



Merryhill Midtown- Parent Teacher Student Organization

Minutes of the September 3, 2020 MMPTSO General Meeting

I. Welcome- Priya Chisholm

The meeting was called to order at 5pm. Priya stated that due to Covid 19 County Health Regulations, the meeting will take place virtually. The mission of the organization was reviewed and the Board was introduced. Participants were asked to write their full name and grade level for attendance purposes. Furthermore, there was a link to a digital attendance sheet posted in the chat box to capture all attendees who filled out the form.

Present: Priya Chisolm (President), Melissa Chechourka (Vice President), Stacey Edgar (Treasurer), Jackie Simon (Secretary), and Elaine Wesphal (Head of School). Other attendees listed in alphabetical order: Miguel Aguallo, Erika Arthur, Lauren Ceello, Kris Chisholm, Amy Choe, Sally Chow, Ashley Cornejo, Patience Dayton, Kristy Dias, Bri Demchuk, Caroline Dunn, Chad Edwards, Michelle Edwards, Melissa Foster, Nicole Fountain Long, Shruti Gadwok, Nichole Gerdts, Rose Giordano, Tarah Gold, Jessica Gonzalez, Kyle, Gradinger, Carlos Gutierrez, Andrea Hern, Brittany Hoey, Krister Holmberg, Jean Hurst, Alex Hwang, Carolyn Kuduk, Angela Lai, Lindsay Laudato, Annie Lee, Morgan Lefforge, Holly Little, Jeanna Long, Gayle Miller-Govenar, Jessica Mills, Carolyn Mofidi, Nicole Morgan, Yoko Mortel, Ikue Nagakuba, Shellie Nast, Diana Nguyen, Colin O' Connor, Marissa O'Connor, Shephali Patel, Kari Reeve, Olga Reid, Kate Reuter, Mark Reuter, Sarah Rudes, Ardeep Sekhon, Adriana Smith, D'mitri Smith, Rosemarie Speth, Leslie Stribling, Dashi Suzuki, Brent Tanimoto, Kim Tanimoto, Tamara Todd, Stacy Toledo, Gurjeet Toor, Dru Torvend, Joseanna Tse, Martice Vasquez, Katie Vavao, Brett Wallis, Doug Ward, Daniel Williams, Dominique Williams, Kevin Yanamura, and Lindsay Yanamura.

II. Approval of the May Meeting Minutes- Priya Chisholm

There was mention of Section IV sub-sections b and c as action items to be addressed at a future meeting. Those items were tabled for further discussion at the October 1, 2020 meeting. After no further items were mentioned for

correction or action, the minutes for the May 7, 2020 meeting were approved as submitted.

III. Curated School Waiver Discussion- Priya Chisholm

Prior to discussion ensuing, Priya explained that the administration reached out to PTSO on September 1, 2020 to acquire a letter of support for the school waiver. The Board created and sent out a simple survey in an effort to gather as much parental input as possible understanding the short turn around that was required. 172 responses were gathered by the survey. 57% were in favor of reopening and 43% were opposed. From the survey, PTSO gathered the most asked questions in an effort to streamline a curated conversation during the meeting. During the curated discussion, the chat feature will be turned off. After the discussion, the chat will resume so that additional questions may be posed. The floor was turned over to Melissa Chechourka for the curated discussion with Elaine Westphal.

Curated questions are attached to the minutes in the binder.

A. "Why are we applying for a waiver?"

- a. Elaine Westphal stated that she would do her best to answer all questions as thoroughly as possible, but added that some questions are not answerable at this time because the situation is dynamic and answers may develop or change over time.
- b. Regarding this question, Ms. Westphal responded that the waiver was started based on the original summer communications that were sent out with the goal of in-person learning eventually. Moreover, there was family input that in-person learning may not be comfortable for some families. The Online Academy (OA) was developed with those concerns in mind. Applying for the waiver is the first opportunity to move toward in-person learning. It is not the only way, but it is potentially a faster way to return kids to school. In order to return to school, a waiver must be filed by the school.
- c. Melissa Chechourka followed those comments with the clarification that the tone of this question represented a concern for the speed of the process. Namely, that parents believed that the school would open based on County guidelines, not on the basis of the school being granted a waiver prior to the County granting schools open.
- d. Ms. Westphal replied that the timeline of events is somewhat vague, but she believes that the waiver process had not been

