

BROOKDALE HOME & SCHOOL ASSOCIATION, INC.

MINUTES OF MEETING

October 8, 2014

The Brookdale Home and School Association was called to order at approximately 7:07pm. Board members in attendance were Mike McLaughlin, Rafael Jimenez, Monica Lutz, Jenn Harvey, and Nicole Bornemann.

Board of Education Representative: Catzel Bumpus stated that the Board of Education is off to a positive start. Presently, it has a balanced literacy program, new contracts with bus drivers and secretaries, and an addition of a Professional Development Director. Parents will be allowed to have the option of opting out of the PARCC and all parents are encouraged to research this. The parents are encouraged to talk to their principal and that educational activities will be provided during testing time for the students whose parents have opted them out of taking the PARCC. She stated that the test scores would be skewed if many of the students opt out of testing. A parent asked for more information regarding this decision. Mrs. Bumpus stated that the PARCC test will take place, but some parents would like to opt out of the testing for their children. Mr. Fleres stated that the state mandates that schools have students take high stakes tests. New information has been brought out that parents have the option to opt out of having their children tested and that the policy is that the school must provide educational opportunities in a separate place within the school building with another teacher. He stated that the district does not know what it would be facing if there are a large number of students who opt out. A parent asked if the students would be taking the PARCC on an iPad and had concerns over children not being able to type well. They were also concerned about an overemphasis on the test. Mrs. Bumpus stated that the school is mandated by the state to have high stakes testing and that testing is a skill that all children have to learn. Mr. Fleres and the Board of Education are not in favor of high stakes testing. There will be a forum about high stakes testing and the district is forced by the government to require it. A parent expressed concern over the children believing that their teacher will lose their job if they do not do well on the test. Mr. Fleres stated that parent should talk to their legislatures about high stakes testing because they mandate it and that parents should attend forums. Mrs. Bumpus stated that parents should send both letters and emails to their state legislatures. A parent asked about who decided on the dates when students would be taking the PARCC. Mr. Fleres stated that everyone in New Jersey takes the test in March. Mrs. Bumpus stated that all of the scores may go down. A parent expressed concern over how stressful and tiring the testing period is and who would receive the test scores. Mrs. Bumpus stated that everyone should have received their test scores from the last school year. Mr. Fleres stated the parents receive a sealed letter containing the test scores. Mrs. Pico stated that the scores of the test will not be reported on a student's report card. Mr. Fleres stated that the children who are the most stressed over the test are the ones whose parents place a lot of stress on doing well and that the school tries to make the testing week fun such as having no

homework or having a party. The scores for the PARCC will be counted this school year. Mrs. Bumpus stated that children become upset over the testing. A parent asked about how the scores will be affected if many students are opted out of the test. Mr. Fleres stated that the scores of the students opting out would be voided or not factored in and could bring down the school's average. Mrs. Pico stated that the PARCC scores would be skewed. Mr. Fleres stated that the school is graded on these scores and that this could affect the cost of housing in the area. He also stated that the scores are one of the ways that the staff decides on who will be placed into the Gifted and Talented Program. Mrs. Bumpus stated that the scores also affect whether or not a student would get into honors classes at the high school. She stated that if parents have any questions, they should contact the Board. Mike McLaughlin asked if the Board of Education elections will be taking place on November 4th. Mrs. Bumpus stated that they will be on the H line and there are three seats for a three year term. There are eight people running and two are running for the two year seat. The review of the budget is already in process and the district is in a good place. She asked that everyone educate themselves on the Board of Education candidates. There will be a forum held on October 22nd and it is a great way to hear the views of others.

Secretary's Report: Minutes were approved from the previous meeting of September 9, 2014.

Faculty Representative: Mrs. Pico stated that there was nothing to report.

Principal's Report: Mr. Fleres reported on important events that are happening at Brookdale School.

a. School Beautification: Mr. Fleres stated that great changes have been made with school beautification and many wonderful things have been donated. Mr. Monge from Happy Tree has done a great job.

b. Thank you's: Mr. Fleres thanked the parents for the iPad covers and for labeling books in the classroom libraries. He stated that each of the books are leveled for the children to read and that some grades received 150 books.

c. Aftercare: Mr. Fleres stated that children are not permitted in the classrooms during aftercare and parents should let their children know this.

d. Reading and Writer's Workshop: Mr. Fleres stated that the children are excited about learning to read and that this is a workshop model. Every teacher has opted to take on the reading and writing workshop program.

e. Second Grade: Mr. Fleres stated that Mrs. Locassio will cover for Mrs. Ritacco for the next five weeks.

