

Orchard Home and School Association September 2021 Meeting Minutes

Attendees (Principal and Board Members): Mary Ferreri; Jimmy Judge; Patty Leung; Jenna Hammond; Tara Klaff; Tia Ly; Jennifer DeSisto.

Other Attendees: Heather Madigan; Georgie Giancamilli; Liz Suri; Michelle Jones; Lindsay Rubin; Meg DiMattina; Johnny Segarra; Amy Gill; Adrian Walker; Jen Zolcinski; Elizabeth Segarra; Harish Ramaswami; Michelle Elias Macdonald; Becky Chin; Danielle Scalzo; J Larsen; Judi Lee; Kirstin Durante; Lisa Arillo; Schweta Dixit; Tracy Parrinello; Vanessa Meer; Jill Grillo-Sorensen; Michael Joel; Melanie Amores; Vanessa Burke; Marya Larkin; Jonathan Kline; Sarah Kline; John Anthony; Katherine Inoyama; Dana Jeong

Treasurer's Report:

- Tara stated that this year's budget is based on the last auction year (2019-2020).
- On July 17th, Orchard held a fundraiser where students and their families bought tickets to see the NJ Jackals play at Yogi Berra Stadium. Tara indicated that ticket sales brought in slightly over \$500.
- She also noted that the most recent Orchard Wear sale brought in an estimated \$600.
- HSA is collecting dues (\$25) for the current school year. When paying dues on Pay Pal, please remember to select "Friends and Family" to avoid Orchard incurring fees.

Vice President's Report:

- Jenna noted that class parents will send out sign-up information regarding volunteer opportunities.
- Currently, there is a need for help with gardening and landscaping at the school.
- Parents are encouraged to reach out to Jenna at orchardvolunteerlead@gmail.com if they are interested in getting involved.

Corresponding Secretary's Report:

- Tia thanked everyone who volunteered to be a class parent. She stated that class parents will send their respective classes introductory emails that will discuss Group Spot, important upcoming dates, as well as volunteer opportunities both virtually and inside the classroom.
- The upcoming Back-to-School Picnic will be the first volunteer opportunity for parents who are interested in getting involved.
- As the Corresponding Secretary, Tia will regularly send HSA news to the email addresses listed in Skyward. Parents should check that the email listed in Skyward is the preferred email. Any parent/guardian who would like to add a secondary email should contact Tia and she will update the email subscription list. Tia noted that Kathleen Moran sends out weekly Orchard and community news while she emails specific HSA news.

Committee Updates:

Group Spot

- Jimmy described that the Group Spot app houses the Orchard student directory which includes students' information by grade as well as their family's contact information.
- Group Spot also includes a school calendar that aligns with the one posted on Orchard's website. The app is a handy resource for alerts on upcoming events and how to purchase tickets.
- Jimmy also noted that the HSA dues are \$25 per family (not per child) and these dues help to maintain costs for the Group Spot app.
- Business can purchase ads to be featured on the app.

Back to School Picnic

- Heather Madigan, Georgie Giancamilli and Becky Chin are chairing the Back-to-School Picnic which will be held on September 23.
- Heather described that this year's event will feature music from DJ Rick. He is Highly recommended and has experience hosting school events including those for Benjamin Franklin Middle School and Hawes Elementary. DJ Rick will host a contest for kids and winners can take home some Orchard Wear.
- This year's event will also feature an ice cream truck so be sure to bring cash.
- Class parents will send out links to prepurchase goody bags and to preorder large pies from Santoni's ahead of time.
- Orchard Wear will also be available on site for parents to purchase apparel, water bottles, etc.
- Students and their families will be able to use the field for this event.

Orchard Wear

- Andrea Pietragallo is the chair for Orchard Wear. She along with the class parents will organize in-person distribution of all items.
- Next month, Andrea will present final net sales of Orchard Wear.
- Jimmy thanked Andrea for her efforts and expertise. He addressed that Varsity Hues provides a limited window to purchase items but will reach out to see if they can extend sales beyond current closing date of September 15.

Social Media

- Patty shared that she and Jimmy have been active on social media platforms (Instagram and Facebook) to share school information and to get families excited for upcoming events. She noted that students' faces are not shown on social media.
- Tia asked for anyone who has flyers for events to please email her the flyers so they can be included in the HSA news emails.

Fun Day

- Rebecca Rothman and Jenn Szilva are chairing the Fun Day event.
- Patty noted that this year's Fun Day will likely be held from 3:00-4:30pm on Friday, October 22. The earlier timeframe will hopefully encourage more kids to stay after school and attend the event.
- Fun Day will feature: music, craft tables, a cake walk game, bake sale, raffles, a photo area, and much more.
- Patty emphasized that the event will be fun and safe for everyone.

