



PTO Meeting  
16 October 2013  
9:15 AM

Frank H. Hammond Elementary School  
1301 Fran Lin Parkway  
Munster, Indiana 46321

## PTO MEETING MINUTES

*(Draft version, pending review/approval at the next PTO meeting on November 20, 2013.)*

### I. Welcome

#### A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Becky McKeever at 9:20 am.

#### B. Sign-in Sheet

In addition to the PTO Board and Mrs. Ellis, meeting attendees included: Tammy Vesolowski, Jen Stevens, Julie Landmesser, Suzanne Regan, Evelyn Regan, Lynette Ault, Julie Giba, Joanna Zych, Hairong Zhao, Tracy Collins, Stephanie Orange, Lisa Gomez, Tina Certa, Jen Johns, Jolene Gelarden, Mary Beth Tepper, Aleka Dovellos and Patty Queroz.

### II. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Lynette Ault motioned to approve the September 18, 2013 draft minutes as presented. Tammy Vesolowski seconded the motion. The September 18, 2013 draft meeting minutes were approved as presented.

### III. Treasurer's Report

#### A. Year-to-date Monthly Budget Report

The beginning balance on August 1<sup>st</sup> was \$18,821.23. Year-to-date funds raised were \$8,872.07. Program expenses were \$10,963, arriving at an ending balance of \$16,730.30. The net Spirit Wear fundraising amount of \$573 has been finalized and is in excess of the amount budgeted to be raised. The *Golden Opportunities* coupon book fundraiser brought-in \$3,485; this amount does not include the sale of one additional book. The yearly Target Rebate came in at \$1,423.35, which was significantly higher than the budgeted amount. Field Trip expenditures were \$9,750.50; all amounts in regard to this expenditure have been disbursed. \$1,025.75 was paid in regard to DARE program expenditures. \$500 in Equipment/Educational supplies expenditures has been made in regard to new soccer goals to be used during recess.

Included for the first time in the Treasurer's report was an accounting of "Scholastic Dollars" earned and spent. There are two categories of "Scholastic Dollars:" (1) "profit" dollars that never expire and (2) "reward" dollars that have an expiration date. It was reported that \$2,507.32 was spent on magazine subscriptions and Book Fair and library purchases; this amount was slightly in excess of the \$2,423.59 reward dollar balance that was set to expire on October 14<sup>th</sup>. The remaining available balance

of “Scholastic Dollars” is \$5,816, comprised entirely of profit dollars that will never expire.

#### IV. Secretary’s Report

##### A. Thank You/Correspondence Updates

The PTO received thank you notes for *Golden Opportunities* coupon books from: the FHH Staff, Tammy Katalinic, Ellie Marinier, Alice Murphy and Karen Markovich, who also thanked the PTO for “Tasty Tuesdays.” The PTO also received a thank you note for “Tasty Tuesdays” from the FHH teachers. Finally, the PTO received a thank you note for field trip assistance from the First Grade Teaching Team.

#### V. Vice President’s Report

##### A. *Frankly Speaking* Newsletter

Vice President Natalie Raffin reported that all submissions to the *Frankly Speaking* newsletter were to have been made by the end of the day, October 16<sup>th</sup>. The newsletter is scheduled to be sent home with students during the week of October 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### VI. President’s Report

##### A. District Presidents’ Meeting Recap

President Becky McKeever explained that she attended a “District Presidents’ Meeting” with organization presidents and members of the School Town administration, such as Richard Sopko, Superintendent. The following items were discussed at this meeting:

- **Harlem Wizards Game Sponsored by Ernest R. Elliott Elementary Parent Teacher Organization (“Elliott PTO”):** A basketball game between the Harlem Wizards and a local team comprised of faculty/staff members of all five School Town of Munster (“STM”) schools and D.A.R.E. Officer James Ghrist is scheduled for the evening of Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, at the Munster High School (“MHS”) field-house. Tickets will be available for purchase before school at Frank H. Hammond Elementary (“FHH”) Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, through the day of the game. The FHH PTO will receive ten percent (10%) of all ticket sales made at FHH. Tickets will also be available at the field-house on the evening of the game.
- **New STM Facebook Page:** STM is in the process of creating a district Facebook page to be linked to the Facebook pages of each school within the district.
- **STM Superintendent Search:** At the last School Board meeting, on Monday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, community members were invited to provide comments and suggestions in regard to the search for a replacement for Superintendent Sopko, who is retiring at the end of this school year. A School Board member will also be present at the next FHH PTO meeting to be held on Wednesday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm, so that members may voice their concerns in regard to the search at that time.

