

**Bower Hill Elementary PTA
Regular Meeting: February 6, 2019
Meeting Minutes**



1. Call to Order	The President, Samantha McVicker , called the meeting to order at 9:15 A.M.
2. President's Remarks	Samantha McVicker welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance.
3. Reading and Approval of Minutes	Secretary, Michelle Adamshick , verified those in attendance had received a copy of the Minutes from the December meeting included with the handouts for today's meeting. Motion to approve minutes was made by Jessica Brodzinski and seconded by Melissa Konggaard.
4. Treasurer's Report	<p>Samantha McVicker and Cindy Peterson presented the Treasurer's report on behalf of Julie Collins.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of the current treasurer's report were distributed. • Ending balance is higher than usual due to after school classes – payments come in and then payments go out to those teaching the classes. • Motion to pay the bills for the months of January and February was made by Jamie Etzel and seconded by Kristi Piatek.
5. Teacher Remarks	<p>Mr. Killen provided a teacher update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder from Mrs. Myers that registration for Kids of Steel has started and can be completed online, the final mile run will be at the Pittsburgh Children's Marathon. • Thanks in advance from the teachers for the Valentine's Day party coming up. • Thanks for the email blasts to help share information about Pittsburgh, the canned good donations, and rescheduling due to the snow day. • 3rd Grade Washington County Field Trips have been scheduled: May 7th – Killen, Leddy; May 8th – Sacco, Kiswardy; May 9th – Shoedel, Williams, Lawrence; May 14th – Hobbs, Gallagher. Thanks to the PTA for helping to fund the field trips. • Music Programs: 2nd Grade – March 15; 1st Grade – May 3rd; 3rd Grade – May 24th • Meatballs & Music – this Saturday, Feb. 9th, 3:00-7:30 performances and food, helps fund the music program.
6. Guest Speaker	<p>Dr. French (Superintendent) and Mr. Fisher (Assistant to the Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment) :</p> <p><i>Some questions were submitted anonymously prior to the meeting. Other questions were asked during the meeting.</i></p> <p>Q: After the new high school opens, how will the rest of the schools be structured? For example will Bower Hill remain K-3? Will there be movement in other buildings to be more age appropriate groupings across the district? Will the middle school close? Timeline of when it will be done.</p> <p>A: Dr. French explained the project is going very well, still on track for school year 2021. Online you can view drone videos to see the footprint of the building and how it is coming along. Structural steel delivered and should be going up by next week. Under budget as of right now. Great team working on the project. The Board has started working on the configuration of the buildings. Demographic study shows projected</p>

decline of enrollment over the next 10 years. New developments but marketed more to empty nesters. District's feasibility study underway to see all possible scenarios involving the 5 current schools and 1 new school. Then they will narrow down the feasible options and consider education aspects. Most scenarios have the Middle School moving to the High School, for Grades 6-8 but the High School would likely need about \$10 million in renovations. No building changes would be made prior to the high school completion.

Q: Could the Middle School be sold off to a private school?

A: Yes, it's possible. Other buildings have also been appraised as well.

Q: Is the project on schedule?

A: A little bit behind but nothing of concern.

Q: Are they building a new stadium?

A: No, not right now will continue to use our current one until older one needs repaired.

Q: Would PT ever consider "elearning" on snow days? If the staff had Google Classroom; upload assignments - kids can do them / watch video links, etc. at home and NOT have to make up the day. McGuffey follows similar program; some use Canva. IL also uses a similar model - keeps kids moving - Keeps seniors graduating on time; and less time into summer....thoughts?

Has there been any thought to virtual learning options as opposed to school closings, similar to other districts around us? For example, Elizabeth Forward has the option of delays, closures, or virtual learning days where students complete their class assignments on iPads or printed paper options. It has been approved by the department of education and therefore keeps the students on track with flexible learning.

A: Dr. French - enough school days are built in so not a concern. Mr. Fisher - nothing substitutes our teachers. Dr. French - would rather have the kids here; understandable if family plans are made on for the make-up days.

Q - What do we do for plans for Presidents Day weekend and kids missing a day?

A - Mr. Fisher - send in educational trip form.

Q - What about Easter Monday?

A - Mr. Fisher - still send in the educational form. Families happen, trips happen - so understandable.

Q - What about the 10 day limit for unexcused absences if kids are sick - is it truly set by the state?

A - Mr. Fisher - anything beyond 10 days need medical excuse. We'll discuss if it happens. Mr. Fisher - state statuettes set the 10 days; educational trips fall under parental excused days. Reasoning is to try to reduce senior skip days, encourage kids to be in school. They have analyzed low attendance days in the past and are now providing an incentive on high truancy days like a volleyball game.

Q - School safety specifically at Bower Hill. Any changes to parents coming in for lunch?

