

MS 158Q – Marie Curie
46-35 Oceana Street
Bayside, N.Y. 11361
(718)-423-8100
MS158QPTA2020@gmail.com

The PTA of MS 158 General Membership Meeting
Auditorium – January 1/21/2020

Handouts – Agenda, Treasury Report, Interim Financial Report, Minutes, Attendance sheet, PTA snack sales volunteer signup sheets

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Tricia Esposito. She welcomed and thanked everyone for coming, and acknowledged we are here to address and discuss all concerns. We want to give everyone an opportunity to ask questions, and request any changes you'd like to see at MS 158. There is a great amount of support present to answer as many questions as you have, and give you information and feedback as to what has been done already, and how we plan to proceed.
2. Parents were asked to review the December 2019 Minutes. Theoni Kosefas motioned to approve the minutes, Vivia Yam seconded, all in favor voted, no objections. The minutes were approved.

3. Treasurer's Report - Vivia Yam

- Beginning balance was \$7,260.62.
- Income this month consisted of snack and spirit wear sales.
- Expenses included deposit for a photo booth for the Graduation Dance, checks distributed for teacher grants, and holiday gift card purchases for staff.
- The ending balance was \$7,680.41.
- Reviewed interim financial report including the total income of \$20,608.41 and expenses of \$12,928.00 covering the period of 7/1/19 through 1/15/20.
- Approval of Treasurer's Report: Michelle Halik motioned to approve the report & Elaine Lee seconded, all in favor voted, no objections. The Treasurer's Report passed.

4. District 26 Superintendent – Danielle Giunta

- Ms. Giunta thanked everyone for coming out. She is here to address safety and well being of the students. She is aware of the issues and events at our school.
- District office has taken full action and has been active.
- Mr. Schandel has spoken openly with PTA and SLT.
- School is in a state of reflection and is taking proactive steps.
- She understands that the community did not feel their voice was heard, and she wants to make sure voices are heard.
- PTA has reached out to District office and invited them here.
- Representatives present tonight include Sen. John's Liu's office, Asm. Nily Rozic's office, Queens Borough student service and safety directors, and CEC.
- Department of Education is there for you.

- Question - Tricia Esposito asked how the school can move forward to restore confidence within the community and that it would provide a safe learning environment.
 - Ms. Giunta thanked the PTA for ongoing emails regarding parent issues
 - She assured that questions that were submitted to District 26 Town Hall meeting last week with the Chancellor, would be answered in time.
 - They have been shared with CEC and they will get back to the community.
 - Her staff including family leadership coordinator, family support coordinator, deputy superintendent, and special instructional liaison, work with the community.
 - When incidents are reported, they immediately go through the steps of investigating and determining findings.
 - Incidents are captured in online reporting system, Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS)
 - The district office checks that all procedures are in place and followed accordingly.
 - They don't just stop at the reporting and findings, but take a proactive approach, by tracking incidents, and providing additional supports. For instance, they have already deployed an additional safety agent and guidance counselor to our school.
 - There is ongoing training regarding Chancellor's regulations.
- Question/Concern - There seems to be a gap in followup with incidents
 - District office has been helping our school develop more timely communication and protocols so parents would be aware of incidents.
- Question - How do we get information out in a timely manner?
 - They are looking at new ways to do this including RFPs.
 - The issue is that when information is received, they need to sort out what is accurate and what is not. Sometimes if the police are involved, they don't want to compromise their investigation.
- Question - What can staff members do or cannot do during an altercation?
 - Chancellors regulation 421 has language that outlines what is corporeal punishment. This does not include reasonable physical force to protect oneself or another from physical injury, or property of the school.
 - There is a fine line regarding jumping into a fight, as there may be a fear of hurting a child.
 - They are working with the school to not get to that point, to learn to de-escalate a situation.
 - Crisis intervention support services support will be conducting a 4 day professional learning at our school, scheduled in February, on de-escalation techniques. This is for all professionals in all schools, and it was relocated to take place at MS158 so it can be readily available to our staff.
 - Discussed teacher support during lunch.
- Question - Will there be additional safety agents assigned to our school?
 - District is not in direct control of this but will put in a request for more.
 - We currently have two. A request for third safety agent was approved with CEC help. Will start here on Tuesday.
 - An additional guidance counselor will be here starting end of the week.
- Question - Will there be more random monitor screenings?
 - A request has been placed.

