Fridays, one big Spring plant sale fundraiser will be planned. There is a need to raise money for supplies and planting beds. Since the garden is now 30 years old, the old beds are rotting, and must be broken down, disposed of, and new ones must be purchased and brought in. A parent volunteer is currently working on getting prices for bed replacement.

Sunday, 10/5, has been selected for a work day (hours will be 9-12). Main goals of this work day will be replacing old beds, putting new beds in, and getting seeds planted. More details to come, and these will be posted on the PTA website. A parent suggested that Signup Genius be used to solicit volunteers for the October work day and Spring fundraiser.

Jane made a point of thanking all parent volunteers who have led classroom groups and assisted with garden work. She also thanked the PTA for funding additional hours for her so that she could reach more students.

She also announced that the Environmental Club (made up of 4th/5th graders) will start meeting on 9/23 during recess; their first activity will be making signs about drought/water-awareness, which will go up all over campus.

A parent asked what the income was last year for Life Lab. Mel Sweet responded that total income was approximately \$1400 – essentially from sales at the garden cart.

A parent asked if Jane had had to make any special accommodations to garden watering/maintenance during the drought. Jane responded that the irrigation hoses are going as usual, and other watering is being done carefully. She also mentioned that a city water official gave his ok to the current watering system.

New Business/Program Updates by Jen Fritzsche and Event Chairs

Jen reviewed the new business and programs currently going on, as follows:

a. Direct Appeal - The Direct Appeal is a major ongoing fundraiser, and this year's goal is \$75,000. The Direct Appeal helps fund a variety of programs in lieu of product sales (wrapping paper, magazine subscriptions, etc). PTA membership costs \$10, and a Direct Appeal donation from any Westlake parent automatically registers them as a PTA member.

A parent asked what percentage of families participate in the Direct Appeal. Mel and Tim responded that about 1/3 of the Westlake community contributes via Direct Appeal.

b. Directory - Emi Willet reviewed the work done thus far on the school directory. This year, updates have been easier and more quickly entered, and her target date for delivery is late October (but at the latest, before Thanksgiving). Ad revenue has surpassed directory costs so far; there are only four or five ad spots left to fill. Emi is trying to get the new Sports Authority location on the west side to advertise or donate.

c. Drive for Schools – Cristine Chopra reviewed this school fundraiser. The deadline for raffle ticket sales is 10/20. As it is the 10th anniversary of this program, additional prizes have been added (this year, there are ten \$1000 cash prizes in addition to the car giveaways). Ticket bundles will be sent home in homework folders very soon. Tickets will also be sold at the Back to School BBQ, and at least one Friday afternoon near to the popcorn stand.

Cristine highlighted that Drive for Schools raised at least \$5000 for Westlake last year. This fundraiser is especially attractive because the school keeps all proceeds of ticket sales.

d. Back to School BBQ: Event Chair Becky Saltikov was not present at the meeting, so Jen Fritzsche informed the group that this event will be on 10/2. Jen also reminded those present that while the barbecue was a fundraiser mainly for 5th grade science camp, anybody could and should volunteer (not just 5th grade parents). Money earned goes into the PTA scholarship fund, and helps fund the 5th grade science camp trip. Middle and High school students are being recruited to run games and craft booths.

e. Playground painting – Nicole Levey explained that this event was originally scheduled to take place at the end of the last school year; it was postponed due to district repaving of the Westlake blacktop. A variety of colorful decorations are planned for both the upper and lower playgrounds. The event is happening the weekend of September 20-21, and it is family friendly. Nicole stressed that this was a massive undertaking and a labor of love; all paint materials were donated by a Westlake family, and Westlake Staff helped to spearhead the project from its beginning. Students who participate can leave handprints on the playground if they wish. All activities will be guided and supervised. This event is intended to inspire school pride via beautification of the campus; it will also be good to reveal/highlight when the Back to School BBQ happens.

f. Winter Artisan Faire – Event Chair Amanda Timar was not present at the meeting, so Jen Fritzsche informed the group that the event would take place on: 12/6. The hours would be earlier in the day this year: likely 10am-3pm. Jen stated that the event was still in the planning phase, and Amanda was looking for volunteers, especially for the bake sale area. Information will be coming out for artists interested in selling goods. Most artisans are parents/community members. Every artist donates a drawing prize.

g. Box Tops – Amy Zavala gave her thanks to parents and kids for volunteering to cut out Box Tops last year. She is hoping that Mr. Curley will help draft kids at lunch to help prep again this year. Amy highlighted that while each individual Box Top only brings 10 cents to Westlake, that still translated into \$9000 for the school last year. She is planning on getting a flyer explaining Box Tops out to teachers for distribution ASAP; the flyer will be in both English and Spanish. Amy informed the group that Box Tops could be found on many food items, but also on Hanes products and Avery office supplies.