##### B. PTO Networking Directories

The 2013-2014 PTO networking directories have been received from the printer. President Becky McKeever asked for volunteers to help sort the directories for distribution immediately following the meeting.

## VII. Principal's Report

### A. New State of Indiana Bullying Prevention Mandate

Mrs. Ellis reported that the STM has been working toward the district-wide implementation of requirements under the new State of Indiana bullying prevention mandate, which was passed into law during the summer. These efforts continue as a “work-in-progress” across the district.

Mrs. Ellis is available to assist with school-related bullying incidents, i.e., those that happen on the way to/from school, those that happen at school, or those that otherwise interfere in some way with the learning process. Sometimes, bullying may be a strictly “neighborhood” issue with no manifestation at school; Mrs. Ellis is not able to address such issues at school. However, situations such as these may be referred to the Munster Police Department (“MPD”).

Mrs. Ellis noted that the goal in grades K-5 is to educate the students about the subject so that their behavior never escalates to the point of bullying. Within the past few weeks, FHH Social Worker Mrs. Christina Brunetti has visited every class in the building to speak with the students. A new “Bully Box” has been placed in the school library so that the students have an outlet to voice their concerns.

Mrs. Ellis introduced D.A.R.E. Officer James Ghrist, who spoke in regard to the new mandate and issues associated with bullying.

### B. Guest Speaker: D.A.R.E. Officer James Ghrist

Officer Ghrist explained that the MPD and school social workers, such as Mrs. Brunetti, have always taken the issue of bullying seriously. Eight (8) staff members of the MPD have been certified to specifically deal with this issue, including Middle and High School Resource Officer Joseph Pacheco and Elementary School Resource Officer James Ghrist. Officer Ghrist reported that during the summer months, the codified definition of “bullying” was amended with the passage of General Assembly Bill 1423:

“[B]ullying” means overt, unwanted, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:

- (1) places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student’s person or property;
- (2) has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student’s physical or mental health;
- (3) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s academic performance; or
- (4) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school. *I.C. 20-33-8-0.2*

Under the new law, the Indiana State Department of Education (“DOE”) has been required to develop statewide guidelines to assist school corporations in establishing bullying prevention programs, investigation and reporting procedures, and discipline rules. It was also mandated that each school corporation provide training to school employees and volunteers concerning the school corporation's bullying prevention

program and annual bullying prevention education to students. As noted above, Mrs. Brunetti has been working with the students in this regard over the past several weeks.

Officer Ghrist compared the three hallmarks of bullying to the three dependent legs of a stool or chair: (1) unwanted aggressive behavior, (2) repeated, or potential for repeated, behavior and (3) real or perceived power imbalance. There are several different types of bullying, including physical, verbal, social and cyber. It should be noted that not all peer conflict issues fall strictly within the definition of bullying.

Victims should know that they are not required to ask a bully to stop his behavior in order for that behavior to be classified as bullying. The bully can often sense when a behavior is unwanted.

It is estimated that fifty percent (50%) of all bullying remains unreported. Often times, students are “bystanders” to bullying; they may be in a position to help, but just do not want to get involved. Students need to understand that there is a difference between “tattling” and “telling.” If a student witnesses bullying, there are three different ways to help the victim: (1) be a friend; he can accompany the victim when the victim reports the incident to a teacher, (2) report the incident himself to a teacher, or (3) step-in and be a “diffuser;” he can try to diffuse the situation by asking the bully to stop his behavior (but he should never challenge the bully to a “fight”).

Victims and bystanders should not be afraid of retaliation when reporting an incident of bullying. If bullying is suspected, the retention of evidence is key, e.g., electronic messages should be printed-out and saved; victims should be discouraged from responding themselves electronically to such messages.

Nationally, fifty percent (50%) of fourth through eighth graders have reported to be victims of on-line bullying. In order to limit the potential for cyber-bullying, Officer Ghrist recommended that parents discourage the use of social media by their children. Particularly, he recommended that parents disable or discourage their children’s access to “Instagram” messaging. He also said that parents should closely monitor their children’s laptop usage and the people with whom they associate. Parents are encouraged to “trust their instincts!”

