

Freedom High School PTO September 11, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Julie Sabatino, President, called the September 11, 2018 meeting of the Freedom High School Parent Teacher Organization (FHS PTO) to order at 7:05 p.m. The meeting was held in the library. 26 people were in attendance at the meeting, including 5 staff/district members (Principle: Mr. LaPorta; Assistant Principals: Mr. DiBillio, Ms. Sage, Mr. Cecchini; and Curriculum and Instruction Assistant Principal/Master Scheduler: Ms. Leeson), 5 executive board members, and 16 additional attendees. We began with introductions.

Guest Speaker:

- Mr. LaPorta noted that this is his 12th year as principal and how much he and his staff enjoy doing what they do. The notion of Freedom Family has evolved over the years and it continues to be an important aspect of how the community defines itself.
- Each year there is a school theme that is connected to the District Road Map and essentially tells the story of how the school operates within this framework. Mr. LaPorta provided an historical overview of this framework, and then announced that this year's theme is Discipline Equals Freedom. The focus is not on student behavior or misbehavior per se but on becoming our fastest, strongest, and smartest selves. It starts with wellness; benefits from mindfulness; and requires strength, fortitude and will. Motivation doesn't always kick in when needed, but discipline does. When feeling overwhelmed students need to hit the reset button by breaking it down and prioritizing. Discipline equals freedom leads to being a better person tomorrow.
- Mr. LaPorta will be presenting building goals to Dr. Silva this month focused on the Core Learning, Stretch Learning, Student Engagement, and Personal Skill Development reflected in the District Road Map. Freedom is looking at reducing the number of failures and suspensions by 10% and improving student attendance by 10%. It is important for parents to know a child is considered absent even if they are in school a half day. The school is being more purposeful about addressing absences. For example, out-of-school suspensions that are due to non-violent incidents will now be served in-school and academic in nature. Also, a suspension at Freedom will not unequivocally result in a suspension from Vo-tech (it will be decided on a case-by-case basis). These goals are consistent with the PA Future Ready Index, which is a Pennsylvania Department of Education initiative aligned with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). If you are (1) a school in the bottom 10% of the schools in the commonwealth OR (2) fall into one of the socioeconomic disaggregated subgroups then you fall into having to use the PA Future Readiness Index. Freedom falls into the second category. In addition to these goals related to Core Learning and Student Engagement, Freedom is working toward the following stretch goals: improvement in the number of student in AP, maintaining AP scores, and improving the total number of student taking the AP tests. Ms. Leeson highlighted some of the statistics surrounding the stretch indicators.
- Ms. Sage spoke about school safety. A faculty Safety Committee last year worked to launch several initiatives, including color-coding the building and providing color-coded passes when students leave class designed to keep kids in class and in their respective areas; a standard response protocol in every classroom; moving away from a traditional lock down to an enhanced lock down using parts of ALICE (alert, lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate) protocol; block 3 safety plan if you are at lunch; and ID's on lanyards for every student that must be on in hallways, to get in late, and for lunches. There are green temporary IDs for when students forget them (as long as it doesn't become habitual), they must be turned in at the end of the day. Mr. LaPorta also noted that the district does not provide the public with maps of the buildings in order to protect this critical information.
- A parent asked a question about students entering the school when they have dual enrollment. Staff noted students can use the library and cafeteria when they are not scheduled for Freedom classes.
- Another parent asked who decides what portion of ALICE is used. Is it the teacher? Ms. Sage said there has been a lot of discussion on this and it will continue, there would be real-time information to assist teachers in making decisions if an incident occurs, either way there will be some teacher autonomy and, as a result, continued education in this area. There is a new BASD app that will get information out to parents in as quickly as possible. It is important for parents to follow school district directions so as not to add to an already difficult situation. This procedures will be consistent across all schools in the district.
- Mr. DiBillio spoke about the trauma element that was added to the District Road Map this year. The initiative focuses on identifying Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The ACEs index creates a score that falls within a pyramid. As an individual moves up the pyramid based on the number of ACEs (5 and up) there is a drastic change in life span (20 years less) as well as quality of life. Teachers are getting better at communicating with students in a trauma sensitive manner which has been shown to reverse the negative consequences of a high number of ACEs. Information about his initiative can be found on the website. The number of guidance counselors and social workers has been increased partially in support of this effort, and the hope is to push this initiative down to the elementary schools.

Treasurer's Report: Kathy Delaney

Budget for this year was reviewed. \$5,039.67 in bank account and roughly 70% is targeted to support departments wish lists. The remainder is allocated for school activities, hospitality, community work, and PTO operations. A motion to the proposed budget was made by Melissa Sonnenblick and seconded Wendy Simpson. A motion to accept treasurer's report was made by Carmela Swenor and seconded by Marie Brown.

Recording Secretary:

The May 15, 2018 meeting minutes are available online and were emailed to the membership list. A motion to accept the meeting minutes was made by Wendy Simpson and seconded Kathy Delaney.

Committee Reports:

Membership/Giant A+ Rewards: Linda Long

- Currently 228 PTO members.
- Parents must register themselves for Giant rewards. We earned over \$3,000 last year. At the end of last year we had 389 registered and we are now up to 432! You do not need to register each year, they roll over as long as you have made no changes.
- ShopRite Boxtops is no longer a program. It is only for grades K through 8.

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC): Marie Brown and Melissa Sonnenblick

- Marie provided an overview of the PAC meetings. There has not been a meeting yet this year. They meet 6 times a year, the first meeting for this year is September 27th.
- The last meeting of the 2017-2018 year was in May and there was an update of #BASDProud Parents which is group focused on advocating for our kids with state and local representatives. Go to www.basdproudparents.org to sign up for alerts.
- In addition, they discussed the state budget at the May meeting last year, the "Any Given Child" grant through the Kennedy Center, and the marketing plan and new logo which are focused on three goals (1) making BASD the obvious choice in the leigh valley, (2) have the community see that the schools are a good investment, and (3) to celebrate the great BASD graduates that we have. The student profile's in BASD calendar is an example of a strategy to accomplish this last goal and an attempt to build our alumni network.
- If parents have any issues, our representatives would be happy to take it to the meetings.

New Business:

- PTO is reducing the number of meetings and make an effort to focus meetings on new information. We are hoping to get more parent involvement.
- Homecoming volunteers are needed to help out but not to chaperone on September 22nd. Teachers chaperone the dance. We need clarification on the need for clearance for volunteers and how long they are valid.
- Mr. LaPorta will be asked to initiate Wish List requests from teachers.

Open Discussion:

- Discussed Thon and who is hosting this year.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 23 at 7:00 p.m. in the Library with Michael Faccinetto, School Board President.

Adjournment: Julie adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathie Grozier