h. New Leaf Cards – Lucy Navabpour explained the program. 5% of New Leaf gift card funds (when purchased and used by someone affiliated with Westlake) goes back to the school. By the first Friday of every month, Lucy will need to have received checks from those who want their card amounts increased/reloaded. Lost cards can be replaced, and funds from lost cards can be transferred. The gift cards have no expiration date. This program raised \$2600 last year for Westlake. Lucy will try to send out notifications via email about reload dates at least a week, and then 2 days, before deadline.

i. High Ground Organics – Jen Fritzsche explained that this is a CSA service which delivers produce boxes to Westlake every week. The cost is \$90/month, which gets you four boxes per month. A parent questioned what percentage of this cost comes back to Westlake. Mel Sweet indicated that she would follow up on the exact amount. Another parent suggested that more advertisement needed to be done to attract people to this program.

j. Wildcat Spirit Store – Sabine Crawford announced that spirit items would be sold most Fridays at the gazebo. New shirts are in the works, and will be baseball-style with a pawprint logo. The shirts will be more expensive than last year's design, but it is hoped that the design will be more attractive, and justify the rise in price. All spirit items will be available online at the PTA website. A parent applauded the online spirit store, and said it would be very helpful for Westlake alums, families, etc. Julie Nolte, art instructor, suggested that in the future, her art classes could possibly design spiritwear logos.

k. Sweatshirts: Jen Fritzsche announced that Lisa Koenig will be working on the sweatshirts this year, and is in the process of developing a new design.

l. Dining for Dollars: Jen Fritzsche gave a brief overview of this program. Jill Heller indicated that she would be taking over as event chair from Nicole Levey. Nicole listed a few of the restaurants involved last year (Pizzeria Avanti, Kianti's, etc), but also reminded everyone that new restaurants are always needed.

Chair/Volunteer Needs by Jen Fritzsche

eScrip: Jen indicated that an event lead for this program is still needed. The program is very easy for Westlake families to participate in (register your debit card at Safeway online and the school gets 5% of all your purchases), and is almost like bringing "free money" to the school. A parent mentioned that if you're shopping online anyways, the school might as well get a percentage (even though we often try to shop locally). Restaurants and other online retailers sometimes participate in this, too – check the eScrip website. Amy Zavala reminded everyone that card registration must be renewed before November at the eScrip website.

Other needs: Jen announced that there was still someone needed to run the Valentine's Dance, and other volunteers would also be needed to help. The Goodwill Truck fundraiser needs a chair, as well (it is tentatively planned for January). The

Walking School Bus will need a new lead, since Ecology in Action is no longer running it this year. A brief overview of the Walking School Bus program was provided by Jen (it is a popular program, at least 20 kids are involved per route, the program happens 2 days a week). Last year's "Drivers" would probably continue, but the program itself needs a lead. Mr. Curley stated that Ecology in Action was willing to help the new lead, but can't do all the work.

Volunteers are also needed for popcorn/popsicle Fridays. Jen clarified that signing on for a shift means you only work one Friday per month. A parent suggested punch cards for popcorn/popsicles instead of cash, which might boost sales numbers. Another parent brought up the concern about students losing the punch cards.

Jen also announced that Becky Saltikov would need a successor for the school yearbook project; it would be ideal if a successor could come forward this year, as they could then shadow Becky.

School Board Candidate Forum by Tim Madsen

Tim explained that a public forum for SCCS school board candidates was in the works. There are currently four open seats on the school board, and all are contested. The forum is meant to help parents become more informed about candidates. Branciforte Middle School has been suggested for the forum site. A parent asked if candidates are allowed to talk to PTAs; Tim clarified that the candidates at the planned forum would be speaking to PTAs from all district schools, so it's acceptable (and not seen as campaigning – just informative). Tim explained that important decisions are made by the school board, and it is good for parents to be aware of those decisions.

Arts Committee Overview by Terry McInerney, Sufi Fox, and Dorothy Franks

Dorothy announced that the first arts committee meeting was held on Monday, 9/15, and there was good attendance. She briefly discussed the upcoming art projects in various classes, and explained the frequency of art/music/dance classes. Dorothy also introduced Westlake's new art teacher, Julie Nolte (taking over for Myra Eastman), who has agreed to take on the 5th grade culminating art project. The current plan for this project is a series of tiles that will be placed along the low retaining wall on the upper campus. Art Parent Coordinator this year is Jessa Stanton; there was a brief discussion and clarification about what classroom art parents do.

Dorothy also mentioned that since this year would be the 20th year of arts at Westlake, that anniversary will be highlighted at the Day of Dance (coming in the Spring).

