

## October 6<sup>th</sup> 2009, Citywide PTO Minutes

- E-Camp update; currently, all 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in the district will be attending Environmental Camp. Venues, costs, and length of stay vary by school. Some parents have expressed concern to administrators that the increasing cost of e-camp has created a financial hardship. The new school committee field trip policy requires school committee approval of all overnight field trips before fund raising begins; how will this affect e-camp fundraising, which generally starts immediately in the fall? As costs continue to rise, will the e-camp program be sustainable?
- How are school committee changes in district policy communicated to principals? Although the district policy manual is available on-line, how will principals be alerted when a policy is added or changed?
- The 2008 MCAS scores are now available. This fall, the state will begin tracking the performance of individual students as they move from grade to grade using a “growth model”. This data could be used to help drive instructional methods. As more tools become available for principals to break out data and analyze results, how is this data communicated to teachers? When confronted with specific classrooms performing poorly on MCAS, what immediate corrective measures are administrators compelled to take?
- Is the High School dress code too lax? Some High School parents have expressed concern over the High School dress code. Students are allowed to wear hats in the building, and female students are often wear revealing clothing (e.g. short skirts, tank tops, etc) There is a marked difference between the strict dress code at the MVMMS and the lax dress code at the High School. Is this a distraction that impacts the learning environment?
- The newly created Technology Advisory Council hopes to utilize community expertise to improve our technology related educational

programs and infrastructure. One goal is to improve our district website, perhaps linking video of student events, sports, music, etc. The district will also be bringing in an expert to discuss technology issues that impact students, such as cyber-bullying, use of social networking sites, and to help define appropriate parameters regarding electronic communication between teachers and students.

- We discussed other issues surrounding use of technology in the district. Should student directories ever be available in electronic form? The consensus, based on past experience, is no. Privacy issues, and the ease with which electronic information can be copied and distributed, makes electronic distribution too risky. We also discussed problems in elementary school computer labs with student research projects...filter programs have not prevented students from viewing inappropriate websites while using search engines. One possible solution is for teachers to work with the ELMS to provide students with a preapproved list of websites to use rather than allowing them to search themselves.
- Has any federal stimulus money for education reached Melrose? Any gains from federal stimulus money have been offset by cuts in state aid.
- Because of our new non-profit status, any separate 5<sup>th</sup> grade fundraising must appear as a line item in the budget.
- The Sped Pac meeting did not have a large turnout...possibly because of a conflict with another community event, and confusion over the venue. Parents are encouraged to attend the next meeting.
- School Committee Election...PTO's cannot endorse any candidate but they CAN encourage parents to vote. PTO's can provide information as to when and where candidate debates and forums are held, and encourage parents to learn about the candidates to become an informed voter.
- The next Citywide meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 10<sup>TH</sup> .