



O'Hara PTO General Meeting
Meeting Minutes – November 15, 2018
9:15-10:15 am, O'Hara Auditorium

Approximately 40 people in attendance. Board members Sarah Shaffer, Nadine Carl, Kristina Adams, Faith Moser, Dana Rofey, and Kristy Batis were in attendance.

- 1. PTO Board Report :** O'Hara PTO Board Treasurer, Kristina Adams, presented her treasurer's report first. PTO's current balance is \$41,000.00. Kristina updated us on the results of several recent PTO fundraisers:

- a. The Fall Box Top collection raised \$693. We are hoping to raise \$1400 through Box Tops for the entire year. New this year, we will offer a class incentive--an extra recess period--for the class that brings in the most Box Tops by the end of the year. Families are reminded that they can send in Box Tops to the classroom throughout the year.
 - b. Our recent Chipotle Dine and Donate event raised \$467. In lieu of a Dine and Donate event in December, Jessica Simms is organizing our first [Barnes and Noble fundraiser](#) at the Waterworks location on 12/1. A portion of all purchases will be donated to the PTO, including Starbucks purchases (just make sure to tell your customer service representative that you are there to support O'Hara!). The PTO will also be manning a complimentary gift wrap table from 11am-5pm at this event, staffed by volunteers (you can sign up to participate [here](#)), who will also be collecting donations. Can't make it to this event? Online purchases made between 12/1 and 12/5 will also benefit the PTO. Just use the Code 12454575 when you check out.
 - c. This year's directory raised \$3216.

- 2. Committee News and Volunteer Opportunities**

- a. Stacy London, coordinator of library volunteers, presented next. Stacy reported that the new library is now ready for volunteers. There are two different volunteer opportunities at this time: 1) [shelving books](#) and 2). [preparing instructional materials and bulletin boards](#). Ms. Fornari may also offer an opportunity for volunteers during instructional periods in the future.
 - b. Next, O'Hara PTO Board Vice President, Nadine Champs, presented about the recent Tree of Life community-building event. Attendance at the event was approximately 100 individuals, and families worked on several projects for the Tree of Life victims/families and first responders. Board president, Sarah Shaffer and Mrs. Batis both thanked parents for their help in creating an event that was

“respectful of each other’s approach to handling a tragedy like this.” Mrs. Batis also expressed her overall gratitude toward O’Hara families, remarking “people here are different and special. I’ve never seen children who are just so kind. It sounds so simple, but they truly are. That’s a testament to the families.”

- c. Nadine Champsi also presented an update on the Thanksgiving Basket food drive to benefit Backpacks for Hunger. The drive will continue until 11/19 and families are reminded to send in individually-packaged, single-serving food items (i.e. ramen, Easy Mac, applesauce pouches, etc) to classrooms. Also, Giant Eagle gift cards are much appreciated for those families who need help purchasing Thanksgiving dinner. Volunteers are still needed to collect, sort, and package the donations during the morning of November 19th. Sign up [here](#).

2. **Teacher report:** Mrs. Lancz, one of our PTO teacher representatives, presented on behalf of the teachers.

- a. Teachers want to thank the PTO volunteers who cleaned the Imagination Playground a few weeks ago.
- b. Teachers also expressed their gratitude for cleaning out the K-2 indoor recess bins. They are collectively wondering if the 3-5th indoor recess bins will also be cleaned? Melissa Troutman, coordinator of indoor recess volunteers, noted that the PTO is asking 3-5th grade classes to clean out their own bins in order to help them take responsibility and ownership. We are also asking students in these grade levels to put together a “Need” and a “Want” list for their indoor recess bins. Ms. Lancz agreed to email the 3-5th grade teachers with this information.
- c. Teachers are very appreciative of the teacher’s lounges that were redone over the summer, partially with PTO funds. She also noted that the coffee pods and creamers have recently run out and the teachers were wondering if the PTO would be willing to refill these supplies? The PTO will work with Cate Mettenburg and the Hospitality Committee to discuss that.

3. **District Forum Report:** Marybeth Dadd, President of District Forum, recapped their last meeting held on 11/13. Several community groups presented at this meeting, including PAGE (PA Association for Gifted Education), PALS (Parent Advocates for Learning Support, DMS (Parents Interested in Supporting Dorsevile Middle School), Fox Chapel Area Fracking Safety Awareness, Fox Chapel Parents for Safe Schools, and Start School Later, Western PA. The next meeting will be held in February. Also, O’Hara has a new District Forum representative, Carrie Solari.

