



## AGENDA

MS54 PTA General Meeting

September 22, 2020 @ 7:00 PM, Zoom Mtg

[BTW54PTA@ms54PTA.org](mailto:BTW54PTA@ms54PTA.org)

### Welcome, Introductions & Minutes (7:00 )

- ~128 participants, including parents, Executive Board, guest speaker, etc. via Zoom
- PTA's mission - build community, make sure everyone feels welcome and included, and to raise funds for things (positions, supplies, etc.) that are not funded by DOE
- Intros by each EB member
  - Laura - welcome and overall PTA mission/purpose
  - Larry - focus on advocacy
  - Anne Rosenberg (Treasurer) - keeps track of the PTA books and records
  - Kyle Clayton (Assistant Treasurer) - focused on grant writing and fles corporate matching paperwork
  - Juhi Chawa - co assistant treasurer
  - Colleen Wilker (VP of Fundraising) - focused on creative and interesting ways to raise funds that also build community and looking for another co-chair
  - Marni Aarlev- focused on newsletter, website and social media
  - Denise Broady - co-recording secretary - focused on setting up knowledge base/transfer
  - Tekla White - new co-recording secretary
  - Marianna Crespi - 8th grade rep. Reach out with issues and things important to you and your peers. Email is [8thgraderep@ms54.org](mailto:8thgraderep@ms54.org)
  - Sandra - 7th grade rep. Reach out with issues or things important to you and your peers. Email is: [7thgraderep@ms54.org](mailto:7thgraderep@ms54.org)
  - To reach out to any PTA members, please go to: <https://www.ms54.org/pta.html>
- June PTA minutes approved. (Anne and Juhi)

### Presidents' Report (7:15)

- Good news --
  - 6th grade engagement efforts have been fantastic
    - Lots of engaged and excited new families
    - Events included buddy program, teacher/family zooms, teacher/Dr. Elster hosted orientation week
    - Thank you for your participation!
  - School Reopening advocacy efforts - big win -- the letter/positions shared with elected officials and DOE by PTA and parents had impact
  - Summer food drive - our families donated 400+ bags of groceries - thank you!
  - 8 DOT bike racks installed
  - School store sale this summer raised \$2k+ -- looking for school store manager, reach out if interested
  - The revamped newsletter and website look great- thank you! Check it out: <https://www.ms54.org/>
  - Biggest good news - already raised over \$65k for Annual Appeal (our largest fundraiser of the year)! The goal is \$250k so keep it up!



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- Unfinished business distributing items won in last year's auction due to pandemic. Email [Auction@ms54.pta.org](mailto:Auction@ms54.pta.org) if you need to collect your items
- SHSAT - Still on track to be administered; details still forthcoming. The PTA will keep an eye on developments; join the PTA facebook group for latest updates

### Principal's Report (7:15 - 7:24)

- Thank you for your involvement in the PTA - we could not do what we do without your support, time, and commitment
- 2 days into the new school year!
  - The extra time has given the school breathing room. We are fully staffed for now, pending extra support from DOE
  - The school is manning phones every day helping kids connect to the DOE's ZOOM - encourage your kids to be patient, and email the teacher if they are having problems connecting. Students should also try to have a buddy in the same cohort that they can text if they are in the ZOOM waiting room as well.
  - Teacher On Call. There is a teacher on call 4 periods a day (i.e, every period except lunch). Students were all sent the "teacher on call" ZOOM link which they should use for any issues. This is for STUDENTS only; no parents.
  - Teachers. Reach out directly to teachers if your student has class-related issues
  - Anticipate schedule adjustments - these will be communicated to the kids; have your kids handle some of these things on their own.
  - Stressed that it is important is that the students need to take initiative, problem solve and handle when things go wrong themselves (ie, alerting the teacher, letting their cohort buddy know, reaching out to "Teacher on Call", reaching out to their teachers with class related questions, etc.). They will learn initiative, problem-solving, self advocacy and resiliency! This will ultimately lead to their success!
- We will have a virtual back to school night so you can meet the teachers by ZOOM (10/8 @ 7PM). More info to come.
- Welcome to our 3 new teachers at MS54!
  - Kyle Haines (6th grade Math teacher)
  - Tom Karbani (6th grade Science teacher)
  - Rob Ericson (Humanities teacher, is returning after 3 years in Costa Rica!)
- Health Screenings - more info coming out this week. All forms should be submitted to the homeroom teachers!
- Social Distancing markings - the inside and outside has all been marked in advance of 10/1 return to school for blended!
- Look forward to an engaging and safe year!

### Budget Update (7:45 - 8:00)

- Off to a good start!
  - After school is on pause for now
  - Balances: Checking (~\$580k) + Money Market (~\$250k)



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- Significant income is annual appeal which has already raised \$65k out of \$250k goal
  - Expenses to date: \$3k for planners
- BUDGET - Overall budget: beginning balance as of 7/1/2020: \$789,478.80; expected budget for year short of -\$114K. (We had originally budgeted for a shortfall of \$250k)
- Prior to the meeting, the Executive Board emailed out the recommended adjustments to reduce the budget shortfall. Questions from participants included:
  - Does reducing the after school budget mean there is no after school? No, after school is self-funded. Typically \$175k raised, and \$175k spent. Fall season drastically reduced (if it happens at all). Hopefully we can reintroduce afterschool once the teachers get in rhythm of school year and have more bandwidth
  - Has the DOE permitted after school? It would be virtual.
  - Can some of the after school activities be virtual (like debate)? TBD
- Budget recommendations passed - 89% yes, 11% abstaining
- Grant Status
  - We will be receiving \$160K for the band room renovation, but not sure timing of when we will receive the funding
- Funding Requests
  - Tents for half the courtyard (\$4.8k) - will be up for 3 months from the date it goes up. This is funded by the PTA out of the supplies budget
  - Tent will be multipurpose - e.g., student outside breaks, physical education classes, students waiting outside, etc. Sides will be open (not enclosed)
  - Street closing approval is still pending with the city. Would be used for extra social distancing for arrival/departure
  - Tent funding was approved - 100% approval

