

**St. Michael the Archangel Catholic School
Parent Organization General Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2006**

The second general meeting of the St. Michael School Parent Teacher Organization was held on Wednesday, November 15, 2006, at 7 p.m. in the Pastoral Center. PTO board President Marylynn Fitzgerald, Treasurer Louis Prosser, VP of Fundraising Colleen Ueland, VP of Education Luann Wiggenhorn, VP of Social Betsy Nalesnik, VP of Volunteers Maureen Beeler, and Secretary Jennifer Butler were all in attendance. School Principal Dr. Sarah Wannemuehler and Assistant Principal Molly Carlin were present, as well as four teachers: Paul Gauthier, Pat Ward, Danielle Davey, and Karlin Moore. The latter three teachers were scheduled as speakers for the evening. Fifty-three parents were in attendance.

Opening Prayer

Read by Marylynn Fitzgerald

Lord, as I greet this new day, let me be ever-mindful of your divine love.

Guide me towards demonstration of love and kindness for everyone I meet today.

Help me put your command to “Love One Another” to work in all I do and say.

Grant me generosity of spirit.

Open my mind and heart to others that I might seek ways to show the power and the wonder of “Love At Work” in your name.

Amen.

School update

Speaker: Dr. Sarah Wannemuehler

Dr. Wannemuehler began her remarks by pointing out some of the physical changes being made to the school. A larger awning and new rugs are in place at the school’s main entrance. The entryway bricks will be replaced with concrete, as the current brick area is uneven and hazardous.

Developments are also being made in regard to school safety. The school has contracted “Alert Now”, a company capable of notifying all parents within three minutes should the school have an emergency situation, weather-related closing, etc. Each family will be

responsible for providing accurate phone numbers and emails addresses by which they may be contacted. The cost to the school for this service is three dollars per student, although this year the fee has been pro-rated as the system will become active December 1st.

Additionally, teachers are now wearing badges displaying their picture and current school year, so that they are easily identifiable. The school is moving towards having both main floor doors locked, and employing a buzzer system to allow entry. A video monitor in the office will show the individual requesting access to the building. Doors will remain unlocked during times of drop-off (which will allow for before-school care and band students) and pick-up. Teachers will no longer use keys to access the building; instead, they will swipe cards which will indicate their identity and time of entrance. Dr. Wannemuehler is considering hiring an individual to monitor the building's doorways.

Dr. Wannemuehler is very pleased with the efforts of the PTO. She is very impressed with the early results of the Angel Bucks program, which is already generating profits of \$1,000 each week and has even greater potential.

Dr. Wannemuehler thanked the parents for their support during the time of her mother's death.

PTO Update

Speaker: PTO President, Marylynn Fitzgerald

Mrs. Fitzgerald thanked Mrs. Carlin for attending the meeting as well as the three teachers—Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Davey, and Mrs. Ward—who volunteered as speakers.

Mrs. Fitzgerald stressed that we, the board and the school parents, are all working through the PTO towards a common goal—to form a better school for our children. This is achieved by volunteering and fundraising. While the PTO's calendar of fundraising events is ambitious, its success is attainable if everyone contributes their small share. Mrs. Fitzgerald noted that this is the first year in the school's seven-year history that a formal and comprehensive program of fundraising has been set forth. She also mentioned that Coach Milmoie intends to use the money he will receive from our fundraising activities to eliminate the registration fees for students participating in extracurricular athletics—that is one example of an immediate benefit resulting from our efforts.

The board appreciates the time and hard work of the chairpersons and volunteers thus far, as well as those involved with Angel Bucks. Christmas tree sales will begin shortly and more volunteers are needed. Tim Appleby, who oversees the sale, hopes to attain \$10,000 in profit for the school.

Mrs. Fitzgerald relayed her experience of helping at the Parish Center quarterly lunch, and how it emphasized why we are all working so hard—for our children. With this in mind, the PTO board created a breakdown of how they would like fundraising monies to be allocated. The following distribution list was read, followed by time for parent comments.

