PTO General Membership Meeting

Tuesday December 11, 2018, 6:30 pm, Minutes taken by Secretary, Melissa Chernovsky

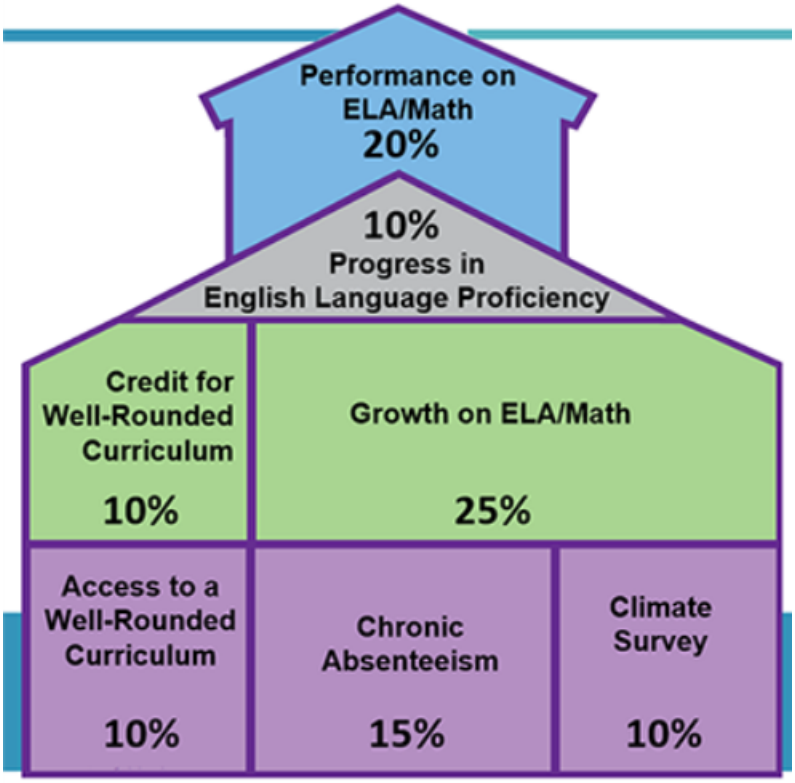
Presentation by Julie Dieguez proprietor of the Wild Child

- Nature Playspace definition:
  - Designated for structural and unstructured play and learning
  - Supports creative and physical play
  - Supports development in a number of areas
- Discussed that outside time is good for kids for the following reasons:
  - Improves attention of ADHD affected children
  - Enriches language development, encourages children to play together
  - Supports imagination and cooperative play which also leads to language improvement
- In 2008 Project Green Classrooms Established
  - Maryland is the 1st state to include an environmental literacy graduation requirement
- Important considerations for Outdoor Spaces;
  - Dual use learning and play opportunities
  - Security of items
  - Maintenance and sustainability / longevity
  - Installation: DIY or professionally
- Map was shown of the Rolling Knolls Campus where areas were identified for possible outdoor classroom projects to be implemented in "Phases". The first space to be developed will be the area to the left of the school from the front, in the area of the cafeteria.
  - It is a goal for the committee to include projects that involve the RKE students in creating the space
  - One phase to be installed by Earth Day (Monday April 22, 2019)
  - Teachers may prefer a more structured space
- The next section of the presentation was viewing a collection of examples with a range of cost options, natural / rustic such as hewed logs, purchased log cabin look items, and nature themed from playground companies
  - Seating and Tables
  - Lockable storage
  - Playground type equipment: balance beams, gaga ball octagon enclosures
  - Raised garden beds for butterfly gardens, milkweed gardens, edible gardens, root boxes
  - Sensory tables and music walls
  - Loose parts: STEM learning tubes, blocks with chalkboard paint, magnetic wall, spatial abacus, geoboard fun, building structures including Sticklets or rods and Velcro straps.
- Some supporting information on the web:
  - www.baybackpack.com
  - Http://dnr.maryland.gov has a page with listed areas with nature play spaces and includes examples

    - http://dnr.maryland.gov/pgc/Pages/NPS/index.aspx
- Discussion / Q&A:
    - Is the intent for the outside area by the cafeteria to be covered? Covering areas requires extra costs and therefore not necessary to be part of the first Phase
    - Can't count on maintenance facility to manage garden areas, it will be a requirement to submit a "maintenance plan" take care of the area, especially in the summer for watering
        - Either via an RKE established committee
        - Or working with an established community group to manage an area.
    - Process: the committee will develop a major / minor report that the Principal submits to AACPS, which will need to approve

Principal's report (Shira Dowling)

