

HMS PTO General Meeting Minutes – January 12, 2011

The meeting was called to order by Co-President Lynne Bloomfield at 9:40 a.m.

Secretaries' Report: The November minutes were reviewed and approved.

Principal's Report: Principal Ruben Peña explained staffing changes that would be effective for the second semester. HMS has a large number of teachers that are not tenured and require several evaluations by the administration. The D181 Board approved the hiring of a Dean of Students for the rest of this year to help free up time for Ruben and Assistant Principal, Dr. Martha Henrikson, to conduct the evaluations. Donna Vorreyer, a long-time Language Arts teacher, has been hired to fill the position. Jennifer Schramm has been appointed to replace Donna for the remainder of the school year. Another teacher will be hired to replace Jennifer as part time 7th grade math teacher. This has been met with some concern by parents of student's in Donna's 7th grade ELA class. Discussion of this situation continued at the end of the general meeting. A separate meeting between concerned parents, Ruben and Superintendent Schuster was arranged by D181 board member Yvonne Mayer in order to address the issues raised by parents.

The D181 Administration, including Dr. Schuster and others, toured the school over the break with Ruben. They observed classroom shapes and sizes. There was discussion of the need for "efficient room utilization" to accommodate students according to a state standard of 750 square foot classrooms for a certain class size. Additional portable classrooms may not be recommended for HMS by the Administration to the Board.

Martha reported that the last week of January will be dedicated to SELAS activities. The focus will be on bullying, but the terminology will be altered to "mean behavior". There will be discussions of what behaviors are "above the line" or "below the line". And the need to change bystanders in to "upstanders" will be emphasized.

Panel Discussion about Hinsdale Central High School issues and experiences with recent graduates: *Does middle school prepare students adequately for Central?*—Most felt generally prepared academically. There is a jump in expectations by teachers, but most felt the differences were personal, rather than due to a change from HMS to HCHS. The difference between honors vs. non-honors classes at Central is more dramatic. Also, the size of the school can be a big adjustment. Shadowing, touring the school during book weeks and peer leadership were all recommended as sources of easing the transition to the new environment. Lunch is sometimes stressful the first few days. There are a large number of kids representing all grades in the lunchroom. Bringing lunch the first week and arranging to meet a friend that has the same period lunch can make it less intimidating.

Classes ---taking all honors classes is possible for a motivated student, but it can be really difficult and time consuming (with 3 or more hours of homework per night). Social studies and English classes require a lot of reading. AP classes may earn a student credit when they go on to college if they get 4s or 5s. AP Exams are in early May. The students stressed that grades are really important for college applications. If As and Bs are not possible in honors/AP classes, it is better to take the regular class and get good grades. Electives choices should help provide a break from the rigor of core classes and support an interest. All the students advised

developing good communication with the teachers, especially if a student is running into trouble with the material.

Activities---Everyone should try to find extra curricular activities. They are a good way to meet others with similar interests. There are many clubs and teams to choose from, and although some require tryouts, others do not. Colleges like to see what activities you spend your time doing....it is more important to do one or two things you love than lots of random events. It is important to be aware of time management, so grades don't suffer.

Naviance—Use it to find a good match and focus college searches. The graphing function is helpful for determining whether certain schools are a realistic choice for application. Guidance office will give training on its use to anyone that is interested.

Presidents' Report: Co-President Lynne Bloomfield reported that D181 will be pursuing online student registration. Online registration may start in April or May, and then an in-person residency check will be conducted, perhaps at back-to-school day. PTOs were asked by D181 to help pay \$500 or so each to help implement the online system.

There was further discussion of the space and staffing issues facing HMS next year. Student population is expected to increase again. Ruben was asked if he could request more FTEs. He explained that he must take what the board allows based on the numbers they use. Typically they take the class number and divide into even sections to determine how many sections he needs to staff. This does not account for the fact that some kids have little flexibility in scheduling due to band/orchestra, ELA, Accelerated Math, ACE, etc. This results in unbalanced class sizes, which can cause further problems when appropriate sized classrooms are not available. Additional portable classrooms and moving the cross categorical (special needs) students to another school could give HMS more rooms, but the administration has not agreed to these remedies.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Annette Phillips reported that we are on target to make our budget for this school year.

Submitted by Co-Recording Secretary Cindy Scalzo