A - Dr. French - we have a wonderful relationship with the police department, lots of eyes on our buildings. Received a safety grant for window coatings and other things that are put out into the public. Writing another grant for telecommunications improvement in the buildings. Mr. Fisher - trying to raise the bar with the Alice Drills, taking field trips to buildings and giving teachers a script to begin the drill. Mr. Garvey - have gone smoothly, identifies area for improvement. Alice Drill sets up a scenario and teachers may choose whether to barricade in the classroom or evacuate. Held a simulated event at the high school with ambulance, police departments/mobile command unit. Had victims, blood, child in room that was locked down in need of medical attention; how do they know when it is safe to let help in, such as note in window saying injured child. Debrief is tomorrow to provide feedback to the school. Parent Comment - in comparison to other schools we are way ahead. Mr. Fisher - goal is to continue to educate teachers such as using the intercom to announce where the intruder is located.

Q – Bower Hill added a third grade teacher this year, presumably to reduce overall class size - will this continue with this grade as they move through the school, assuming consistent enrollment?
A – Mr. Fisher – they have analyzed future years, there is one more class at BH, one less class at PV so same total for next year. Always looking at staffing needs – an additional teacher was just added at PV due to number of IEPs.

Q – Congratulations on the district’s achievement as the #1 school in PSSA scores and other accolades of this nature. Do the schools need to continue to better the scores to be seen as “top schools” or is maintaining current performance sufficient. Additionally, how do you balance the desire for high scores with a well-rounded educational experience and avoid only “teaching for the test”?

A – Mr. Fisher – we are so blessed with teachers/administrators in the District, he doesn’t need to tell the staff to continue to push. We’re not teaching to the test. Looking into how kids might be having misconceptions with the questions and how can we help with that. They see great things. Dr. French – nice to be #1 but the top cluster of schools will likely jockey back and forth, what matters is the kids, and what produces good outcomes. Mr. Garvey – message to classroom teachers is keep doing what you’re doing. Changes to the test made it more about thinking like a mathematician rather than recalling math facts, which makes it harder to do test prep.

Q – Do we still have the test prep?

A – Mr. Garvey – yes. Always looking for resources to fill any gaps after looking at data. Constant balance of fun/work. Dr. French – coach books are helpful for question structure.

Q: Could there be a teacher email sent to describe the test prep to the parents? Looking for something similar to what has been discussed here.

A: Good suggestion, Mr. Garvey will look into that.

Q: Mr. Fisher, Now that the new Math program has been in place for a few years, Are you able to share what type of improvement we have seen in the Math scores on the benchmark tests and/or the PSSA Math scores.

A: Mr. Fisher - controversy over Envisions Math but students have shifted to thinking behind the math, every grade level has taken tremendous strides. We purchased resources to develop a comprehensive math program, not just Envisions.

Q – Curious about the thought process in the new High School with layout in terms of disabilities. Son spends tons of times transition at McMurray now. Also wondering about inclusion plans.

A – Dr. French – yes considered, improved at new High School Middle School has things in place already too for inclusion. Mrs. Kelly is a strong advocate, when we do inclusion the idea is how we can have most children included with activities, still do pull-out at needed. Mr. Fisher - new school all academics together with support rooms on each level but everyone can have access to the support rooms not just those with an IEP. Dr. French – still working on more co-teaching models. One of Mrs. Kelly’s goals is a transition plan for the new high school. Jessica Brodzinski – mentioned her brother-in-law has down syndrome and speaks at different schools about his transition through school and beyond. If the school would be interested in having him come to speak? Dr. French – yes, definitely.

Q – The district has invested much in Rachel’s challenge along with other kindness / anti-bullying programs before it. Do you feel this investment that has paid off? My concern is that the children who were kind already have really run with it but that it hasn’t made any significant impact on the children who tend to tease/bully/intimidate those around them.

A – Dr. French – that’s exactly the reason we need Rachel’s challenge, always going to have incidents, there will always be kids that struggle to do the right thing. Believes it’s a great investment. Historically kids acting up always get the teachers attention, trying to do the opposite and give kind acts the attention. Recognizing more kids holding doors, etc. Always going to deal with these struggles because kids are learning.

