MIDDLEBROOK PTA MINUTES 11/16/17

(unapproved)

1. Call to Order - 9:04 a.m. in 8G 135. In attendance were: Hillary Morrissy, Nicola Davies, Vanessa Elias, Laura Rowley, Ginna Yerral, Chandra Ring, Lauren Feltz, Tara Peterson, Jackie Shaw, Carolyn Lyon, Carolina Corrigan, Lisa Finn, Gretchen Jeanes, Jen Markey
2. Approval of 10/19/17 minutes - a motion to approve was made Ginna Yerrall and seconded by Laura Rowley. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Principal’s Report – Lauren Feltz
   1. Lots of high highs and some rocky lows. Proud of the student-led commitment to kindness, lots of talk showing empathy to people making mistakes. Schools used to separate kids having a lot of trouble, whereas now we’re teaching them to mend relationships. Kids don’t know specifically who caused pain. There’s a plan for long term responses with the ADL and an evening event for parents to bring kids to. It is hard for parents to support kids if they don’t know what was seen so this allows greater parent support. This won’t be about the hate speech at Middlebrook, but about the normalization of hate speech and lack of civility. There is a great New Zealand video on “Give Nothing to Hate”. It helps kids to feel empowered when a conversation they don’t endorse takes place.
   2. There was a beautiful Veteran’s Day celebration. It was wonderful for the kids and Veteran’s alike. Remembering kids and Veterans should be celebrated beyond Veteran’s Day, such as is done with the Nick Maderas collection.
   3. We’re heading into conferences. There was some discussion about the conference sign-up process and how it can be more clearly detailed for parents new to the school.
   4. Lots of professional development taking place here and beyond for teachers. At Middlebrook it is focused on how to use technology in class-specific ways. Eight teachers went to the Book Club Institute at Columbia.
   5. There was a lot of dialogue about district follow up after the Middlebrook Parent Meeting. There is a no place for hate committee with parents, students from Middlebrook and High School and people from each building. The district is working thru the ADL steps to be a No Place for Hate District. This program currently isn’t in CT, but working to bring it here. Middlebrook is taking all suggestions from the ADL and bringing staff/sensitivity training to all. All the work being done is a work in progress. There are a lot of people that want to help and Middlebrook is working to best utilize these offers. Middlebrook is exploring partnering kids with adults who can make it happen and to bring change that the students want. One option is an evening with diverse community members and across grade levels in a culturally respectful way. A Cultural Night was suggested as an opportunity. A challenge is that kids don’t always want to highlight differences. Team Change consists of at least 3 students per team and also has students that were part of Helping Hands at Cider Mill. The Kindness Club is open to all students. Anyone that wants to advise and help is invited to do so. Kim Zemo provided resources to help parents talk to their kids on the WPS Parent Portal. There is a lot of education on the 7th grade level but this incident was at the 6th grade level. Students can always access guidance counselors. Teachers and social workers are always available to help parents with how to talk to students. Student/Parent book clubs may also make sense. We don’t want to shelter kids so much that they hear about things from their peers in an inappropriate way. It is best to expose them to difficult topics at home. The social-emotional learning curriculum is under review and there is awareness about the need to teach empathy. The parent community is appreciative of the candor Lauren has offered.
4. President’s Report – Hillary Morrissy
   1. The Annual Appeal numbers provided a pleasant surprise.
   2. Book Fair: Setup is December 4 and 5 with the fair running December 6-12 from 8am-3pm in the library. It will also be open 12/6 and 12/11 in the evening for 6th and 7th grade concerts. There’s a tentative 8th grade event to help teams build team libraries. Look for volunteer sign-up sheets.
5. Officer Reports
6. Vice President – Laura Rowley:
   1. Membership: We had 307 members last month and are up to 340. Fliers went into teacher mailboxes, but that number is still low (about 20). Tara Peterson sent an email with the registration link for online signup and will follow up. Membership is $10 without a directory and $15 with a directory for teachers.
7. Treasurer – Jackie Shaw
   1. At current the Annual Appeal has done well, bringing in $17,300. Not doing a mailing saved nearly $800.
   2. Total income is now at $33,700 with unknown monies from the pictures or the Turnover Shop.
   3. Nobody won the pizza party offered to bolster annual appeal donations as no team reached 50% giving.
8. Parent At Large – Lauren Yoon – no report:
9. Teacher Representative – Tara Peterson (7G):
   1. 8 Red: Successfully and productively navigated historic Philadelphia together last Thursday. We’re now preparing to roll out our service project initiatives. We’re doing background work in preparation for our writing/social studies model congress unit.
   2. 8 Yellow: Students have been bringing in contributions for the veterans supply drive. The half day before Thanksgiving will be centered around the theme of gratitude, students will be having discussions, writing letters, and taking part in the local community service project Hearts and Crafts, which delivers cards to hospitalized people around the holidays. We’ll be gearing up for our school-wide Toys for Tots drive after Thanksgiving break. Mark your calendars for December 7th, the 8th grade afternoon/evening Book Fair event.