Please know that it is imperative that anyone with any knowledge of destructive behavior, or planned destructive behavior, should contact the MPD. In these and all other alleged bullying situations, Officer Ghrist will contact the parents of involved parties before speaking directly with students.

Parents should be cognizant of the fact that students will often react to a situation in the same manner that their parents do.

## VIII. Committee Reports

### A. Dining for Dollars – Jolene Gelarden and Aleka Dovellos

Co-Chairperson Jolene Gelarden reported that \$422.53 was raised through this program during the month of September. In addition, \$100 was raised at the October Little Tokyo event. The committee is considering a “McTeachers Night” at McDonalds. Please contact Jolene and Aleka with feedback in regard to the Dining for Dollars event offerings and/or their frequency.

Co-Chairperson Aleka Dovellos announced the upcoming dining/play event at Jaks on Thursday, January 9<sup>th</sup>. There is no school on the 10<sup>th</sup>. It’s from 5-9 pm, and for \$25,

each student will get pizza, pop, a game card worth \$10 and access to all attractions. This is a \$40 value for \$25. For each ticket sold, the FHH PTO will receive \$5.

**B. Junior Achievement (“JA”) - Aleka Dovellos**

Chairperson Aleka Dovellos has worked with grade-level teachers to secure dates for JA. Information in regard to volunteer opportunities will be distributed in the near future through room coordinators (“RCs”). Please sign-up for your child’s classroom. JA teaches students about making good economic choices. The program gives volunteers all materials and an outline to follow. It’s very easy and very fun!

**C. Party Planning - Becky McKeever for Patty Oganovich**

There is at least one outstanding background check for a party planning volunteer that needs to be completed *prior* to the Halloween room parties. All room party volunteers should complete this process ASAP.

**D. Book Fair - Jill Krieg**

Co-Chairperson Jill Krieg reported that the fall Book Fair will be held from November 13<sup>th</sup> through November 22<sup>nd</sup>. There will be a special teacher preview lunch, for which volunteers and donations are needed, a “Donuts for Dads” event (moms and other adults are welcome, too!) and a “coin war” preceding the Book Fair to be held November 4<sup>th</sup> through November 8<sup>th</sup> in order to provide teachers with funds to purchase books for their classroom libraries. Book Fair committee members think that it is one of the best PTO committees! Anyone interested in this volunteer opportunity should contact Chris Ashcraft or Jill Krieg.

Also, to guarantee that your child gets a copy of Wimpy Kid 8: don’t forget to send-in your pre-order form by October 23rd.

**IX. Unfinished Business**

**A. Use of “Scholastic Dollars”**

The use of Scholastic Dollars had been discussed earlier in the meeting. Please see the Treasurer’s Report for a discussion of this item.

**B. Purchase of Playground Equipment (Soccer Goals)**

Recess Aide Julie Landmesser reported that the new soccer goals purchased by the PTO have been put to good use over the past few weeks. The students are enjoying the cardio-vascular activity enabled by the use of the goals.

**C. Teacher Grant Process Team**

Members who expressed an interest in being a part of the teacher grant process team plan to meet next week. Teacher grant awards are planned to be distributed to the faculty before the Thanksgiving holiday.

**X. New Business**

**A. FHH Library Book Purchases**

Former PTO Co-Presidents Jen Johns and Julie Landmesser have each selected a book to be donated by the PTO to the FHH library in their honor. These books have been purchased and will be placed into service in the near future.

## B. In-School Informational Signs

FHH has employed the use of twelve (12) roughly-constructed informational signs used as directional aides at school-wide events, such as registration, and during educational activities, such as Moneyopolis. The husband of School Secretary Karen Markovich has developed a prototype of an improved model of such a sign, equipped with a dry-erase board so that information to be displayed may be altered. He has estimated the cost to improve all twelve (12) informational signs as approximately \$85. Becky McKeever motioned to approve the \$85 expenditure. The motion carried and was passed by a majority of the vote.

## C. *Digitally Speaking* Newsletter

President Becky McKeever thanked Communications Committee Chairperson Julie Landmesser for her efforts in regard to the development and launch of the new weekly electronic FHH PTO newsletter, *Digitally Speaking*. Julie Landmesser, in turn, thanked Tracy Collins for volunteering to edit this communication on a weekly basis. All submissions to this newsletter should be emailed to both Becky McKeever and Tracy Collins.

## D. Box Tops

Parents were reminded that the fall Box Tops collection drive will come to a close on Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>.

## XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 am.