

**COUNCIL OF DARIEN SCHOOL PARENTS
MINUTES OF THE MARCH 1, 2018 GENERAL MEETING**

Wendy Ward opened the meeting at 9:32 am.

Wendy Hopper made a motion to approve the February CDSP General Meeting Minutes. Amy Zerbe seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously with no abstentions.

RECESS UPDATE

Several elementary school PTO Co-Chairs have discussed the duration of recess and how recess time is used with their principals. The principals are supportive of adding outdoor time and more movement for students throughout the day whenever possible.

The elementary school principals acknowledged the challenges of curriculum scheduling and increasing free time, with the following feedback:

Hindley: Not opposed to lengthening recess if there is broad consensus and state curriculum requirements are met; in favor of decreasing screen time during indoor recess as well

Royle: Students have very little screen time currently; with access to common areas, Royle students spend more time outside of the classroom during indoor recess

Holmes: Screentime is prohibited during indoor recess (though parents report that not all teachers follow this rule), and “rainy day” supplies are very popular during indoor recess time. There have been staffing issues with multi-grade morning recess.

Ox Ridge: Screen time was decreased last year, and outdoor time has been increased whenever possible.

Susie Da Silva explained that curriculum is written to engage students and to create movement, and the administration is currently reviewing the amount of time spent per unit of study. The administration and all of the principals prefer more outdoor time and more movement indoors.

Next Steps: Dr. Brenner offered to meet with a group of parents from each school to discuss recess.

REISS FUND UPDATE

Reiss Fund Co-Chairs have contacted school principals to arrange meetings with PTO Co-Chairs to discuss new leadership and plans for next year.

After discussing the Reiss Fund's history and recent changes, including last year's conference, CDSP members determined that meeting with the Reiss Fund Co-chairs collectively (rather than individually by school) will be more effective and prevent confusion.

MMS TRAFFIC UPDATE

Marla Chandler (MMS Co-Chair) provided an update to the ongoing traffic congestion during the morning drop-off time period (7:15 to 7:50).

The MMS Co-Chairs have continued to discuss the problem with MMS Principal, Shelley Somers; however, without funds to pay a police officer, there seems to be no solution. Additionally, the traffic loop may be too small for an effective traffic flow, even with a police officer directing traffic.

Dr. Brenner suggested the possibility of swapping the bus and car drop-off loops, which was very well-received by CDSP members.

Next steps: MMS Co-Chairs will encourage parents who are frustrated with the MMS traffic to attend the next BoE Facilities Committee Master Plan meeting.

SCHOOL SAFETY DISCUSSION

Discussion regarding school safety, including parents' safety concerns about portables.

CDSP members expressed appreciation for Dr. Brenner's comments about school safety during Tuesday's BoE meeting, which will be included in school wires, as CDSP members agreed the informative remarks would be helpful to all parents.

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT DISCUSSION

A tentative replacement schedule for school playground equipment (similar to the replacement schedules provided for athletic fields and equipment) was proposed in order to allow PTO Chairs more time to plan ahead.

CDSP members expressed reluctance to adopting the proposed plan, preferring instead to continue to wait until the Director of Facilities determines which equipment needs to be replaced during his annual summer inspections of the playgrounds.

BUDGET UPDATE

Budget Chair, Shelly Skoglund, reminded CDSP members that the BoF Public Hearing is at town hall on March 13th at 7:30pm, and provided an overview of strategies and next steps:



Council of Darien School Parents P.O. Box 2643, Darien, CT 06820

In previous years, CDSP has encouraged brief, organic remarks by parents and fewer formal speeches, which has been successful.

At least two to three parents from each school should speak briefly to show support for the entire budget or any specific item they wish to defend. Names of speakers will be collected over the next two weeks.

CDSP members agreed that one high-level CDSP speech defending the valuable and necessary improvements to our children's education will be most effective.

SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE

Catherine Piorkowski explained that the Special Education Committee has been trying to coordinate SESS facilitators and PTOs/parents in order to avoid duplication.

The Special Education Committee and PTO Chairs continue to refine communications, with two specific additions to their communication loop:

- End-of-year meetings between SESS facilitators and Special Education Reps to assess the past year and plan for the following year
- A PTO or PTO Exec meeting following the SESS/SE meeting, in which the PTO Co-Chairs share the information discussed, particularly plans for the following year, with their PTOs (for budgeting and other purposes).

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of how SEL is being worked into the curriculum in all subjects.

Brief discussion of possible PTO involvement in preparing for the planned student walk-out on March 14th.

Shelly Skoglund made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Julie Best seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:03.

Respectfully submitted by Tiffany O'Connor, CDSP Secretary.