

Northwood PTSA General Meeting January 15, 2019

Meeting was opened at 7:42 pm by Ms Robyn Watts, PTSA President.

In attendance were Ms Watts; Andrea Verbrugge, PTSA Vice President; Jenn Sawin, PTSA Secretary; Ms. Charley-Greene, Principal; Michele Moller, Northwood Cluster Coordinator Amarilis Lugo de Fabritz, MCCPTA Delegate; Jillian Newby, After Prom Chair; and Ms Brandy Reazer, SGA head. Approximately 10 other persons were in attendance.

Cathy Shrestha (Treasurer) and Jenny Espinoza (Membership Chair) were unable to attend.

Minutes

Copies of the November 20, 2018 meeting minutes were distributed. A motion was made from the floor to approve the draft minutes. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Treasurer

Cathy sent her report as of December 31, 2018 and it was distributed.

Membership

Membership is up. 55 parents, 128 staff, and 5 students have joined.

Ms. Charley-Greene, Principal

Congratulations to Alvin Huynh on a Posse Foundation full-tuition scholarship to Bucknell University. Congratulations to yearbook editors and staff on awards from National Scholastic Press Association. Poms recently took 2nd place in competition and their county championship is February 2 at Blair HS. Recent community involvement: Drumline performed at the “Shutdown Social” dinner organized by Councilman Tom Hucker to support furloughed federal workers; Northwood staff/student panel at the MCCPTA Mental Health and Wellness Forum.

Cluster Coordinator

Michele noted that the MCPS operating budget hearing is January 16, moved due to weather. She and Amarilis will testify. Mental health is a theme; counselors are overloaded with a chronic shortage in lower schools, especially bilingual staff. More psychologists are needed. At Northwood, MC2 expansion may add load to teachers in advanced courses in the MC2 pathway. While we plan for a new Northwood building, we are in the current facility for some time; we need bookcases, desks, filing cabinets, etc.

Presentation

Ms Charley-Greene explained the new Active Assailant Training. Students will train in February. Cluster Security Coordinator will do a physical walk-through to look for vulnerabilities and consider options for addressing; counselors, Wellness Center staff, and Central Office counselors will be on-site to address student concerns. Parents are encouraged to contact Ms Linda Jasper or Ms Charley-Greene with questions.

This is not really a drill, more of a conversation about situations to discuss, think through options and strategies. The purpose is repetition and planning; this enables students to act instead of freeze. Principals were trained last summer. Wheaton HS students told Ms Charley-Greene that this was not a big deal, that they already think about these issues.

The approach is “lockdown with options”. Blocking doors and windows and moving to the hard corner are still an option, but other options exist. Second takeaway is improving situational awareness, knowing your environment: where are the doors for ingress and where are the exits for egress, what do you hear, what’s around you, what are your circumstances?

The approach is “Avoid, Deny, Defend.” Avoid by being unavailable to the assailant, hiding, fleeing (especially if you’re already outside). Be aware of your location, the location of the threat, the available exits, etc. Portables’ walls can be penetrated – unless there is direct involvement, the best option from a portable may be to flee. Deny by blocking access, make it difficult for the assailant to enter. The goal is to delay, to increase the time for an assailant to gain access; emergency response can take 3-5 minutes. Defend – if your space is breached, how can you defend yourself? What side of a door should you be on to defend against an attacker? (Note: don’t engage an assailant; that is neither a goal, nor is encouraged or expected.)

Training is about 45 minutes. Students will see and discuss situational slides among themselves and then with the teacher. They will not be shown a video, and information on real-time survival will not be shared with students. Teachers have a script with answers and will not be ad-libbing; teachers not comfortable with leading the training will not do so. Students may ask questions that teachers can’t answer, and these will be gathered as feedback.

Issues for Northwood include the safety of the preschoolers in the child development area and communication with ESOL students. Students and parents should know the phone numbers of school and each other – in an emergency, you may not be able to look it up.

Parent question re the protocol of determining harm from chatter? Ms Charley-Greene explained that there is often chatter, and students communicate with her directly about things they see on social media. Her team has gotten very good about concealing sources of information from the kids, and anonymous calls are welcomed. Students and parents are very vigilant – it’s important to NOT assume someone else will report what you see. Schools and SROs communicate with each other. Pay less attention to the content and more to what is NOT being said; if students are not in immediate danger, the message will be vaguer.

Upcoming

Ms. Charley-Greene: No school January 21, early release January 25, professional day January 28, third quarter starts January 29, report cards distributed February 6, Black History Month showcase the evening of February 7.

PTSA events coming up are senior scholarships (seniors should be reminded to apply), counselor appreciation week (2nd week of February), Silent Auction for After Prom February 17, Pi Day March 14, and in the spring a flea market and “test drive” fundraiser.

Ms Reazer: For SGA, donations need to go to Value Village. SGA National Lead Training is February 1-3. February 9, hosting the state conference legislative session for SGA. Date TBD, Cole Peavey is trying to organize a movie night as a community builder.

Prom and After Prom

Jillian gave a brief update. Prom is May 16. We keep \$10 of the \$15 cost of a Papa John’s discount card. The Silent Auction will be both in-person on Sunday February 17 and on-line before that; note that the Monday is a holiday.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:11 pm
Minutes respectfully submitted by Jennifer Sawin, PTSA Secretary