- 20% Fine and Performing Arts and Music
- 20% Athletics
- 20% Technology
- 15% Teacher and Administration Support
- 15% Capital Building Improvements
- 5% Religious/Spiritual Enrichment
- 5% Library (in addition to Book Fair proceeds)

Questions/Comments on fund distribution:

A parent questioned the designation of only 5% for spiritual enrichment, considering that we are a Catholic school. Mrs. Fitzgerald replied that the board will discuss this further at the next board meeting and adjust allocations if necessary. Later in the meeting Dr. Wannemuehler noted that many individuals are very willing to freely donate religious items to the school, citing the gifts of rosaries and holy water fonts this year from the school wish list.

It was asked if the overall distribution to these categories could be reviewed in order to gain a larger picture of how all school money (PTO and otherwise) is disseminated. Mrs. Fitzgerald explained that only the library receives additional funds from the book fair; the other categories are not subject to additional fundraising proceeds. The average profit generated by the book fair could be identified.

A stipend for athletic coaches was inquired about. This has not yet been discussed by the board, but may be considered. Mr. Prosser noted that the PTO will probably not have funds for stipends this year, but may at some point in the future.

A parent wanted to know if the athletic category includes P.E. Athletics does encompass the entire physical education curriculum.

It was asked what specific spending goals might fall within each of the categories, as the areas are quite broad. The board will work with the school administration and staff to identify the precise needs within each allocation. Dr. Wannemuehler noted that the profits from last year's auction that had been designated for fine arts were used to buy the kiln and additional instruments. Dr. Wannemuehler also explained that the wish list has been very helpful in publicizing particular needs.

A question was raised about designating some of the PTO funds for recognition of outstanding teachers. Mrs. Fitzgerald explained that this is one of the aims of the teacher and administration support component. Dr. Wannemuehler mentioned the Carolyn Wheelock award which honors one faculty member at the end of each school year. This award includes a monetary benefit, which the PTO will match this year. The parent suggested that it would be nice to honor more of the teachers, as we are fortunate to have an exceptional staff. Mrs. Fitzgerald responded that this should become increasingly possible under the PTO. Mr. Prosser later noted that the teachers also receive Christmas bonuses funded by the parent's generosity to the school's Christmas collection.

A parent wondered if these percentage allotments, once they are voted on and become a part of the PTO by-laws, could at some future date be changed. Mrs. Fitzgerald said yes, that both the percentages and the by-laws, once voted on at the January meeting, may be amended through a vote and will likely be revised numerous times through the next several years, as the PTO develops.

A student enrichment fund was suggested, to provide for activities such as science fairs, chess club, etc. Mrs. Fitzgerald explained that the PTO board created the initial fundraising distribution with the categories listed, but the board will discuss the designation of money for student enrichment programs.

It was noted that the wish list is published on the school website.

A parent asked about what is included in the technology component of the allocation. Mrs. Fitzgerald stated that the school is hoping to obtain numerous Smart Boards. Dr. Wannemuehler added that the computer facilities are continuously being upgraded, as part of the school's evolving technology plan. Nearly all of the original school computers have been replaced. Technology also includes software used by teachers as learning aids.

The rising costs associated with field trips are a concern for many parents, and it was asked if the PTO might help subsidize some of the expenses. Dr. Wannemuehler explained that we must charter buses, as public school buses may not be rented in North Carolina. Bus companies must carry enormous amounts of liability insurance (this also prevents parents from driving children to field trips); coupled with increased gas costs, the transportation component of field trips has become quite expensive. However, during last year's parent forums, an overwhelming number of parents said that they do want field trips as part of their child's education, in spite of the higher fees. Should a family be unable to send their child on a field trip because it is cost-prohibitive, Dr. Wannemuehler stressed that the parents talk with her so that the child may be included. The PTO will discuss some type of assistance for field trips in the future. Dr. Wannemuehler mentioned that at her former school every family paid a set equal amount towards field trips. The resulting fund would be used to pay for field trips, and the fund's money would carry over from year to year.