- We want to send message that safety is important.
- Mr. Schandel went to every class to thank them for coming forward regarding an incident that occurred.
- We need to model commitment to safety so that our kids will replicate.
- Safety and well being of school does not rest on one person. It takes a village.
- Discussed possibility of workshops on safety, well-being, parenting skills. Can approach PTA of SLT with ideas.
- Need help from parents to get specifics regarding how kids are doing and talking to them about cell phone usage.
- Question - Can we have a cell phone and technology policy?
 - Policy is set by SLT, need to grapple with it.
 - Discussed issue of cell phones used in restrooms, and how to communicate the need to come to class with respect and love of learning.
- Question - What student assemblies have there been?
 - Brainpower, social emotional learning approach, RULER approach, developing empathy, understanding of feelings, mood meters
 - Proactive approach
 - Ms. Giunta and district office staff have conducted walk-through at our school and talking to staff and kids.
- Question - What is daily experience of kids with everything that is going on?
 - Kids are feeling sad that their school is getting all this negative attention.
 - In talking with them, they have important ideas about how to make their school safer and more productive.
 - Teachers are checking in with kids, having them stay focused.
 - Learning is continuing.
 - Guidance counselor, teachers and Mr Schandel involved.
 - AP's checking in with kids.
 - Data analysis of school data highlights that our school's ELA and Math scores are favorable, and that we have a supportive environment. Safety and well being has had uptick across the years. We have increased access to Algebra, and record number of students going to the HS of their choice.
- Question - Where are we compared with other schools regarding incidents reported?
 - We have average number of incidents reported compared to rest of the district.
 - We have increase number of suspensions compared to last year.
- Question/Concern- Parents from elementary feeder schools concerned about safety
 - Mr Schandel is available to attend PTA meetings at these schools, to answer any questions and give confidence to parents.
 - MS 158 is a great place to be at, and kids thrive here. District 26 is an excellent district.
 - Kids will be okay because we are all stepping forward.
 - We are doubling down on safety and excellence for kids.
- Question about the school Crisis Team
 - Every school has a crisis team, made up of administration, guidance counselors, and other staff.
 - They met today, talked about everyone's feelings and what needs to be done.
 - Discussed how incidents are traumatic to the entire community. Talked about how to get back to normalcy.
 - Developing plan to visit classes to access kids in smaller intimate settings.

- Question - Chancellor's office has all the expertise to handle all situations, why is Mr Schandel struggling on how to handle this situation?
 - Borough school student service and safety directors stated that school staff will get some basic training but each school has individual needs.
 - We can tap into crisis team for ideas and plan for future.
 - We want to make sure all systems are in place.
- A father of student who was sexually assaulted. shared about his daughter's experience from September to November of last year, as well as another child's sexual assault last year in the boy's bathroom. He stated that there was no discipline at the school, and that parents should be concerned for safety of their kids at this school.
 - Ms. Giunta stated that his daughter is why we are here today.
 - Although she could not speak about specifics due to privacy issues, she said everything is being reviewed.
- Question - What do teachers do when informed of an incident?
 - When anything is brought to their attention, they have strict guidelines to report it.
 - What they are looking at is how that process moves forward.
 - This is outlined under Regulation #8443, which is on the school website.
 - A letter went out that Mr. Schandel put on Pupilpath, which also outlines how incidents are handled, along with the links to the regulations.
- Question - If kids are shown to have broken a law, why is there not immediate suspension and authorities notified? Why is it being investigated by DOE and not authorities right away?
 - A parent stated that the issue is a larger DOE issue, as there is a legal case in other schools.
 - Our principal and incidences are under further investigation, DOE cannot share results.
- Parents raised concern that kids safety are more important than anything, and that teachers need authority to discipline kids at school.
- Ms. Giunta stated her primary role is to elevate community concerns and to engage parents. This meeting is important as our voices need to be heard unlike at the last Chancellor town hall meeting. Mr. Schandel, local officials also here to listen.
- There will be a second safety town hall meeting set up.

5. Principal's Report - Mr. Henry Schandel

- Mr. Schandel wants to speak to everyone, and to hear everyone, to answer questions
- He recognizes there have been a lot of these incidents that parents are concerned about.
- Sexual harassment training
 - how they are educating students on sexual harassment
 - occurs twice per year to talk about appropriate behavior and consequences - occurs before December and in April
 - opportunities for students to make anonymous reports
 - Sexual harassment liaison - Ms. McNamara trained as "go to person"
- Chancellor's regulations discussed at last month's PTA meeting. Have to double down and talk with every class.
- In addition to the principal, the APs, guidance counselors, and SAPIS (Substance Abuse Intervention Specialist) worker are all available to students.

