

Salem Hyde FTO General Meeting Minutes

November 29, 2022, 6:00 pm. Meeting held in the Salem Hyde Elementary School café.

Attendance: Board members Melanie Emery (co-chair), Claire Joyce (co-chair), Deborah Ketola (co-treasurer), Jayme Wonderland (co-treasurer), Christine Dunne (secretary), Principal Becky Groat, and Janay Huffman.¹ And several non-board families and individuals.

Mary Curcio, New York state director of Read to Them, spoke about a grant the organization recently received. It covers the cost of each Syracuse City School District elementary school student receiving a book. Students from the same school receive the same book (which their school leaders have chosen).

The idea is students' caregivers will read some of the book out loud to their child (or children) every night; teachers will ask related questions at school. This program is aimed at boosting literacy skills and family engagement. Principal Becky Groat said Salem Hyde students will receive their book soon; it is *8 Class Pets + 1 Squirrel ÷ 1 Dog = Chaos (Twitch the Squirrel)* by Vivian Vande Velde. The program will kick off with an assembly.

Principal Groat gave other updates about the school as well:

- Wladis Law Firm would be giving all students a hat and pair of mittens in the coming days.
- That Friday the kindergarten-1st grade team would be hosting a Pizza with Santa fundraiser featuring games, activities, and gym time.
- The eat lunch with your child events would be starting up soon, with a different grade participating each month.
- The school has been sending lots of communications to families, including monthly calendars and Facebook page updates. While less emphasis has been placed on the electronic newsletter, it's possible this will start up again in the future.
- The strict COVID regulations from before are now pretty much gone. Mask wearing is optional; just about 5% of people in the building still wear them. Masks could return at some point; it's worth noting many illnesses are going around and keeping students and teachers out of school.

Claire Joyce provided a recap of recent FTO events. The back to school BBQ was a great success. More money was earned for this event than for any other FTO fundraiser in recent memory. The money goes to purposes like grade-level field trips.

The Halloween costume giveaway was also a big success. The FTO received more costumes than it could give away (about 500 in total), in part due to a \$295 donation from the Sedgwick Farms Neighborhood

¹ Board members Dan Karleski, Chrissy Lefkus, and Charina Turner were absent.

Association. This is great as extras can be used for next year's event. The roller skating party was also quite successful.

Deborah Ketola provided more details about different events. The back to school BBQ generated about \$1,500 in profit (with half of the earnings from raffle donations/sales), while the roller skating party earned over \$500 in profit (including \$330 from cotton candy sales).

Claire Joyce brought up the topic of the school clothing closet, which is used when students aren't dressed properly or otherwise need clothing. Donations are always welcome; pants and new underwear in particular are needed. She also mentioned that she and Christine Dunne are managing FTO volunteers, and always looking for new ones to give of their time—even if it's only an hour every so often. She mentioned upcoming FTO and school events, including the middle school information night on Jan. 9—which will be part of the FTO general meeting.

Christine Dunne provided some more information about that night, which is intended to help 4th-6th graders and their guardians/caretakers learn more about their different options for middle school. Representatives from different schools will be in attendance to share their perspectives and answer questions.

Another upcoming initiative is a penny wars fundraiser. Three Salem Hyde teachers and/or staff members will be chosen to participate. Each will have a jar to which school community members can contribute money. The individual with the most money at the end of the fundraiser will have to perform a TikTok dance at a public event (such as an FTO meeting); the dance will be recorded for more people to see.

Lastly, Jayme Wonderland spoke about the topic of chorus. She noted that the school hasn't offered chorus since before the pandemic, and it would be wonderful to bring it back. Right now only general music, band, orchestra, and the musical are options.

Ms. Groat responded that singing is a part of general music, and that by having chorus students might have to be pulled out of their classes even more than is taking place right now (for orchestra and band lessons/practices). She also doesn't want them to have to choose between chorus and orchestra or band. And given instructional requirements, there is not enough time to block out chorus for everyone.

The meeting ended around 6:40 p.m.