f. Back to School Night: Mr. Fleres thanked the parents for being involved.

g. Opt Out Policy: Mr. Fleres stated that the parents have the option of not having their child take the PARCC. There will be a forum on the PARCC to discuss these issues.

h. If your child is sick please do not take them to school

i. Week of Respect: Mr. Fleres stated that this event will begin October 20 and that Mrs. McCartney will have activities.

j. Star Testing: Mr. Fleres stated that this is a benchmark assessment which is done a few times a year to see the learning growth of the child.

k. Gifted and Talented: Mr. Fleres stated that this program will be starting soon and that Mrs. Barton is the head of the program. Children in Grades Four through Six are labeled Gifted and Talented by criteria which will include scores from the PARCC/NJASK, cognitive score, and recommendations made by the teacher. He also stated that there will be an IQ test given to all Third and Sixth Grades. Reading will be weighed higher than math ability. There are about 33 students who are identified as Gifted and Talented at Brookdale School and that last year there were 28 children in the program. The program is done at lunchtime twice a week and it is student driven. At this time, there is no definite curriculum for Gifted and Talented.

Congratulations to James Damiano and Giancarlo Serrano for winning the Columbus Day Essay Award Contest.

Treasurer's Report: Monica Lutz presented the budget. Our current budget in the checking account as of amounted to \$26,124.22 and that the total holdings amounted to \$3,702.18. Mike McLaughlin stated that there were some concerns after the last meeting from the Sixth Grade parents about the funding for activities and that the HSA has increased the revised budget to \$55 per student. There is also a budget increase for beautification (from \$600 to \$1000). He also stated that we have to approve the budget and vote on it and he asked if the HSA should do a ballot or a hand vote. Everyone approved the budget by a hand vote.

Items on the Agenda:

- a. Fan Replacement:** Rafael Jimenez stated that the HSA needed to only replace five fans within the school. including at \$250.00.
- b. Solicitations:** Mike McLaughlin stated that presently there are no guidelines or policy on non-school fundraisers. The HSA has a finite budget and he wanted to know if anyone had an opinion for a policy on this issue. Parents raised the ideas that this is not done in other schools, that these type of fundraisers can turn into a bottomless pit, set aside a certain amount for this, or to have fundraisers like these geared more toward community events. A few parents raised concerns about federal auditing or to have individuals come to the HSA to ask for donations. Mike McLaughlin stated that this

issue will not be resolved tonight and that the HSA will continue to think about this. He thanked the parents for their input.

The Thank You Roster:

- a. **Birthday Gifts:** Mike McLaughlin thanked Maria Rendfrey for all of her hard work on putting together the birthday gifts for the students.
- b. **Paperless:** Mike McLaughlin thanked Marlene Matulac for doing such a wonderful job on Paperless.
- c. **Fall Mum Sale:** Mike McLaughlin thanked Jessica Rohrer and all the volunteers for doing a wonderful job on the Fall Mum Sale.
- d. **Class Dues:** Mike McLaughlin thanked Dani Kennedy and all of the class parents for doing a wonderful job on collecting class dues.

Upcoming Activities:

- a. **Halloween Dance:** The Halloween Dance will be taking place on October 27th at 7:00pm in the school gym. Parents must supervise their children at all times.
- b. **Halloween Parade:** The Halloween Parade will take place on October 31st at 1:00pm at the school and that children can either bring their costumes to school or go home to change. Children who are going home must let the office know. The children will be parading around the concrete walkway and parents should please keep the blacktop clear. In the event of bad weather, the parade will take place inside the school gym.
- c. **Innisbrook:** Congratulations to Stanley Williams for raising over \$1,400.00 during this fundraiser.
- d. **Coffee and Conversation:** Mr. Fleres stated that this event will take place on Wednesday, November 19 from 8:30am-9:30am in the Media Center. This is an agenda-free meeting where parents can meet with him.
- e. **BrookdaleBuzz.com:** Mike McLaughlin stated that this website has links to all of the websites related to the school and that Rafael Jimenez has done a wonderful job setting this up.
- f. **After-School Programs:** Mike McLaughlin stated that a chairperson is needed for this program.

A parent raised the question on how items get placed on the HSA agenda. Mr. Fleres stated that many parents have raised concerns over the Aftercare Program and that this program is run by the YMCA. The staff at Brookdale School are not on the staff for aftercare and that he does not

have any authority over it. He stated that there have been supervision issues and other issues stated by the parents that have been bothersome.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34pm.

The next HSA meeting will be held at 7:00pm on Wednesday, November 12, 2014.

Respectfully submitted by Nicole Bornemann, HSA Secretary, on November 7, 2014.