	<p>Q - Could we have more ‘tune-ups’ because she noticed her son was treated nicer initially. A – Mr. Fisher – that step is then up to each building to continue the incentive. Just saw positive locker tags at the high school. Dr. French – kids do what we do, follow the lead, children do what we do. We have to mind our own shop. Mr. Garvey – what’s different about this program is the parent involvement such as PT for Kindness. Dr. French – kids are under at tremendous amount of pressure and not sure where it is coming from, working a lot on how can we intervene to fix this at the school. Yesterday, 3 tips came in, worrying about other kids dealing with issue such as depression. Result –wrap care around the kids, police go out if needed. Goal – want kids to work hard and be good person.</p> <p>Q – What is your goal for Peters Township school district in the next 3-5 years? Q – What is our district’s biggest challenge / area for growth? A – Mr. Fisher – area of growth is to find that balance, strive to be your best but be ok with failing, you’re going to fail and that’s ok, but we just don’t give up. Kids that are struggling are the ones that aren’t able to handle failing. Dr. French – leadership team discussion evolve around overall kids’ well being. Our goal - kids are high achieving but good citizens as well, resilient. Fear – not providing enough opportunities for kids to handle failure. Be kind and work hard.</p> <p>Q – Has any consideration been given to hiring more teachers to teach accelerated classes at the middle school. Accelerated middle school students that go to the high school early and then finish the day at the middle school have such a long day. A – Dr. French – we will try to solve some of that when we make the transition. Understands the accelerated students have a very long school day.</p> <p>Q – any discussion about laptops/iPads for students? A – Mr. Fisher – having conversations all time, if it extends learning then it’s a benefit, try to give students advantages with all different formats iPads, chromebooks, etc. in the classroom. In our community – we buy online licenses but books are used more. Math is much better on paper than on the iPad. Good mix – opportunity at school, traditional at home. Data return on investment not convincing enough. Another concern is the amount of screentime to consider.</p> <p>Comment – much appreciate the advance notice for the school closings last week.</p>
<p>7. Report of First Vice President</p>	<p>Samantha McVicker relayed a report from Angie Glud on the following committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After School Dance: Recital will be April 6th ● Area Council: Jessica Brodzinski provided an update from the last meeting. Counselors from the HS, MS, PV and BH spoke about transitioning kids from one school to the next. McMurray – coteaching counseling lessons so each counselor gets to know all kids. MS – counselor follows you for 2 years. HS – counselor devoted to college and career readiness, and general counselor, next meeting is Feb. 21st. ● Box Tops: Next drawing is March 1st. ● Character Counts: Next meeting is March 5th at 12:00 at Pleasant Valley. ● Spirit Recognition – Next Red White & Kind is Feb. 22nd.
<p>8. Report of Second Vice President</p>	<p>Samantha McVicker relayed a report from Carrie Ace on the following committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gratitude: During the Valentine’s Day party, kids will work on paper flowers to be displayed in mason jars and donated to an assisted living facility. They will also be doing a DVD collection after Valentine’s Day. ● Volunteer Coordinators: Next party is the Valentine’s Day party coming up on Feb. 14th. ● Heart Challenge: Michelle Adamshick spoke about the American Heart Association fundraiser, previously a jump-a-thon changing to a dance-a-thon this year. The event will be this Friday, Feb. 8th and they are still looking for volunteers through AtoZ. Donations are due at the end of February.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Volunteers: Michelle Adamshick explained that the library is looking for more volunteers. Since the holidays there haven't been as many volunteers as earlier this year.
9. Report of Third Vice President	<p>Laura Rohrbach gave a report on the following committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After School Classes: Melissa Konggaard and Brandy Hamrick provided an update – signups are going on now through AtoZ until Monday. There will be no late registrations. Some complaints have been made about increasing the opportunities for kindergartners. Samantha McVicker explained those age restrictions are determined by the instructor. Parents will be notified if class size minimum has not been met prior to Friday so students can select a different class if they choose. • Assemblies: CLO is coming March 25 • Family Game Night: Thanks to Angela Srsic and Dana Sasuta for a great event. New games, a scavenger hunt and more added to an already fun event. Great having extra teachers come to call Bingo. • Kindergarten Coordination: Registration on 3/13 and 3/14, Orientation on 5/22. Mr. Garvey mentioned the Online Portal should open around 3/1. • School Tool Box: Flyer coming home in March to describe school supply kit that is shipped directly to your house. Orders can be placed in March but shipped at a later date. • Teacher Staff Appreciation: Valentine lunch next Thursday catered for the teachers, donations accepted on AtoZ, extra money will be put towards Teacher Appreciation Week.
10. Principal's Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks to the volunteers for Family Game Night and the upcoming Dance-A-Thon. • Mid-year diebels just finished up – our scores keep increasing in comparison to past years which is great. • Kindergarten celebrates Dr. Seuss Week. Older grades invited to join in. Wacky Wednesday – Feb. 27th. Crazy Sock Day – Feb. 28th. Read my shirt day – March 1st.
11. Old Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
12. New Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
13. Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samantha McVicker described an upcoming, new event called Bingo for Books on 3/29. There will be 2 sessions similar to the Bower Hill Bistro, kids will win books as prizes, something additional since we had such a great year with the read-a-thon. Will be looking for volunteers, can volunteer for one session and attend the other with your family. • Next meeting is an evening meeting – we'll be looking for volunteers for the nominating committee.

Submitted by: Michelle Adamshick
Michelle Adamshick, Secretary, 2018/2019

Date approved: _____