

Minutes of the Tuesday, March 12, 2019 Gunston Middle School PTA Meeting

1. Beth Hicks called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Mr. Seward presented the Gunston MS Goals Update, a review of Gunston's School Management Plan.
3. Treasurer's Report
 - a. Fall Fun Fest - no loss or gains
 - b. Silent Auction made \$4,612.96
 - c. Spirit Wear - there was enough ordered for printing. Will have end-of-year sale.
 - d. Upcoming Costs
 - e. Phoenix Bikes Program - \$500
 - f. Teacher Appreciation Week - \$1,000
 - g. Phoenix Bikes Program - \$500
 - h. SOL Prep Snacks - \$500
 - i. Preference is to end year with 10K in bank, need to raise
4. Immediate PTA Volunteer Needs
 - a. PreK-12 Instructional Programs Pathways (IPP) Rep - Meeting, March 21 7-9 pm. At this meeting, participants will:
 - i. Learn about the work of IPP thus far 2) Provide input on the criteria for defining an option program
 - ii. Work in small groups on the visioning for APS instructional pathways
 - iii. Take the information learned at this meeting back to share with their respective school communities
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 - b. Nominating Committee - need one more member to help find slate of officers to present at May meeting, vote held at the June meeting. Seeking officers for:
 - i. VP of Programs
 - ii. VP of Communications
 - iii. Secretary
 - c. Cinco De Mayo Event, May 3, 4-7 pm
 - i. Dunk tank - GMS teachers sign-up to raise money
 - ii. Photo Booth
 - iii. Face painting/Henna?
 - iv. Food - Food trucks w/Hispanic offerings
 - d. Teacher Appreciation Week, May 6 - 10
 - i. Daily prizes announced over intercom
 - ii. Appreciation Poster on Cafeteria Wall

Upcoming PTA Meetings:

April Meeting, Tuesday, April 9 - Topic: Racial Justice in Education

May PT Meeting, Tuesday, May 14 - Topic: Safety

Meeting adjourned at 8:45

State of the PTA - Brainstorm to Increase Parental Involvement

Cause 1: Parents Don't Feel Truly Welcome

You say you want help, but do your actions match your words? What does a brand-new parent experience when first connected with someone in your group? Is she personally welcomed at your meeting? If she checks a box on a volunteer form, does someone call her and give her a (good) job to do and a mentor to help her get the lay of the land? Or is her first experience with your group being hit up for money?

Antidote: Have a volunteer position or committee solely focused on welcoming new parents to your school and new volunteers to your group. It's that important.

Cause 2: Fear of the Black Hole

Many parents worry that if they volunteer one time, they'll be sucked into a vortex from which there is no escape. They help out at one event and next thing they know, their days and evenings and weekends are all gone. Honestly, too often this fear is actually true.

Antidote: You have to make it more than OK to volunteer just a little bit—even publicly celebrate that idea. Stand up at open house (or in your newsletter) and specifically recognize the Black Hole. Let people know that your group is all about volunteers who do what they can, when they can, with no guilt. And make sure that's true.

Cause 3: Artificial Schedule Demands

Who says that 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday each month has to be sacrosanct? Why do volunteers have to be available at 10 a.m. on a school day? How many potential volunteers are turned off or in effect turned away because their schedules don't match yours?

The days when everyone had to attend the meeting for your group to be productive are over. Schedules are far less standardized today than they were years ago.

Antidote: Use technology and flexibility to your advantage. With cell phones and texting and email and home computers, you have to change your group's systems to support volunteers who can't (or don't want to) fit your traditional schedule.

Cause 4: Your Goals and Results Are Too Small

Volunteers, especially the best, most energetic ones, are attracted to success and big wins and challenges. If your group has a track record of doing a few "just OK" things and that's what you have scheduled for next year, that really won't draw in the masses.

Antidote: Start talking now about one or two big goals. Think about eliminating (or transforming) a few of your modest efforts and replacing them with one much more grand offering.

Cause 5: It's Just Not Fun

It sounds shallow, but this may be the biggest cause of all. If your group is too bureaucratic or if your meetings drag on for hours or if drama and politics dominate, then you're going to have a heck of a time bringing in parents.

Antidote: Lighten up. Tell a joke. Go out for some fun after your meetings. Celebrate volunteers and your good work. Smile.

Making small strides in a few of these areas can make a big difference for your group. If you do good work now with eight volunteer leaders, imagine what you can do with 14 or 20! Don't get too caught up in the 300 parents who aren't helping out. When you work on your group (and then make those changes and results visible), volunteers usually follow.