4. **PALS Report:** Stacy London, PALS representative for O’Hara, recapped their recent meeting, in which Tim Mahoney, Director of Special Education for FCASD, discussed topics ranging from accessibility of nurses, transportation, sensory strategies in the classroom, etc. Their [next meeting](#) will be held on 11/28 at 9:15 am in the Market

District Atrium and Tim Mahoney will be there again, gathering input for a new community awareness initiative he is working on. Stacy encouraged families to attend meetings, review meeting minutes (normally presented narrative style with helpful links) at palsinfo.org, and become involved. Specifically, she mentioned that O'Hara will need three more PALS representative next year.

5. Principal's Update: Mrs. Batis presented on behalf of O'Hara's administration.

- a. First, she discussed student growth and achievement in a Powerpoint presentation entitled "O'Hara Elementary Data Presentation." She is pleased with O'Hara's overall PSSA performance, citing a positive collaboration between teachers, administration, students, and families as a root cause. Our ELA PSSA results show a +3.79 points since 2016. Although there were slight dips between 2017-2018 in 4th and 5th grade ELA scores, these drops were marginal and could probably be attributed to two factors: 1) Pennsylvania recently raised the bar in terms of PSSA expectations and 2) O'Hara implemented a new ELA curriculum last year. Again, Mrs. Batis reinforces that the dip was marginal and the overall trend is very positive. She also mentioned that an overall building focus has been placed on increasing PSSA math scores and our results in this area have been very encouraging. The 3rd-5th grade PSSA Math average increased 8 points since 2016, and approximately 10 points in both the 4th and 5th grades. 4th grade PSSA in science went up 1.5 since 2016.
- b. Next Mrs. Batis discussed instructional response plans--emphasizing that teachers/administration regularly review several data inputs for each child, including PSSA data (which has some flaws due to the fact that results are not available during the same school year), STAR assessments (generally approximately 20-minute long assessments taken quarterly in Reading and Math), teacher observations, and teacher feedback. When specific needs are identified, a rigorous and collaborative RTII process is initiated that includes familial involvement. If families have any concerns regarding their child's school performance--either high or low performance--they are always welcome to reach out for a meeting. Also, parents are always welcome to look through their child's quarterly STAR assessment results. Just email the teacher for a copy of the parent report.
 - i. Megan Amster noted that the school did a really good job of getting extra help for her children with math and reading very early this year.
 - ii. Stacy London also wondered if kids are looking at their own STAR assessment results again this year? Mrs. Batis noted that individual

teachers are making that choice if they think the kids are ready for those conversations.

- iii. Melissa Troutman mentioned test anxiety, especially in relation to third graders taking the PSSA's for the first time. Mrs. Batis mentioned that teachers are trained to not overemphasize the actual test, but to frame it as a tool to make the best choices for each individual student. Also Mrs. Batis mentioned that the school's guidance counselor is always available for children who seem to have a particularly hard time with test anxiety and that special accommodations can be made for those kids.

6. District Update. The FCASD new School Safety and Security Coordinator, Officer Joe Kozarian, spoke next.

- a. Officer Kozarian lives in the South Hills and is the father of five grown children. He has been with school districts for almost 17 years and is very passionate about school safety. He says, "Every decision I make is always about the kids and the staff to make sure they're safe." He also notes that the Fox Chapel School District is far ahead of many other districts in terms of school safety and definitely moving even farther in the right direction. Officer Kozarian mentioned that there is now a School Resource Officer in each school in the district. He sees these officers as serving a triad of roles: 1) being a law enforcement officer to protect kids and staff against threats, 2) being a guest speaker, who can talk to kids about bus safety, being home alone, bullying, calling 911, internet safety, etc, and 3) being a mentor for kids that need them. These officers are not involved in routine discipline with the kids, but are there to help kids feel safe, emphasizing that "if you have a safe school, grades will go up. If kids feel safe they can concentrate on their schoolwork." Officer Kozarian mentioned that each officer wears a "dress-down" police uniform (khaki pants and a polo shirt) and wears a belt with a sidearm, handcuffs, flashlight, and an extra magazine. Each school resource officer is a certified police officer, who also undergoes an additional 40-hour training to work in schools.
- b. Finally, Officer Dennis Lynch introduced himself as O'Hara's School Resource Officer. He was a school police officer at the Freeport School District for the past four years. Before that, he worked for the Penn Hills Police Department. He began volunteering in the Penn Hills School District the day after the Columbine shooting and has been involved in school safety initiatives since then. He chose to come to O'Hara because he liked the large school size "to keep me busy." He mentioned that he "will do whatever it takes to keep this building safe and to

make a bond with the kids.” He introduced himself to the kids at the beginning of the school year and is now affectionately known as Officer “Fist Bump.” He also described his typical day, noting that he’s regularly walking throughout the building and grounds, checking security cameras, and closely monitoring times when kids are outside, such as pickup, dropoff, and recess. He also spends a fair amount of time building a positive rapport with the kids, especially at lunchtime when he appreciates leftover cookie donations :).