



Bishop School PTO Meeting Minutes
Date: January 7, 2020
Location: Bishop School Library, 7-9 p.m.

- **Attending:** Principal - Mark McAneny; PTO Rep - Caroline Thom (3rd grade teacher); PTO Board Member: Co-President-Elisa Komoni (2nd year); PTO Co-President -Christina Marko (1st year); Co-treasurer: Karin Moellering (2nd year); Co-Treasurers: David Brecht (1st year); Communications Coordinator: Junko Nagano (2nd year); and Recording Secretary: Neshe Gafuri (1st year); Room Parent Coordinator: Laura Tikonoff (2nd year), not in attendance for this meeting
- Two members of the Bishop Community attended, including Bishop DIG parent representative
- **Introductions:** Elisa (PTO Co-President) opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and all in attendance introduced themselves
- **November 2019 meeting minutes** approved, announced that they are on the PTO Website
- **Principal's Update (Mark McAneny):**
 - Welcomed back everyone, and reported that last week there were 60 students out on Thursday and Friday, but back in full force this week
 - Stated that grade level teams are working with students as well as collaborating and meeting 1x/week with data-teams to discuss best practices, and look at the data to inform interactions
 - Reported that Bishop school has been working over past year to obtain assistance dog to aid students with stress, anxiety, improve engagement, and reluctance to reading
 - Bishop school started the conversation on obtaining a service dog about 3 years ago and at present time with efforts from teacher Caroline Thom, it has come to fruition and now the school is in the process of waiting for a match
 - There is more than 25% of students in the school that already are dealing with some type of anxiety and trauma and that statistic is increasing
 - As we think about wellness in our community as a whole, we want to give tools and resources to everyone to learn how to cope and it has already been proven that assistance dogs are one of one of the ways to elevate anxiety and trauma
 - Bishop will be one of the first schools in Arlington to have full-time assistance dog
 - Principal McAneny and Ms. Thom have already drafted the information which will be shared with Bishop community in tomorrow's update, but first needed to share the news in this forum with this group

- **Teacher's Update (Caroline Thom)**

- Distributed handout with organizations' website (NEADS.org), gave additional information, and history on the organization that she has been working with in order to obtain the assistance dog
- NEADS already has total of 18 dogs placed in the schools throughout Massachusetts and most of the schools are middle schools and high schools
- Stated that over the 20+ years of teaching she has observed that children have not changed but the stressors have
- Research shows that the outcomes of a walking dog in a room are immense especially for children
- NEADS trains dogs in prisons, the dogs are trained 15-18 months and then they have to pass a test before they are matched
- Ms. Thom also has to go for training to find out if she and the dog are a good match, subsequently there is a graduation, and then the dog is hers
- Assistance dogs are more trained than therapy, and service dogs to read the clues in children; among other things, they teach children to make eye contact, deescalate etc.
- Dog will be Bishop School's assistance dog Monday-Friday, but the dog will go home with Ms. Thom where she will be responsible for room and board expenses for the dog
- Thus, the dog doesn't cost anything the only thing that the NEADS organization asks for is that we fundraise one-time \$8,000 over the period of 2 years, and the funds go directly to NEADS organization
- Need to share with PTO the donation page setup by NEADS organization such that PTO can share with Bishop community
- This is a new and exciting adventure that will be a very positive addition to the Bishop community and especially to the most vulnerable population

- **Co-Treasurers Update (David Brecht/Karin Moellering)**

- Karin handed out copies of updated budget and reported that PTO has raised 51K already which is more than previous years at this stage of the year
- The annual fund alone is at \$ 29,400 which is pretty much what PTO raised as a whole over the last year, thus PTO remains confident that it will meet what have planned for
- On the spending side there are additional enrichment activities and the garden in the spring that we still have to be paid for
- Second round of teacher checks, room parent checks and teacher appreciation have not been included in this budget either
- However overall the budget looks healthy

- **Co-Presidents Update (Elisa Komoni/Christina Marko)**

- Walkathon and Craft Fair, have been two successful events that took place in November and December
- Teacher and Room parent checks will go out next week
- Backpack Mail will go home with students for second request for Annual Fund Fundraiser, as well as open PTO Board Positions for next year
- PTO Bulletin Board will be updated with Science Night reminders
- Recent grants approved:
 - Positive Incentive Sticker, where for classrooms with most stickers earned will have the teddy bear and banner placed in front of the classroom to reflect children's good behavior

- Gym Mat that was requested by Mr. Scopa has been approved
 - Read Live (Read Naturally) approved, program that will assist kids with reading needs, and it will serve about 30 students
 - Ms. Murphy's request for closet and classroom maintenance has been approved by the PTO as funds for this type of request have been budgeted, however it's installation will be worked out with Mr.McAneny
 - Thank You Note from Fran was read by Christina
- **DIG (Diversity Inclusion Initiative) Update**
 - Jessica conveyed that members of the Bishop DIG are going to host a cultural fest for the entire school community
 - Event will be held over the weekend, preferably March 14th
 - There will be three components to this event:
 - performance
 - artifacts
 - food
 - Areas needed for event are: Library, cafeteria and gym
 - Recommendation by Christina was made to Bishop DIG to start the application process for the building permit
 - A grant will be submitted to the PTO for the associated costs

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Movie Night – Friday, January 10, 2020

Camp Auction – Thursday, January 16, 2020

Dance and Social/Spirit Day – Friday, February 7, 2020

NEXT PTO MEETING: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2020