Yearbook and School Photos

- School photo day is September 22. Liz Suri stressed that kids should arrive at school ready to have their photo taken.
- Online links will be sent out and students' families can review the proofs before purchasing any items.
- Students' photos are used not only for the school yearbook but also for their student IDs.
- There will be a Google group album for each grade. Parents will need to upload photos in their child's group album.
- Jimmy emphasized the Google group albums are on an Orchard HSA drive. Photos uploaded by parents throughout each grade will be stored on the drive and can be easily accessed to gather photos for 5th grade memory books in the future.
- The yearbook committee will ask for photos for specific events such as the first day of school. Year book sales will happen later in the year

Amazon Smile

- Johnny Segarra will be chairing Amazon Smile. He noted that \$1,500 have been raised thus far through eligible purchases from Amazon. He is happy to help parents sign up.

5th Grade Fundraisers:

- Amy Gill described some of this year's 5th grade fundraising activities including: an outdoor movie night at Orchard on October 15; a Spook House on Fun Day on October 22; two different Bingo Nights (location to be determined); holiday wreath and Krispy Kreme sales.

Co-President's Report:

- Patty described that both teachers and staff shared positive feedback regarding Back-to-School Night. She emphasized that parents felt safe and enjoyed spending time in the classrooms and meeting teachers in person.

- Jimmy explained that each school's HSA report to the Federated HSA which then advocates shared concerns with the BOE. Amy Gill oversees the elementary schools and Todd Rothman oversees the middle and high schools. The main topic of discussion in the most recent federated meeting was how to safely allow students to join together for lunch and recess.

Teacher's Report:

- Michelle Jones provided the teacher's report for this meeting. She noted that teachers are happy and excited to have the students back for full day instruction. She thanked the HSA for providing staff lunch on the first day of school and reassures parents that everyone is doing their part to remain safe.

Principal's Report:

School update:

- Mary indicated that Back-to-School Night is one of her favorite events, and it was great to see everybody.
- Mary further indicated that a different Orchard teacher will join the HSA meeting each month to provide the teacher's report.
- This year's new staff members include:
 - Ms. Veenstra – Grade 1
 - Mrs. Dino – Grade 4
 - Ms. Madison – Special Education
 - Ms. Hoff – Education specialist
 - Mrs. Rubin – is now in-house at Orchard as the full-time guidance counselor. She worked with groups of students over the summer and continues to work with them as they adjust to the new school year. She is also visiting classrooms more often now that she is at Orchard full-time.

Field Update:

- Mary noted that the field will not be used for sports (such as Maroons soccer). However, students and families can use the field for one off Orchard events (such as the Back-to-School Picnic). The field should become available for use for sports this spring.

Lunch Procedures:

- In regards to lunch, Mary explained 2 main goals: 1) to provide as typical of a school experience as possible for the students and 2) to make sure everyone remains as safe as possible.
- Given these goals, one grade level eats in the cafetorium at a time. All windows and doors will be open and the air conditioner will also be on to increase air circulation. Students sit at assigned seats and about 3 feet part from each other. They remove their masks only for eating lunch.

- Grades 3-5 eat outdoors in the amphitheater weather permitting (Even outside, the kids are reminded to space out and stay safe.).
- Grades K-2 eat indoors in the cafetorium.
- Mary noted that students are acclimating very well and they may switch the indoor/outdoor groups later on. She stressed that families should reach out to her if they have any questions or concerns regarding current lunch procedures.

Upcoming Assessments for Students:

- It has been a few years since Orchard has had standardized assessments. As a district, Orchard will use Linkit! benchmark assessments. Students in grades 2 through 5 will take the assessments to provide baseline data. Students in grades 4 and 5 will also take Strong Start assessments in October. Pieces of data will be shared with parents.
- Data collection from test results help ensure students are getting what they need academically.
- K-1 students will receive teacher directed assessments such as phonic screenings 3 or more times a year. This information will be shared in parent teacher conferences.

LSHSA/DEI Committee Update

- Meghann Bierly stated that a welcome letter was sent out to parents on September 10. She thanked parents who have already reached out to her and she will be in touch soon regarding volunteer opportunities at all levels (i.e., sharing an idea for an event, book ideas, event participating...etc.)
- DEI committee will focus on Hispanic Heritage month and kindness theme.
- Along the theme of kindness, students are reading and discussing Only One You by Linda Kranz.
- The first book to be featured in the Story Walk this year is Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You by Sonia Sotomayor. The book focuses on differences and importance of asking questions.
- The committee is working with the Eagle Scouts to create a more permanent story walk installation. The goal is to present a story on a board that is strong enough to withstand all weather conditions. One concept is to use wooden poles to hold a board with plexiglass. The story pages can be interchanged inside the plexiglass. The poles would stand in flower pots that can be decorated in honor of heritage or another DEI message. Families could purchase the pots as a fundraiser. Materials alone will cost around \$900.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06pm.