developed at the time that the initial summer communications were sent to families. In fact, the waiver process only existed within the week prior to this meeting. Furthermore, the process and the situations with this health crisis change daily and the future is unknown. For our school, the process is being managed by a “Waiver Team” at the home office of Spring Education which manages several schools across California. The process is similar to the process of building a house. The application process is more of a conversation between the applicant and the State, not an application with a response answering “yes” or “no.” First, there is a submission of interest by the school to the County/State. Then, there are several discussions of the plan and safety protocols. It is more of a conversation. Once reviewed, the County/State will respond and make a decision with parameters. The home office Waiver Team has stated that they will give 2 weeks to open the school once the waiver is approved to allow time to prepare staff, schedules, protocols, and families.

B. “What are the health protocols/procedures required to reopen?”

a. Ms. Westphal explained that the final guidelines are decided by the County/State which presents as a living document since regulations and recommendations change frequently. At this point, there is a maximum of 14 students per cohort according to guidelines. Spring Education and this Merryhill campus are working on their own preferences and procedures. Merryhill Midtown plans to do the following:

- i. take temperatures daily, symptom checks (with students with 2 or more symptoms being asked to return home or be picked up from school),
- ii. the clinic has been converted to an isolation space,
- iii. hand sanitizer dispensers have been added to the hallways,
- iv. multiple entrances will be utilized when school is resumed,
- v. no visitor policy will continue,
- vi. masks will be required,
- vii. social distancing will remain in effect,
- viii. classroom furniture has been minimized to decrease the number of touch surfaces,
- ix. Merryhill class sizes are maxed at 20 students (which currently has space in some grades) so the school may have

physical space in classrooms to separate students in our hybrid model,

- x. bathroom utilization can be separated by grade level and area of the building,
 - xi. cleaning services are dedicated to 2.5 hours of high touch surfaces and areas.
- b. Ms. Westphal further explained that when deciding on the hybrid model, major consideration was given to partial day exposure for all students, reducing the amount of the need to utilize common spaces, to eliminate the need for food services, and reducing the need for sanitizing recess equipment.
- c. More communication will become available when more specifics are known. Since the school is not open now and the process is just beginning, Ms. Westphal feels that it is inappropriate to try to guess or predict what specifics will actually be implemented when the time comes.
- d. Ms. Westphal stated her first priority was to get DL and the OA off the ground. Now that those programs are moving ahead, she will work with the Waiver Team at Spring Education to proceed with the waiver process.
- C. “In the event the school reopens and children test positive or are exposed to Covid 19, what will protocols be, and how will the students be supported if they are required to quarantine or be home sick if in-school classes are still in session?”
- a. Ms. Westphal replied that the question necessitates responses to a lot of “what if” questions. In simplified form, the protocol will be: If there is 1st person contact with a positive Covid case, that person will need to stay off campus for a 14 day quarantine regardless of a negative test in the interim.
 - b. If there is a positive case on campus, recommendations and procedures would be guided by the County based on the amount of exposure (ex. classroom, office, facility personnel), and a decision would be made according to contact tracing. All guidance would be in concert with the County, Spring Education, and Merryhill Midtown procedures.
 - c. Communication about positive test results will be given to families when there is 1st person contact while respecting personal privacy and HIPAA guidelines.