Sufi explained that art cards will be available online throughout year this year (instead of only once), most likely before the winter holidays and before Mothers Day. Terry stated that Carrie Haber will scan the art images, and will need volunteers to help scan/organize.

Art Auction Update by Julie Graff

Julie Graff announced that this year's auction theme would be "Hawaiian Luau," and will take place at the Elks Club on 3/14/15, from approximately 6-10:30pm. The event will have a "vintage" feel to match Elks Club ambiance

Julie explained that the auction committee would be working to keep ticket prices reasonable this year. Ticket price includes dinner, dancing, and access to a fun tiki bar, a drawing, and both a silent and a live auction.

Julie explained that an online auction will happen prior to event just like last year, but will close sometime during the week prior to the auction. No online bidding will take place at the event itself this year. New items will be available at the event that you will have to see to bid on. Classroom art projects will be available for bidding at event (not online). The drawing at the event usually brings in about \$10k each year, and some big ticket items show up there – this is just one more reason to compel people to attend. Julie highlighted some of last year's biddable teacher experiences, and she will work with Mr. Curley to come up with a specific fund-a-need area to focus on during the live auction.

This is Westlake's biggest fundraising event of the year. The auction supports programs such as dance and music, and funds vital positions like learning assistants, life lab teacher, physical education, and also the science fair.

Julie asked for volunteers to help with the auction. Some areas in need are: the Donation team (need 2), corporate sponsorships, sound/entertainment (1-2), teacher experiences (1), wrap-up team, and event setup/tear down team. There will be other assorted jobs, as well, depending on what parents are willing to give their time to do.

A parent asked about the capacity of the Elks club; Julie stated that it was about 300. It will be important for parents to buy their tickets early; presale might start as early as December. A parent stated that the earlier tickets could go on sale, the better for financial/childcare planning. Julie: agreed. Tickets will be available online and in-person.

Global Citizens Committee by Deanah Rabiah and Victoria Sanchez-Toledo

Deana Rabiah explained that the GCC was a new committee that was started last year to encourage Westlake students to become global citizens; in other words, to learn about different countries/cultures, and how they fit into the world around them.

International day and night events were held last year, and were very well received. While the events were a great success, much was learned about how to better plan and execute some components.

There is now an International Parent role for each classroom (much like an Art Parent), and this position is meant to work with each teacher to create a project for International Day with the students. A few GCC-organized tables will be present at Family Arts Night in November; hopefully, decorations for International Night can be made at FAN.

International Night is scheduled for 4/15/15. Suggestions and/or recommendations for performers are welcome – all performers must be able to perform gratis (no funding available).

The penpal program is in the planning stages. Last year kids wrote to Guinea and Ukraine, and this year's activities are in the works.

PTA Enrichment Programs/Assemblies by Deana Tanguay

Deana announced that there are two new after-school enrichment activities available for students this year (both activities are being offered gratis by the instructors): Pilates for 4th/5th graders, to be taught by Lucy Navabpour, and Guitar for 4th/5th graders. Chess will be back in the Spring.

The Young Scientists Club is in its 3rd year, and will begin taking place before the start of the school day (7:30-8:10am) starting 10/15. The club will meet for seven Wednesdays, and all grades are welcome. A variety of subjects will be presented: game design, wind power, undersea robots, seismic studies, and astronomy. The club is meant to promote different careers in the sciences, and encourage students to explore all the different ways the brain works.

The Lego class will continue after school; there will most likely be a grade 1-3 group, as well as a grade 4-5 group. Info will come home in the homework packets soon; there is a lottery system for this popular class.

New programs are always wanted, and feedback is desired. The STEM/Skydome assemblies might be back. Further discussion and planning will be needed.

PTA Website Update by Carrie Haber

Carrie informed the group that the new PTA website can be found at www.supportwestlake.org. A new, general school website should be coming soon, too; Carrie is working with Mr. Curley on developing this.

Carrie gave an overview of the website's features. There is a PTA meeting/event calendar that will be updated regularly, and community events will also be posted. Contact info for event chairs is now available, and soon there will be links to volunteer opportunities via Signup Genius; right now there's a general form that can be submitted, too.

A parent suggested that it would be important to get teachers aware of the new PTA website and get that info out to parents. Carrie stated that she is working with classroom parents to get website info disseminated to the school community.

Donations to the Direct Appeal can now be made easily online. More content is yet to come under the "Fundraising" tab. The online store will have more items added as the year progresses, too.

Upcoming Events by Jen Fritzsche

Jen announced that an author (Pseudonymous Bosch) would be speaking to 4th and 5th grade students in the library on 9/30; this event being done in partnership with Bookshop Santa Cruz. Signed copies of Bosch's most current book are available for sale on the PTA's online store.

The first Family Movie Night will take place on 10/10, and the movie will most likely be *The Lego Movie*.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.