As part of her final comments, Mrs. Fitzgerald discussed the PTO elections that will be held in the spring of 2007. A nominating committee of at least three members will be formed in February. Elections will take place in late March to facilitate a smooth transition between PTO boards. Officers are elected for one-year terms, although current board members may run again for their title or another on the board, as the by-laws allow for two consecutive years of service. A parent noted that a two-year term of office helps the PTO in terms of consistency, so that is something that we at St. Michael's may want to consider.

PTO Board Updates

Speaker: VP of Fundraising, Colleen Ueland

Mrs. Ueland provided an update on fundraising activities. The most successful fundraiser to date has been Angel Bucks, as the school has averaged a profit of \$1,000 each week. Mrs. Ueland thanked Ellen Dalbo and Lisa Miles for initiating the Angel Bucks program at St. Michael's, and all of the parents for their patience and participation in these early weeks. By Thanksgiving weekend credit cards will be accepted for purchases of Angel Bucks, in time for Christmas shopping.

The Harvest Moon Saloon was a great night of socializing for parents. The Needle in a Haystack event was very successful, with all fifty-five chances being sold at \$10 each. Participants won gift cards, Halloween baskets, and gag gifts. Mrs. Ueland thanked chair Sheila Schlageter, as well as all of those volunteers who helped make the Harvest Moon a success.

The Jingle Bell Run will take place on December 2nd, with Cid Cardoso as chair. Entry forms have been distributed to all families, and registration may be made online, by mail, or at the school office. The event will consist of a 5k on the trails through Bond Park, a 1-mile fun run, and a 200 yard dash for children ages six and under. While supplies last, registered participants will receive a t-shirt designed by St. Michael School students. Each runner will also receive a pair of jingle bells to tie on their shoes for the races. Thirty-nine volunteers are still needed to help coordinate this event.

Christmas tree sales will begin Thanksgiving weekend and continue each weekend through December 10th at the Pastoral Center. Wreaths will be available as well. Volunteers may sign up for shifts online, or contact Tim Appleby.

February 9th will be "Out of this World Bingo", chaired by Sharon Sands and Karen Andrews, with help from Donna Kocur. The space-themed event will consist of a pizza dinner and bingo games with prizes. Each class will be asked to donate items for baskets that will be raffled during the evening. Baskets will be child-themed with games, gift cards for kids, etc.

The auction is scheduled for March 10th at Prestonwood Country Club. It is the largest fundraiser for the year, with expected profits of \$50,000. The night will consist of a sit-down dinner, silent and live auctions, and music. Everyone may attend, regardless of association to St. Michael's, so invite neighbors, friends, work contacts, and so on. The committee is in need of acquisitions from school parents and businesses. Companies willing to underwrite part of the auction will be showcased. Laura Greleck and Marina McKenna are chairs of the event.

The camp-out is set for May 18th and is still in need of a chairperson. Families will camp-out behind the school with a cook-out, kickball and games, a movie, and a bonfire. It will be a family event to celebrate the ending of the school year.

Mrs. Ueland thanked everyone for their help and patience with the launch of this year's PTO fundraising agenda. The schedule has required a lot of volunteers and time, and the PTO appreciates everyone's efforts. While the purpose of fundraising is to generate funds for the betterment of the school, Mrs. Ueland hopes that our time spent working on and participating in these events will also result in many memories for St. Michael School children and parents.

Speaker: Treasurer, Louis Prosser

Mr. Prosser thanked Ellen Dalbo and Lisa Miles for their work on the Angel Bucks fundraising program. Almost \$72,000 has run through the designated Angel Bucks account, with over \$4,830 of profit received by the school thus far.