### **New Business**

#### ***Elections/PTA Openings/Help Wanted***

- Elections will be held October 13 @ 7:00 with live streaming and voting. Need to pre-register
- Board Openings
  - Co-Treasurer
  - Co-Assistant Treasurer (to help with grant writing)
  - Co-Corresponding Secy
  - Co-Fundraising VP
  - 6th Grade Rep
- Non-Elected Openings
  - Online Auction Chair
  - School Store Manager
  - Class/Cohort Parents
  - 4 open SLT
- Email: [nominations@ms54.org](mailto:nominations@ms54.org)

### **Community Updates (7:40 )**



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- Fundraising: we need a team and ideas!
  - Can't rely on our go to things this year (ie yankees games)
  - Need to re-think strategy- likely going to do more small things, fewer big things
  - Want to raise funds and bring people together responsibly
  - Meeting on Thursday 9/24 to brainstorm ideas - want to roll things out soon!
- Wellness Committee
  - Please email with your ideas, concerns and participation! Email [wellness@ms54pta.org](mailto:wellness@ms54pta.org)
  - The next meeting is Friday, 10/16 @ 8 am followed by 11/13 @ 8 am.
- Equity Team
  - Meeting on 9/30 @ 7PM! Zoom link will be sent
  - Email if interested, available on the website
- 108th Street Construction
  - Due to COVID-19 the WSHFHS building will not open until May 2021. Will remove the scaffolding in the next few weeks.

### **Guest Speaker: Elizabeth Cohen (CEO & Director; Cognitive Behavioral Therapist)**

- Dr. Cohen is a regular and popular speaker at MS54! She has been featured prominently in many media outlets! We are lucky to have her in our community!
- Key Points
  - Our nervous systems are on OVERDRIVE due to the pandemic! We need to get our bodies moving - dance parties, shaking, incredibly important. Try this simple exercise: "Lion's Breath" (from yoga) - big exhale, shake hands and head. You can do it with your kids!
  - 3-5x fold increase in depression/anxiety due to pandemic. We need to consider our students' feelings. A brain can't take in info/learn unless they are calm, and feel safe. Important as parents to help kids feel safe - have dinner at the same time, bed time, family rituals, keeping things consistent/same helps us feel safe.
  - Give yourself and your kids a "hall pass" - more permission to screw up and do better next time. We're all simply doing the best things we can given what is happening due to this trauma (COVID)
  - These kids are going to exit this pandemic more resilient - they are learning what happens when things get really hard, people are showing up, life gets tough and they are learning that people are there for them and they can handle stress. Kids are building this muscle earlier than we did!
  - Take care of yourself - as parents, what are you teaching your kids about how to handle stress? If you are struggling then you should get help (don't suffer alone) because "you need to put your air mask on first"!
- Takes about 6 weeks in a regular year to adjust to the new school year, expect longer this year due to the pandemic



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- Pandemic is a “global existential trauma”
  - Trauma therapists typically work after the fact; we’re not ready to process this since we’re still in the middle of it
  - We’re still in this trauma (and so our kids). Extra compassion is important
- Emotions are like an iceberg - you only see the tip
  - Kids maybe not being rude, disrespectful - they are just stressed. Look underneath the initial outburst
  - Use tools like: “I know this is really hard, how can I best support you?”
- Be mindful of your own “Energetic Load”
  - Do you find yourself incredibly tired but having trouble sleeping? Being on the gas and the break at the same time?
  - Nervous systems on/off expends a tremendous amount of effort. Notice your behaviors and give yourself extra TLC
- Allow yourself and your kids to be imperfect - it’s so hard but you have to let your kids try and fail things
- Getting angry at your kids is not a problem but you need to go through the entire “rupture and repair” cycle
  - The repair is the most powerful relationship you can have and teach your kids
  - Teach your kids how to be in a complicated world - how to handle stress, how to get mad and then later revisit and repair the relationship after things cool off
- Validate your child’s feelings to help them manage the uncertainty - they just need to know they are not crazy for feeling this way
  - Repeat what they say: “I know it’s frustrating you don’t know....”. “I know it’s really stressful and you are bummed out, how can I help you?”
  - Empathize that you are losing things as well “I know I feel really bad too - I was looking forward to XYZ that got cancelled too”
- Check out a few recommendations that were raised by Dr. Cohen and others --
  - Books: The Whole Brain Child!! And Under Pressure!
  - EFTTapping App -- great for kids for managing stress!
- Technology - don’t fight constantly about technology -- that is a problem because it’s too much conflict! Write down your goals for your kids for every day. If they do them all, then they can have the screen. Take the battle out of it
- Email: Elizabeth Cohen if you want to talk privately:
  - [doctorcvt@gmail.com](mailto:doctorcvt@gmail.com)