- d. If a teacher is quarantined for any reason, the plan would be for the teacher to teach via DL if it is possible. If the teacher can not teach during quarantine, there are other steps the school can take to continue to support student education due to the deep staff Merryhill Midtown can utilize.
- e. Melissa Chechourka clarified the question to ask, “How will learning be modified if a cohort is quarantined?”
 - i. Ms. Westphal responded that in the best case scenario, the class would continue learning in a DL format until the class can meet in-person again.
- D. “What is the probability Merryhill is successful in receiving a waiver? Do you have any insight on the timeline for the waiver process?”
-This question was skipped because it was addressed in prior responses to questions previously asked.
- E. “If parents are not comfortable sending their children back under a waiver process what are their options?”
 - a. Ms. Westphal answered that parents answering questions based on predictions of how they may feel today back in July was difficult. However, she believes that part of the fear and anxiety expressed may be due to concern that the school is planning to reopen next week. She assured the group, “this is not the case.” There is more work to do on the waiver and the procedures before they can open and even with that said, it will be 2 weeks to reopen after there is approval.
 - b. If a parent is not comfortable sending a student back to school once the school reopens to in-person learning, parents can explore with staff the options to transition to the OA.
 - c. There is not a current option to remain in DL if in-person learning resumes. It is not possible.
- F. “What does the hybrid schedule look like? Hours? Is there a path to full time in-person? Will there be an option for before/after care (for the remainder of the day) for full time working families?”
 - a. Ms. Westphal answered that she has spent a lot of time working on schedules. When the hybrid schedule was initially created it included middle schoolers returning to campus also. When the waiver process came out, only K-6 would be allowed to return. (In our case, 6th is middle school, so it’s K-5). Therefore, the hybrid schedule had to be redone. If school opens with the waiver,

Midtown will be running 4 schools in 1: PreK full-time, K-5 hybrid in-person, Middle school- DL, and the OA academy.

- b. Currently, the AM schedule will likely be 8-11:30am. This timing allows for a lunch transition for students and teachers, extensive cleaning, breaks for teachers/staff, and preparing for health checks for students to arrive between 12:30-1 for the PM schedule with 3 hours of learning in the afternoon. The school is looking at options for B&A care w/o mixing cohorts which requires a lot of staffing since a cohort could only be 1 student or 10 students. The ultimate goal is to offer at least 1 hour of B&A eventually, but she would like the hybrid schedule to be working well before they try to manage more. County guidelines are also taken into account.
 - c. The actual assignments for AM/PM still need to be figured out, that is the next task.
 - d. Another reason for selecting the hybrid model was due to the ability for it to support DL, middle school, and OA electives as there is a lot of staff overlap.
 - e. A lot can be done with 8 students in 3 hours with a teacher.
 - f. Independent asynchronous (virtual) learning will be by grade level, not class which allows for cross grade level socialization.
 - g. Melissa Chechourka asked if study hall would be offered in the afternoon. Ms. Westphal stated that at this time there is not a solution to study hall. Teachers can only work 8 hours teaching from 8-4pm. The school is looking at utilizing TAs for additional support for learning at home for students (monitoring Seesaw, Schoology, lessons, Q&A, etc.).
 - h. A positive aspect of the hybrid model is that students can ask their teachers a question about an assignment the next day at school. They do not have to wait until a few days later when their class is back in school. For example, a full day Tuesday/Thursday schedule student might have to wait 4 days in between school days to address a question and not have face time with a teacher.
- G. "Can the school provide more information about the steps taken by the school to protect the school community from COVID-19, especially now that parents are not allowed on campus and cannot see for themselves.
- This question was skipped because it was addressed in prior responses to questions previously asked.
- H. "How do the teachers feel about reopening?"

- a. Ms. Westphal stated that in general teachers want to teach with kids in front of them. There is anxiety about how all of the new procedures will work and be managed because it's new. But, teachers were also nervous about DL because it's new and they have never done it before. So, part of the anxiety may be because it is all new. She paused to allow staff on the call to respond.
- b. No staff offered comment.
- I. "Will PTSO be provided a copy of the application for the waiver?"
 - a. Ms. Westphal stated that part of the waiver requirements include posting it on the health and safety website. Much of the website areas regarding the waiver are handled outside of her role, rather they are managed by the Spring Education home office.
- J. Priya Chisholm extended the discussion and asked Ms. Westphal a few more questions prior to her departure. Priya read aloud the following questions posted in the chat after asking Stacey Edgar to resume the chat function.
 - a. "If a student has to quarantine for 14 days or longer but their class is not, then how do they learn at home without distance learning for 2 weeks +?"
 - i. Ms. Westphal's response was that it will depend on the grade level. Most grade levels have support (TAs) to help. Schoology also offers the ability to communicate with teachers and students. Additionally, everyone is learning how to video conference which may provide student support. One on one conferencing may be possible also. Support will depend on need.
 - b. "What's the process to move the child to online academy, because I'm not comfortable sending my child back yet."
 - i. Ms. Westphal stated that the family should email her directly to move forward with OA.
 - c. "I thought the county says a cohort is 14 students and one teacher that have to stay together and that teacher can't be with other students not in their cohort. How would that work with the hybrid model."
 - i. Ms. Westphal's understanding of the cohort number is that it is 14 students in 1 space, not the same 1:14 each time. She believes the ratio is more of a PreK licensing issue, not for K-5.

