

**PARENT TEACHER STUDENT ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 1565
Nome AK 99762**

Minutes of May 7, 2007 Meeting

President Julie Kelso called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m., in the Nome Elementary School conference room. The following individuals were in attendance:

Julie Kelso	Carl White
Betsy Brennan	Mari Lammer
Sandra Keller	Lori Head
Margaret Thomas	Sylvia Matson
Elizabeth Coler	Laura Lawrence
Nikki Polk	Julie Bourdon
Lisa Wehde	Sharon Penttila
John Berkeley	

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 8, 2006, meeting were not available for review or approval by the members present at the meeting. This matter was tabled until the next meeting.

Report Card

This year, the Nome Elementary School (NES) report card does not specifically address citizenship and work/study habits. Julie stated that she had spoken to several parents and teachers who stated that they missed having those items listed separately as areas that students would be graded on. Carl indicated that these items had been deleted during the transition to Power Grade, the report card program NPS began using this year. Staff had initially been under the impression that some categories would have to be deleted due to space limitations. They decided to omit these two categories and to address them in the narrative comments, as necessary. However, Carl recently checked with Robin Johnson, NPS Director of Technology, and she indicated that NES could put them back on report cards next year. Carl indicated that he would bring this issue to the Building Leadership Team at NES, and a decision would be made.

Margaret brought up a different concern regarding the report cards. She believes that it would be more meaningful if Music (other than Band) and PE were graded using O,S, and N, rather than A-F. Given the nature of the activities that take place in those classes and the relatively limited contact each teacher has with particular

students, a less-precise grading system would be more appropriate. When she inquired about this earlier this year, she was told that the grading system had been dictated by the new computer program. Carl will check with Ron Horner and Joni Ahmasuk, the Music and PE teachers, to find out which grading scheme they would prefer.

Julie passed along a concern voiced by a parent who could not attend the meeting. The parent would have liked a report card that indicated in greater detail what his or her child had learned during an academic year, such as a check-off list of Grade Level Expectations. It was suggested that the parent look at a detailed printout of the student's MAP scores and use the DesCartes table (available in the school library) to ascertain the skills the child has mastered and the ones he or she should work on next, or visit with the child's classroom teacher for more information.

Reading Intervention Update

Carl announced that Jon Berkeley will be the Title I Reading teacher next year. Jon and Carl discussed the new steps NES will take next year to address the needs of its students who are considered struggling readers. Students in grades 4 through 6 who are in need of intervention (i.e. who are reading at least two grades below their nominal grade level) will be assigned to a program called Language!, which has been in use at NPS at the Junior High level for the past two years. Susan Rand and Diana Adams are the sixth and fifth grade teachers who will be assigned to teach those students. The rest of the students (those at the "Strategic" and "Benchmark" levels) will continue to participate in the Houghton-Mifflin reading program. The reading consultant NES has been working with this past year from the Consortium on Reading Excellence has strongly recommended that teachers make greater use of the broad range of resources for differentiated instruction available from Houghton-Mifflin. Teachers present at the meeting indicated that they plan to follow these recommendations now that they have become familiar with the basic components of the program.

Students in Kindergarten through Third Grade who are in need of intensive reading intervention will be receiving supplemental instruction from John Berkeley, the Title I Reading Instructor. He will be using "Language for Learning," or an SRA program called "Early Interventions in Reading" to supplement Houghton Mifflin. John will work with groups of approximately ten students for 90 minutes at a time. This instruction will be in addition to the 90 minutes these students receive through the Houghton Mifflin program.

Grouping for instruction

Several staff members responded to questions from parents regarding the advisability of grouping students for instruction, particularly in light of the fact that some grouping would necessarily take place for purposes of reading intervention. The staff present indicated that they were busy this year becoming familiar with the new Houghton-Mifflin math and reading programs. Both programs offer teachers materials that would allow them to differentiate instruction, and they hope to make greater use of those in the future. The staff has discussed the pros and cons of grouping for instruction this year and will continue discussing this subject. Jon Berkeley stated that he had philosophical and practical objections to grouping. He views classrooms as communities and believes that they should reflect the composition of the community. As a practical matter, there seems to be an indirect correlation between academic performance and behavioral problems. The students who encounter academic difficulties tend to be the ones who present the most challenging behavioral problems. If these students are grouped together, classroom management issues can become virtually insurmountable. Thus, he favored differentiation of instruction within, rather than between, classrooms.

PTSA Scholarships

Lori Head reported that the PTSA has approximately \$9,000 in its account. After several minutes of discussion, it was agreed that the PTSA would spend up to \$3,000 on scholarships this year, awarding either three or four depending upon the applicant pool. The members agreed that a committee should be convened in early fall to develop criteria for awarding the scholarships. In the past, grades have been the primary factor in determining recipients. Of the recipients chosen, those whose parents participated actively in the PTSA were awarded a greater amount. Those present at the meeting agreed that each recipient should receive the same amount, regardless of their parents' involvement in PTSA.

Santa Shop

Carl stated that he thought it would be a good idea to bring the discussion of the pros and cons of the Santa Shop out in the open. Those who oppose it say that it does not promote instruction, that it is a hardship for students who do not have money to purchase gifts there, and that the items purchased at the Santa Shop create disruptions in class later. On the other hand, it provides students with an opportunity to learn how to budget their money. Several teachers voiced their opinions. Mari Lammer stated that originally, she thought it was a good way to teach budgeting to students. However, in reality, that goal does not get accomplished—students who do not bring enough money to make all the purchases they want the first day bring more money the next day. She felt that other options should be explored. Sandy Keller said that she felt ambivalent about it, as did Sharon Pentilla. Nikki Polk said that, on balance, her sympathy for the children who

could not afford to make purchases outweighed her assessment of the benefits of the Santa Shop.

Carl suggested that the PTSA define the purpose of the Santa Shop and decide whether or not it was achieving that purpose. The consensus of those present at the meeting was that it does not serve primarily as a fundraising activity-- it consumes far too much time (particularly on Julie's part) by comparison to the revenue generated. This year, for example, it yielded a net profit of approximately \$1,900. Julie stated that the PTSA views it primarily as a community service operated for families who would otherwise not be able to afford holiday gifts. It was agreed at the meeting that this purpose could be served by confining Santa Shop activities to after school hours. That would allow families to come to purchase gifts without disrupting instruction during the school day and hurting the feelings of students without the means to participate in it.

In response to concerns about the quality of the items presented for sale, it was suggested that the PTSA explore other vendors and/or products, such as books, providing that would not intrude on book sales held to benefit the school libraries. Nikki indicated that the Arts Council had discussed the possibility of sponsoring or co-sponsoring an arts and crafts activity that would allow students to make their own gifts. The PTSA could join the Arts Council in this venture.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.