Committee chairs with bills to be paid out of PTO funds may turn in receipts to Mr. Prosser or to Mary Gallagher in the school office. Mr. Prosser asked that a telephone number and address are written on or included with the receipts, which should be reimbursed within 3-4 weeks. It is simpler for businesses to bill the school rather than the PTO having to reimburse individuals.

The Harvest Moon is expected to gross approximately \$2,500. A final number will be available once all of the applicable bills have been paid.

Mr. Prosser opened up the discussion to questions.

Teacher Presentations

Mrs. Wiggenhorn introduced each of the faculty speakers. The first speaker, Karlin Moore, currently teaches 5th grade at St. Michael's. She has previously taught Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades, and has been at St. Michael's since the school's first year. Her topic is that of reading strategies.

Danielle Davey is also a 5th grade teacher. She is new to St. Michael's School this year and has previously taught science and religion. She will speak about study skills.

The final speaker, Pat Ward, will talk about learning styles. Mrs. Ward is a middle school science teacher at St. Michael's, and has taught in North Carolina for over 25 years. She is the mother of five grown children.

Below is a synopsis of the speaker's topics. For hand-outs or additional information, please contact the teacher directly.

Speaker: Mrs. Karlin Moore

Mrs. Moore stressed that parents and teachers need to work together to teach students and help them thrive. Parents should role-model reading to their children, and talk with their children about reading.

The reading strategies described by Mrs. Moore are most relevant for kindergarten students through 4th grade. She explained "tricky" words, and ways parents can help children decode words. Eventually children should implement these strategies independently before asking for assistance.

Mrs. Moore emphasized the importance of retelling, to be sure that a child comprehends what he/she is reading. Parents should also ask generic questions about a story to determine comprehension.

To check if a book is appropriate for your child's reading level, ask him/her to read a page of the book. If five or more words on a page are too challenging or tricky, that book may be too difficult.

Speaker: Mrs. Danielle Davey

As a former high school and middle school teacher, Mrs. Davey has an interesting perspective on study skills. The study skills learned in the later elementary school years will help students immensely through their future education. She began her talk with an exercise that demonstrated the importance of repetition, grouping, and making connections when learning.

In elementary and middle school, students should begin to discern the study skills and learning strategies that work best for them. Mrs. Davey described a number of different strategies such as acronyms, thinking/concept maps, color-coding, classifying, sequencing, note cards, rhymes and songs, physical games. Mrs. Davey encourages students to create their own memorization tricks to help them develop as learners.

Speaker: Mrs. Pat Ward

Commenting on Mrs. Davey's presentation, Mrs. Ward mentioned some of the test-taking strategies learned by middle school students, and how they too employ some of the techniques described by Mrs. Davey.

Mrs. Ward works with her middle school students to determine if they are left brain or right brain thinkers, or somewhere in the middle. She also helps students to evaluate their learning styles—visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. Mrs. Ward explained that assessments assist students and teachers in understanding themselves, as well as differences in one another, both as learners and as people.

Mrs. Ward also noted the importance of children getting adequate amounts of sleep, getting to school on time, and staying on task with school work and projects. She stressed the necessity of middle school students in particular being present for as much instruction time as possible, and asked the support of the parents to this end.

Closing Prayer

Read by Luann Wiggenhorn

Taken from Prayers for Parents by Renee Bartkowski

Dear Lord,

Help us to remember that out of all the jobs we have to do, right now, that this time in our lives parenting is the most important.

Being a success at work or in our community will mean little if we're not successful as parents.

Remind us Lord to focus our attention and conserve our energy for this most important job.

Let us be constantly aware of how great a privilege it is to be entrusted with bringing up these children.

How blessed we are to have you think that we are worthy of this responsibility.

Help us to do a good job with these fragile souls whom you've entrusted to our care.

Following this prayer, the first general meeting of the St. Michael School PTO was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.