schools
student

- ii. Our PreK has been in full day since the first day of school. The initial cohort was 7 and now it's 14. Our PreK has 9.
- d. "The topic of COVID in itself polarizing, evident in the split results of the poll, has admin taken account of the results of the poll before moving forward with the waiver."
 - i. Ms. Westphal reminded the group that the application for a waiver is run by the home office Waiver Team and the submission of interest focuses on health and safety.
 - ii. In 2 weeks, this would be great. A waiver may or may not be necessary because it depends on what the Governor decides to do and what the changes will be in the data.
- e. "If there were 14 or fewer students in a class who wanted to do in-person (i.e. not choose to transition to full online), would the class become full in person rather than hybrid?"
 - i. Ms. Westphal replied, "I don't know." There are many variables including grade level, space, etc. Some are already moving ahead to open based on their numbers and spacing.
 - ii. Ultimately, the answer is unknown at this time.
- f. "Is the PTSO able to see a copy of the waiver application and timeline associated with any steps for implementing the waiver."
 - i. Ms. Westphal reminded the group that there is no timeline.
 - ii. Anyone can access the County guidelines.
 - iii. In terms of what is submitted, the waiver would be available to all families once the Waiver Team submits and completes the process.

IV. General Discussion of Waiver- Priya Chisholm

- ❖ Ms. Westphal left the meeting. Priya asked for the chat function to be reengaged and noted that the bylaws require attendees to vote in-person on the matter before us. Specifically, we will need to vote on a resolution of whether to write a letter of support for the waiver for K-5.
- ❖ Tamara Todd made a motion for submission of a letter from the PTSO in support for the submission of a waiver.
- ❖ Holly Little seconded the motion.
- ❖ Open Discussion of motion-
 - There was much discussion regarding that the survey was sent out a short time ago and that families had less than 24 hours to respond. With only

172 responses, it is unknown how many families actually responded to the survey of families eligible to reply.

- It was noted that the survey only went to K-5 student families. Although it was asked of staff on the call, no staff were able to answer how many families were enrolled at the school.
 - A parent noted that they did not agree to moving forward in case other families did not respond.
 - There was an additional comment that the waiver is moving forward regardless of our letter. It was further noted that there is never 100% response to surveys. Moreover, the PTSO Board was given a task which was agreed to needing an inclusive response and needed to be expeditious due to the meeting ensuing the same week. PTSO understands that the discussion is emotional for many people for various reasons, but the waiver will happen regardless.
 - Another parent mentioned that part of the waiver requires a letter.
 - There was an additional comment that the decision was to vote on writing the letter of support.
 - There was a request to resubmit the survey to parents to allow for more time to respond to the survey.
 - The Secretary reminded the attendants that there is a motion on the table that needs to be voted on before proceeding with another motion or request.
 - Another parent noted that they felt it was important that parents knew that the letter of support was requested and was part of the waiver process. This parent proposes additional time for the survey given the decision is important and additional time should be given.
 - Another parent stated agreement with the latter and proposed more time as well.
 - Another parent agreed that there is not enough information to make the decision to support the waiver and would support having more time for the survey.
 - Another parent described the timeframe in which to respond for all parties was unfair and that the topic is severe and not a “normal” topic for PTSO meetings. The parent supports more time and that there is no need to rush.
- ❖ Priya Chisholm called for a vote and asked Jackie Simon (PTSO Secretary), to explain the voting process for this meeting. [Based on prior discussions among the Board, it was decided that only eligible participants were members as a result of paying membership dues would be able to vote on issues before the

PTSO in conformance with the Amended Bylaws.] Given the larger number of attendees (approximately 66) and the lower number of members (approximately 25) and the time of the vote at 6pm, it was decided by Priya to call out the paid member's names to vote when their name was called with a yes, no, or abstain. The motion was repeated and roll-call votes were taken of paid members present. Final count of total members eligible was 33. Priya noted during the vote count that paid members who fill out the enrollment form and the \$15 membership fee are the attendees eligible to vote on this motion. She further encouraged attendees to join.