- AACPS ratings
    - Located on the AACPS website: https://www.aacps.org/statereportcard
    - 36 minute video describing the results in a 12/5/2018 board presentation
    - The RKE ratings were passed out, and can also be accessed on the school website:
        - **www.mdreportcard.org**
    - Scores Based on the following breakdown of weighed points:



Calculating ES SCORES

  - The RKE report highlights RKE growth in number of students meeting learning objectives year over year
  - It was noted that RKE has a higher ratio of lower income and English Language Learner students than other 4 star elementary schools. A note to be very proud of RKE instruction.
  - Reviewed/discussed the school absence policy:
    - Excused absences: illness, parent returning from deployment, bereavement, access to transportation e.g., bus couldn't do pickups on a day due to flooding, doctor/dentist visits with a companion note.
    - Schools are dinged when a student misses 18 or more days of school
    - Not excused: vacations
    - Best not to have more than 2 unexcused absences a month, otherwise a student is put on a "watch list"
  - 15 points of the total were missing from all AACPS elementary schools: from AACPS website… "*AACPS elementary schools reflect a score of 0 (out of 15 possible points) in the "Access to a Well-Rounded Curriculum" and "Credit for a Well-Round Curriculum" indicators. This is due to the fact that while quality instruction in these areas was provided, when the indicators were established in the middle of the 2017-2018 school year AACPS had no mechanism in place to track which specific fifth-graders experienced all of the Health standards in the different curriculums. Given the inconsistency of the data, Superintendent George Arlotto made the decision not to report any fifth-grade grade student as having met standards in these in these two categories.*"
    - Likely next year once the tracking measures are in place, most elementary schools across the board will increase their score by a star.
- December 14th is festive sweater day
- Flea Market is on December 20th –
  - Lisa Lyman is helping to organize donations and volunteers and the signup genius is mostly filled for helpers on the day.
  - Accepting donations up to the day (prefer by the day before (19th), but will not reject any donations)
- December 21st is pajama day where it is planned to show a movie in the morning and have holiday parties in the afternoon

President's Report (Elizabeth King)

- Mrs. Covington expresses thanks to those who provided donations for holiday community outreach programs and for the family affected by a fire

VP report (Elizabeth on behalf of Audrey McGuire)

- Teacher Appreciation: Brunch on November 26th was successful with many donations where Audrey appreciates the support

Treasurer's Report (Kim Augusterfer unable to attend)

- To receive update next meeting

Volunteer Coordinator (Lauren Miller)

- Please when checking into volunteer, remember to sign in with the administrators as "Volunteer" and not as "Visitor"

Special Events Coordinator (Catherine Bishop)

- Plenty of opportunities upcoming for volunteers
- Father /Son – on the calendar for January 9th.
- Father/Daughter dance – have a volunteer planning for April
- Will solicit previous organizers of events without new organizers for a checklist / blurb and hours estimate and post to the rocket blast / PTO website
    - For example Variety night – responsibilities include putting together a couple of flyers, organize two helpers, one for the music and another for backstage preparation of the acts, and MC'ing the presentations
- Rocket Blast - Please send Catherine any announcements you have for the Rocket Blast as content is needed.

Secretary (Melissa Chernovsky)

- Minutes for the Nov. meeting are approved and will be posted shortly after this meeting
- PTO minutes are being posted to the PTO website: http://www.rkepto.org

RKE Staff Report (Michelle Bassett)

- Teachers are appreciative of the support and teacher appreciation events

Old Business

- Teacher Appreciation idea discussed with Shira – regarding purchase large fans for the teacher's lounge which is quite warm, small fans for the teachers with sentiment: "I'm your biggest fan".
    - Solicit feedback if there is indeed a heating issue in certain areas (outside of the set thermostat range) then it should be addressed with the building facility heating & cooling management
    - Solicit feedback if teachers would want personal desk fans and Shira will investigate any safety / facility concerns with implementation.

New Business

- Regarding the sharing program for Christmas, some clarifications were discussed.

- Unwrapped presents equals new and in the store packaging, but not with added gift wrappings, papers, bags, etc... Use of a bag is only for transport (not necessary to be a gift wrap bag). It is left to the parents to determine how to distribute and present the gifts.
- Discussion on how to coordinate between sponsors of multiple children in the families, would be very challenging and not required.
- Suggestion to break up lists of items for the children via a spreadsheet, where more people would volunteer who may not have been able/willing to sponsor all items on an individual's list. It was discussed that there were more people this year who wanted to participate. It was recognized that it would require more mission oversite and re-organization of the incoming donations.

Next General Membership meeting is on February 12th 2019.

Adjourn ~8:00pm.