

**PS 191/RSMA
PTA Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2019**

The first PTA meeting of the year was held in the cafeteria. The meeting began at 8:30. There were about 50 parents in attendance.

Welcome and Introductions.

Kristy Sanchez welcomed everyone to our first PTA meeting of the year and the members of the PTA Board introduced themselves:

Kristy Sanchez, President
Aimee Chang, Vice President
Scott Feinblum, Treasurer
Ingrid Johnson, Secretary

Damaris Carrion, PS 191's Parent Coordinator, presented.

She will be looking for parent volunteers throughout the year. In October, she will need help with picture day – from combing hair to following parents' written photo instructions to wiping noses! She will let us know when picture day is scheduled. Please consider volunteering.

Scott Feinblum, PTA Treasurer, presented.

The PTA's overall goal is to have a place where we can bring everyone together and listen to both teachers and parents so that we can build community and connection.

He provided a summary of the PTA Activities:

- **Year-end spring celebration auction** in the school gymnasium. This is where we make about half of the funds we raise for the whole year through ticket sales, 50/50 raffle and the auction.
- **Family giving.** Every dollar counts, and we ask people to give what they can. A form is included in the PTA welcome packet and will be sent during the year by Damaris
- **Bake sales.** We did 4 last year. The kids enjoy it, and all kids get something! We will need assistance on **Friday, September 20** for our first one of the year. We need donations of food, and people to work during the day. PLEASE EMAIL the PTA (pta@ps191nyc.com) sign up to volunteer. If you are donating bake-sale items, please drop off your item at the table inside the school entrance during drop off on September 20.
- **Coin drive.** We will start this in the beginning of October and have it run through the end of November. We will provide a pizza or ice cream party for the classes with the most coins raised with a prize for Pre-K, K-2, 3-5 and 6-8. Finding coins can be a fun activity with your kids, too.
- **Budget.** At the end of the year, we create a proposal for how the funds we raise will be used. We discuss the proposal with the administration to get their feedback, and then the PTA votes on the proposal. This past year (in June) we voted on a budget for the current year, which includes:
 - Staff appreciation week (last year we had a week of staff appreciation that included, breakfast, lunch and a \$10 Amazon gift card for all staff)
 - Professional development, which provides the teachers with training but also provides the school with library books for the classrooms and other materials
 - A classroom stipend of \$150 for each classroom, to be used on supplies and other needs of the classroom

The money we raise is distributed equally across the school.

Scott asked that everyone fill out the sign-in sheet, including their email address, so that the PTA can email out reminders and other information to parents. He let everyone know that if they have any questions, they can feel free to reach out by email to: pta@ps191nyc.com.

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We welcomed Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, who has been a constant and long-time supporter of PS 191.

Assemblymember Rosenthal has supported PS 191 financially. She was also good friends with Madeline Polayes, after whom the PS 191 library was named. Assemblymember Rosenthal remembered Madeline Polayes as an advocate for affordable housing.

Rosenthal has been an Assemblymember for 13 years and has worked closely with the school during that time. She thought the turnout for our meeting was “amazing” and believes that, over the years, PS 191 has been “underestimated” and now we have a beautiful building. She obtained \$200,000 for the school in 2017, and she will continue meeting and talking about what our needs are.

In general, she feels that DOE has done a terrible job addressing the lead paint issue in schools, which is not a problem in our new building, especially because lead paint can do damage in ways that cannot be repaired. She is chair of the Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and is very concerned about children – especially in high school – who spend the day vaping. She is also committed to animal legislation, children’s issues, and health issues. She welcomes children to come visit her office, and she wants to know what we think. She asked to reach out to her office with our concerns.

Principal Lauren Keville made some announcements.

She reiterated appreciation for Assemblymember Rosenthal’s support for the school of the years.

She emphasized the need to be in school every day, on time. She emphasized that it is important that the parents and the school work together, as we are the most important partners in our children’s education. She also emphasized that it is important to support children in their homework – the most important being reading with your child every night.

She greets children at the front door every morning and this is a good time to raise issues with her so that you can address the issues together. She appreciates parents’ involvement.

As for events and announcements, please check the calendar on the website. Also, Damaris sends home monthly reminders of events. We will soon have a school-wide phone app – Remind – to facilitate communication. Teachers in Pre-K to grade 5 can use Remind or Class Dojo for classroom communication; middle school teachers use Pupil Pass.

She introduced Assistant Principal Perez, who this year will focus on Pre-K to grade 5 and math and science. And she welcomed new Assistant Principal Kim Parkinson, who will focus on grades 6-8 and ELA literacy and social studies. While they focus on certain grades, both can help with anything you may need.

She thanked the PTA for the support of the school, including professional development, which not only provides support to the teachers but also provides resources like books for the school. And many thanks for teacher stipend – she believes PS 191 has the hardest working staff in NYC.

We have a new lower school guidance counselor, and we will have an opportunity to meet with her.

She reiterated her thanks to Linda Rosenthal and also thanked Helen Rosenthal (city council member).

Ms. D.J., music teacher, presented.

She spoke about the arts program. Last year, two RSMA graduates got into LaGuardia, and we were thrilled. Julliard is offering private lessons and even a Saturday program for flute, saxophone, and clarinet. The 7th and 8th graders will perform the Grinch Who Stole the Holiday.

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Scott Feinblum welcomed Angelique Ray.

Scott introduced Angelique Ray, a first-grade teacher, who gave hours and hours and hours to the PTA last year and who helped immensely with the Spring Auction. *(Although not in attendance, a BIG SHOUT OUT to another PS 191 teacher, Erica Rubin, for all her help and support last year!)*

Aimee Chang, PTA Vice President, presented.

The School Leadership Committee, or SLT, is essentially the “board of the school” and creates a plan for the next academic year. We need to vote on a parent representative. Kurt Weiss was elected in unanimously. Congratulations Kurt!

Parent concerns, questions and miscellaneous issues.

A parent noted that there are no lockers for students to place their bags. Kristy said that the school had lockers from the old building, but the new hallways are not wide enough to accommodate. This will be raised with the SLT.

A question was asked about how much the PTA raised last year. Scott responded:

- \$30,000 in total
- \$15,000 from auction
- \$15,000 from family giving, coin drive, and bake sale

The budget is:

- \$15,000 for professional development
- ~\$6,000 classroom stipends
- ~\$2,000 staff appreciation
- ~\$2,000 expense for activities
- ~\$2,000 miscellaneous (last year this included calculators, uniforms)

Scott also discussed the school-branded clothing/SWAG, and there was unanimous support expressed for a project.

One parent mentioned the morning announcement – “You are loved...” – and that she fell in love with the school after hearing that. Aimee mentioned that students will be able to participate in the morning announcements.

One parent raised concerns that she did not get information on the YMCA after school program, and now it is filled. Another parent asked about the waitlist for the YMCA after school program. This appears to be an issue that the demand for such programs is greater than the slots available. We will find out more about this issue from Principal Keville and raise at SLT.

One parent discussed how her child was recently diagnosed with Tourette’s Syndrome and that it would be great to have an educational program that would help people understand different disabilities and prevent bullying. A suggestion was made that the SLT could also help address this because they are working on a program that would align with such programs.

The meeting ended at 9:30. We are thrilled to start the new year with such a diverse and committed group of parents!