- ❖ It was added that attendees could not pay at this moment in order to vote.
- ❖ There was an additional comment to state that the process needs to be transparent and that 25 people can not represent all the families, parents needed to be informed with a letter and an explanation of the process.
- ❖ Priya recognized the comment and reminded parents that paid members do have the authority to vote at this time.
- ❖ Jackie Simon called members in attendance. The final count =14 yes, 12 no, 4 abstentions, 2 members not present to vote. Stacey Edgar double counted the numbers. Motion to write a letter of support passed. [The Secretary recounted the votes to triple check at the writing of the minutes and noted that the vote count was incorrect. Final count should have stated 14 yes, 13 no, 4 abstentions, 2 members not present to vote.]
- ❖ Another parent mentioned that the reason they chose Merryhill was because the campus was willing to move ahead with opening in-person instruction as soon as it was possible. They have a child in a 2 parent working family. The focus should be on health and safety that is being put in place. Summer camp went well at Merryhill and there were no cases. Focus on what can be done safely rather than operate in fear.
- ❖ A parent asked if they did not get their questions answered, how would that be resolved. The complete list of questions from the survey were sent to Ms. Westphal. Parents are encouraged to send additional questions or concerns directly to the school.
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- For families that are against starting a dialogue with the Sacramento County Dept of Public Health on how our school can reopen, eventually, what is your hesitation?
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- ok I know everyone would like to open the school and so would I. however, I would like to err on the side of caution because we are in an unprecedented pandemic and the flu season is coming soon and COVID-19 is already amongst us. I believe in the fall and winter COVID-19 will spike hard!

- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- I agree with The.LastKnight13, we are voting to support something that we have not even seen the formal plan
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- I'm not trying to scare anyone I just want to highlight the facts from what the state and federal doctors are saying.
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- This waiver process is an opportunity to have a direct conversation with our local health officials about how we can eventually reopen safely. It is not a done deal.
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- every health official I have read about expects a hard spike in the fall, all you have to do is check online cdc.gov etc
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- is the survey being open to all grades since all grades were allowed to vote tonight?
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat-Waiver Office contact info: waiver@cde.ca.gov, phone number 916 319 0824, Unfortunately I don't see an address but that's the contact info from the website.
- ❖ Jackie Simon reminded the group that there was a 2nd motion on the table that might need to be addressed. Priya asked if the motion would like to move ahead.
- ❖ The second motion was made by Adriana Smith who stated she would like to move ahead with her motion to have additional time for parents to be able to respond to the survey with an additional 1 week for responses from the date of the survey waiting until after the holiday weekend, presumably Tuesday. Contingent upon administration sending the survey.
- ❖ The motion was seconded by Miguel Aguallo.
- ❖ Jackie Simon requested a new person to make the motion as Ms. Smith is not a paid member at this time, she has submitted her form, but not paid her fee.
- ❖ Miguel Aguallo adopted the motion and stated it again.
- ❖ Nicole Fountain Long seconded the motion.
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat: I think to be respectful of everyone's time we should just bring it to a vote now
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat: Contact the Waiver Office
Mailing Address
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 5602
Sacramento, CA 95814
Telephone Numbers
Main Telephone Number: 916-319-0824
Fax Number: 916-319-0117
E-mail Addresses
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat-
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Schools%20Reopening%20Recommendations.pdf> - info to review
- ❖ Additional comment in the chat- This doc includes the language about the waiver specifically: "A waiver of this criteria may be granted by the local health officer for elementary schools to open for in-person instruction. A waiver may only be

granted if one is requested by the superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools), in consultation with labor, parent and community organizations. Local health officers must review local community epidemiological data, consider other public health interventions, and consult with CDPH when considering a waiver request. "