- Students can walk into his office at any time without appointment.
- Question - What trainings are conducted with staff?
 - Similar training
 - All staff are mandated reporters (to be done within 24 hours)
 - Try to be proactive - to intervene before any incidents occur
 - Any allegations are reported to parents right away
- Questions/Comments-
 - Parents of children who were harassed and bullied questioned about why they were not notified from the beginning, why police were not notified immediately.
 - They felt lack of connection and communication with principal.
 - Parents frustrated not knowing how the aggressors were being disciplined. They feel that school is allowing this behavior with no consequences.
 - Some parents troubled that adults close by did not step in to stop the assault in the lunchroom, and feel that kids are not protected. Breakdown of trust in adults in the building.
 - Another parent asked if kids know who to go to. They didn't know who was who in the building, who to call with concerns.
- Mr. Schandel stated whenever he is notified of any incidents he would act right away.
- Mr. Schandel recognized that parents are frustrated not knowing how other kids are disciplined.
- He stated he appreciates the input and wants to be responsive.
- Question/Comment - It seems that children don't feel confident and teachers not confident, how do we change the perception of parents?
 - Met with SLT earlier today.
 - Discussed how to communicate better with parents the positive things going on - Brainpower program, student leaders, supportive environment
 - Idea of monthly newsletter
 - Changes have occurred from conversations with parents from PTA meetings and Principal Coffee Chats.
 - He has monthly Principal Coffee Chats (next one this Friday) - informal conversation with parents.
- Question - With 1,070 kids, and 2 safety officers. how many more security guards can we get to increase security at our school?
 - There should be a school safety officer at the cafeteria, and staff stationed at different stairwells.
 - We currently have 2 safety agents and they are allowed to break up fights.
- Question - Why didn't adults intervene in the cafeteria assault?
 - Training occurred Monday after lunchroom attack.
 - Teachers are allowed to use reasonable force.
 - Discussed restorative practices.
 - Mary Vaccaro, UFT rep stated that teachers are terrified to break up fights as they don't feel supported. She stated that at the cafeteria fight, unseen on camera, one teacher went to make a phone call to get help.
- Question - What do we do to change current regulations that we feel are not protecting out kids?

- Explained the difference between superintendent suspension vs. principal suspension. Principal suspensions occur in house and superintendent suspension occur outside of school.
- Physical altercation can result in range of possible consequences ranging from phone call to parents, meeting with parents, removal from activities, or external suspension. Principal suspension may last 1-5 days. superintendent suspension is 6+ days, and is not at discretion of the principal, but dependent on a hearing at LIC office with an attorney. Cases can also be appealed.
- Consequences also depend on many factors including the circumstances, history of the child, and any IEP.
- Discussed citywide behavioral expectations, and restorative discipline.
- According to the city code, insubordination does not automatically lead to suspension, but instances like carrying a firearm automatically results in superintendent suspension.
- In the case of superintendent suspension request, a student is removed immediately pending trial.
- Mr. Schandel stated that after he came to be principal here, reported incidences have increased 127%, and suspensions have increased.
- He is making sure things are documented correctly.
- Question to Ms. Giunta - Has our school followed all regulations?
- Question to Mr. Schandel - Why do parents feel like they have no contact with the principal?
 - He stated he wants to hear directly from parents.
- Question - Why are parents not informed of incidents at the school?
 - Discussed how to engage with parents as it is important for parents to be aware of what is going on at the school.
 - It is not protocol to send out information on all incidents, especially related to sexual abuse.
 - Mr. Schandel apologized for leaving parents in the dark for so long, as his immediate concern was what was happening in the building.
 - He is learning things through this process, how to better handle situations next time, while keeping confidentiality.
- Comment - Parents want to hear from principal more often and for him to have increased presence in the hallway and classrooms.
 - Mr. Schandel will share all incidents from past week at next PTA meeting.
 - They have regular fire drills, and regularly teach kids how to behave.
- Comment - This is not the first time a principal has had to deal with such problems, why is DOE not supporting him with all their resources and experience?
 - Queens Borough student service and safety directors stated that their job is to support the principal to make changes in the school.
 - The school is what you and the principal want it to be, your vision.
- Question - How do we rebuild trust in our school? Is the principal following regulations?
 - Ms. Giunta stated that they are looking into suspension data and how our school is doing. An investigation is going on and they are following up.
 - Regarding trust, Mr. Schandel has said he needs to improve his communication and increase his presence. He will do this through his principal coffee chat, 2nd safety town hall meeting and PTA meetings.

- Actions speak louder than words. Actions will rebuild trust.
- District office and borough team supporting the process in place.
- Looking to help principal to be a “transformative leader”.
- Our school is a top performing school sending kids to the top high schools in the city. We just were spotlighted in the district for being a model for art instruction to other schools.
- Question - What is the adult presence in the cafeteria?
 - All schools aides and 3-4 teachers are present in the cafeteria, as well as a Dean, AP or occasionally the principal, on rotation.
- Question - Can parents volunteer at lunch?
 - Not sure, will follow-up.
- Question - How can we change chancellor’s regulations?
 - There are open community engagement meetings that we can attend.
 - Parents can also contact District 26 office or local elected officials.
 - Can send questions to other district town hall meetings.

6. Mary Vaccaro, District 26 UFT Representative

- President of Union knows of incidents.
- School is getting attention.
- Spoke to UFT members today.
- Members feel like they are not being supported.
- UFT supplying support to teachers.
- Will follow up with principal.
- UFT Parent Liaison, Delci Rodriguez wants to invite parents to dinner to discuss, and with the entire staff to understand the issues.
- Contacting Chancellor and CEC regarding student safety, cell phone policy, and student removal policy.
- Parents can call her at any time.
- Stated that trust with the principal is an issue.

7. Melissa Wood motioned to adjourn the meeting, Elaine Lee seconded, all in favor voted, no objections. Meeting adjourned at 10:01 p.m.