   3. 8 Green: For Science, students are most excited to be creating their own Robotic Arms, a STEM related activity. They have been so creative and have designed one that can function to even pick up a cup with 50 pennies. We’ll be kicking off our annual gently used coat and blanket drive for the Bridgeport Rescue Mission Shelter after Thanksgiving. We are encouraging all of our students to participate and help those who are less fortunate than us.
   4. 6 Red: Our 6th grade students have been exploring cells, Europe, improper fractions, proper fractions, slightly proper fractions – all the great stuff that makes the world go round. In Mr. Kaulins’ class students will be completing our annual Hearts and Crafts cards for patients in hospitals and assisted living homes (began by Shah family years ago). All 6th and most other grades are doing this too. Our 6 Red advisory groups have begun adopting charitable causes that we will be connecting with for the remainder of the year to support.
   5. 6 Yellow: In sixth grade, teachers and parents are eager to begin parent conferences and students are excited about having 5 short days in a row. The holiday concert will be held on December 6th.
   6. 6 Green: students have been making the most of their new Chromebooks by regularly using online resources in several classes. They’ve been exploring nonfiction texts using Newsela.com; they’ve been developing basic skills in both grammar and math by using IXL.com; and they’ve been accessing science materials using their new digital tech books. Ask your child to give you a tour of these valuable resources.
   7. 7th Grade: Reading classes are finishing their unit on nonfiction and historical fiction reading about the civil rights movement by comparing a fictional and nonfiction account of an event from this time period.
   8. 7 Yellow: A small and dedicated group has helped restart our ARK group – Acts of Random Kindness. They generated a few ideas and we have already acted on one where we made kind messages on paper and hid them in the non-fiction books we are using on team. The students selected a positive graffiti drawing from among the student submitted entries. A high quality color copy was made for each student and they placed them in various areas.
   9. 7 Green: We’re preparing for team activities next Wednesday, which will include problem solving and team building work, along with some small group focus ELA skills practice and building.
10. Committee Reports
11. Fundraising: $100 came in today.
12. 6th Grade Activity Night: The night went well, with a few bumps along the way. There wasn’t much information passed on, a sharable Google Document to be passed along year-to-year would be helpful. Roughly 175 students were there, it was a challenge keeping the students contained.
13. 7th Grade Activity Night: Over 160 students attended. More volunteers would have proven helpful. The games were a hit. This event was very well promoted by teams. Has Middlebrook ever had dances? Might be a fun idea.
14. Box Tops – $114 turned in for the first submission. There’s a competition upcoming.
15. Stop & Shop: 197 people registered with $306 raised thus far. Lauren Feltz will ask teachers to register.
16. Shutterfly and Tiny Prints: Holiday cards can be ordered here for a fundraiser.
17. Hospitality: The Veterans Day Reception had an amazing crowd. Rather than lunch, this event will be snacks moving ahead. Thanks to Heather Priest who supplied the cookies. Winter Solstice on December 6 will be the last event of 2017. Be on the lookout for signups for this.
18. Special Education: The recent social was one of the best attended, with some teachers and administrators also in attendance. PAB is a small group, continuing to get the word out about their work. Consideration is being given to making PAB a Special PTA Group. We’re currently looking for speakers for IEPs and ADA 504’s. Explore various areas of mental health. Andrea Leonardi - had a well-attended town meeting, answered questions about direction for district
19. Wilton Youth Council:
    1. Michael Fowlin - amazing, tailored presentation to group ages/school
    2. Wilton district staff - 3-day DBT staff training, excited and appreciated, learned how work with different levels and stages of child growth  
       Offering DBT to parents is a thought
    3. Free Play - workshop Nov 15th Dr Gray  - Play Deficit Disorder - slow decline, increase in mental health issues, mixed ages helps with child growth. Kevin Smith said he would like to incorporate
    4. Alan Schwartz - ADHD Nation presentation at the library, well received
    5. How to Talk sessions - 3 sessions offered, first two sessions are full
    6. WYC Community Conversation - Wilton is a Place for Love, trying to create community connections in real life not just social media
    7. Book - How to Raise an Adult – TED talk on January 24th Weston Library 10am and Wilton Library - 7pm Book Discussion about book Feb 28th
    8. Sonja Luther - Developed a survey social/emotional for the high school students. Will come back to the town to discuss the outcomes from the survey
20. New Business:
    1. Bathroom Project: Carolyn Lyon approached Hillary after the first PTA Meeting of the year about Words on the Wall. Carolyn saw bathrooms decorated with inspirational quotes and thought this was a good idea for Middlebrook bathrooms. There are 12 bathrooms in the school. She found a variety of quotes of all sizes to put on stall doors and larger walls. The quotes run a spectrum (Dr. Seuss, Ghandi, Roosevelt) to get you thinking. They are applied with contact paper and she is requesting $700 for 3-4 quotes per bathroom. Chandra Ring made a motion to approve, Hillary Morrissy seconded. Unanimously approved.
21. Meeting Adjourned at 10:40am.