- ❖ Parent asked, "Will the letter reflect both results?" Priya replied that the letter will reflect both surveys and the data from both. The letter would explain both processes.
- ❖ Jackie Simon noted that the budget needs to be approved at the meeting tonight according to our bylaws, so we need to be sensitive to time and agenda items.
- ❖ Priya stated that families should respond to both surveys.
- ❖ "Is there a reason why the prior survey can not be extended?" Priya responded that the prior survey has been closed, therefore a new survey is required.
- ❖ "Will delaying the letter be submitted delay the process of the waiver?" Priya stated that per Ms. Westphal's discussion, the submission of the waiver is an ongoing process that can be constantly amended.
- ❖ A parent asked, If a motion to send a letter has already passed, why not send a letter now? Is this going to delay the process further? Do we have to get a vote on the second survey? Priya replied that the submission is a process and is continuous, therefore, we can honor both sides by waiting and sending 1 letter that reflects all of the data collected.
- ❖ Another parent asked, "Why not send the letter of support now and send a supplement letter later since the motion passed?"
- ❖ A parent interjected that, "We are talking about 1 week of an extension, not a year, and that to be respectful of everyone's time and interest we should allow the letter to reflect both positions."
- ❖ A parent opined that in all of the years of being involved in PTSO, we [PTSO] have never had to decide such an important situation, we are usually deciding on snacks and gifts. We are all trying to do the best we can to be respectful and inclusive and not move forward on an agenda. Ms. Westphal has already submitted the results of the first survey to the Waiver Team. We need to vote on whether we want to resurvey the parents and give them more time. If you are not in support of the extension, then vote "no."
- ❖ A parent asked the question if the "letter even matters?" Priya acknowledges that she does not know the answer other than to say it is a component of the waiver form.
- ❖ Another parent asked, "Can letters be written to the admin, the county, etc. to give parents not present at the meeting or who did not complete the survey to

share their thoughts?" Priya says feel free to send letters to Merryhill or PTSO email, county health- their address was noted in the chat.

- ❖ A parent observed that the survey does give the school more information that can help the school make more informed decisions.
- ❖ Another parent asked, "How was it decided to apply for a waiver? By whom?" This was driven by the home office Waiver Team, not PTSO and not Elaine Westphal.
- ❖ Jackie Simon called members in attendance. The final count =13 yes, 4 no, 8 abstentions, 8 members not present to vote. Stacey Edgar double counted the numbers. Motion to write a letter of support passed.

V. Treasurer Report- Stacey Edgar

- A. Review of current finances- The total balance as of 8/31/20 is \$7157.10 with a membership count of 51 or 44% of last year's membership total.
- B. Shoparoo was ended by the company, so that will be lost income.
- C. School Credit Union changed their member policy only allowing teachers or family members of teachers permitted to be members. Therefore, MMPTSO opened a bank account at US Bank.
- D. School Cents and Shopping to Educate are not continuing at this time due to Covid, so that will be an additional loss of income.
- E. Last year's budget included costs for a Parent Education Night which was postponed due to Covid. The event has been rescheduled as a virtual forum on 9/22/20 at 7pm and the cost will carry over to this event.
- F. The proposed 2020-21 budget was reviewed. The proposed budget is extremely cautious given the elimination of fundraising opportunities due to Covid.
- G. The Treasurer's report includes 4 attachments:
 - a. July 1, 2020-August 31, 2020,
 - b. 2020-21 MMPTSO Budget
 - c. 2020-21 MMPTSO Actual vs Budget
 - d. MMPTSO Profit and Loss Statement
- H. A motion was made by Kim Tanimoto to approve the budget as presented.
- I. Melissa Chechourka seconded the motion.
- J. There was no discussion of the report.
- K. Jackie Simon called members in attendance for the vote. The final count =24 yes, 0 no, 0 abstentions, 9 members not present to vote. Motion to approve the budget passes.

VI. Miscellaneous- Priya Chisholm

The remainder of the agenda from today's meeting will be tabled until the next General Meeting on 10/1/20.

Meeting is adjourned at 7:05pm.

Submitted by Jackie Simon, Secretary _____