

January 12th, 2010 Citywide PTO minutes

- As part of their alcohol and drug prevention efforts, and on the heels of the results of the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the Melrose Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition is conducting a survey of parents of 5th, 7th, 9th, and 11th grade students. The data collected from these anonymous surveys will help the Coalition better understand adult perceptions and opinions concerning substance abuse in our community. This survey should be arriving in your mailbox by the end of January and should be completed by one parent/guardian in each household. Any questions regarding the survey may be directed to Kara Showers at (781) 979-4128 or kshowers@cityofmelrose.org.
- March 2nd is Community Reading Day. All PTO's should remind their hospitality committees to have refreshments available for the readers that morning.
- The Annual Bridge Trivia Bee Fundraiser will be held on Saturday March 27th. All PTOs should begin recruiting a team to represent their school. All proceeds from the Bee are used to fund the Bridge volunteer coordinator for the district.
- We are still looking for a webmaster to represent the schools for the Melrose Community Calendar. The position involves receiving and posting school events. Anyone interested should contact Emily Rubenstein at the Bridge at erubenstein@melrose.mec.edu or call 781-979-2299.
- The Roosevelt School will hold a dinner and silent auction on March 12th at the Hilton Hotel in Woburn.
- We discussed playground maintenance and safety. Several schools have reported injuries on playground equipment. The responsibility for supplying and spreading wood chips falls to the landscaping company the City has contracted to maintain its properties. PTO's should monitor substrate levels and contact their building principal if they need additional mulch. The district is also using volunteers to increase supervision at lunchtime, working with

abutters to encourage reporting of vandalism, and changing playground rules to prohibit snow play in icy weather.

- We discussed the current interpretation of the new state ethics guidelines with regards to gift giving. The understanding of what constitutes a group gift has been called into question. Concerns were raised that giving multiple gifts under different “groups” of children to avoid a \$50.00 cap may result in room parents leaving children’s names off the gift if their parents could not afford to donate. At the superintendent’s suggestion, the Citywide group is asking each elementary PTO to submit a copy of their room parent guidelines to the Citywide Rep, for discussion at the February meeting. The group will examine room parent practices across the district and make a recommendation as to what a district wide room parent policy would look like.
- We discussed the reporting practices of the principal’s revolving account. Currently, the only principals who have limited check book privileges with their revolving accounts are the middle and high school principals. Depending on the school, certain fundraisers have allocated profits to the principal’s revolving account. Reporting practices vary by school. Concerns were raised that parent participation in fundraisers drops off when they are unaware of how much money is being raised and on what it is spent. Would it be possible for principals district wide to communicate the details (amount and how it is spent) of their revolving accounts in reports to the PTOs?
- The Melrose/Franklin/Tremont street crossing guards, who are hired to cross the elementary students attending Roosevelt, have had their times adjusted by five minutes. Contractual agreements prohibit the district from changing crossing guard coverage at these locations for better middle school coverage. Currently, these crossing guards are stationed from 7:45 to 8:25. Would it be possible to adjust the times of elementary crossing guards, whose coverage extends to very few extremely tardy students, to achieve better coverage for middle school students at peak traffic times?
- A follow-up to our discussion of E-camp practices...after speaking with each elementary school, the superintendant concluded that each school valued its

own unique program above any economies of scale that could be achieved by attending the same camp for the same amount of time. Superintendent Casey also informed us that the district would attempt to offer a uniform curriculum for children who do not attend e-camp. We discussed the social benefits of e-camp for children, and the team-building aspect for the class. Would students benefit more if the program was held in the fall? Fall costs for camp are often less than for spring and summer. Some districts hold e-camp for sixth graders. What are the implications for fundraising if e-camp timing was changed?

- A question arose regarding e-camp scholarships....what is the criteria for determining which families get scholarships? Criteria include, but are not limited to, participation in the free and reduced price lunch program, knowledge of family hardship, etc.
- Melrose has joined the State of Massachusetts application for grant money available under the federal "Race to the Top" program, which could send up to \$250 million in education funds to Massachusetts over the next four years. The superintendent, the school committee, and the unions have all supported the memorandum.
- A Gifted & Talented screening will be held again this year. Details will follow.