

FHTMS PTO Meeting 1-16-09

Meeting commenced at 12:30 PM.

Attendance: T. Glesner, S. Meisenzahl, D. Bugbee, J. Beatty, S. Mekler, J. Boardman, D. Jacobs, S. Merrick, N. Daudelin, J. Hendley (reporting)

Guest speakers: D. Grippo (FHTMS Jazz Band advisor), students in Jazz Band: A. Shapiro, N. Plumeau, B. Anderson (8th grade); N. Beatty, A. Tuttle, B. Lambert, G. Cannon, and D. Mercier (6th grade). M. Larkin (SBHS prevention coordinator and SADD [Students Against Destructive Decisions] advisor); W. Bugbee, H. Slattery, K. Krupa (SBHS students in SADD).

1. Presentation: David Grippo, FHTMS Jazz Band advisor, and Jazz Band members

Mr. Grippo described how jazz offerings have expanded this year in the FHT band program: While the 7th and 8th grade jazz ensembles continue with great success, a 6th grade jazz band was added at the initiative of two 6th graders this year. Practice schedules have also expanded: 7th and 8th graders are pulled out of band practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while the 6th graders practice Wednesdays after school and “they’re already in good shape to play,” reports Mr. Grippo, who noted that the holiday jazz band concert was a huge success. “All our ensembles are flourishing...they’ve charged up the whole district with jazz,” he added. “The high school will greatly benefit from all this.” The program has also linked younger and older students: High school students are helping and mentoring; 8th graders gave the 6th graders a standing ovation (“unheard of,” noted Mr. Grippo)

Students shared their experiences with the program:

“It gives me a chance to play music I want to play ... jazz music is just cooler.”

“Jazz band is a little more serious; people there really want to play music and they’re motivated.”

“It’s fun to watch others perform and then to play with them.”

Mr. Grippo explained that with growing interest, more students are needing instruments they can’t afford, and the rental program is prohibitively expensive for some. He suggested that nominal funds could help provide instruments kids could borrow at low cost –and that the community could also help by donating their unused instruments. “We especially need trumpets, clarinets and saxophones, and the big things--tubas, bass fiddles.”

Most students in the program have taken outside lessons. Mr. Grippo recommends all students take summer music camps such as:

Latin Jazz camp with Ray Vega at FlynnCenter

Rock Camp (Burlington Parks & Recreation)

Summer Jazz camps at Elley-Long with Jack Phipps

Action steps:

PTO to brainstorm ideas for funding, possible band scholarship opportunities (perhaps with Ellis Music, the company contracted for instrument rentals). Will also get the word out to community to donate any instruments they no longer use.

Susie Merrick will look into scheduling a PTO meeting that includes a visit to observe band practice.

2. Assistant Principal's Report: Stuart Weiss

Mr. Weiss noted that Inauguration Day will be well featured at FHTMS: There will be a live feed in the cafeteria on the large screen and additional screenings on the Smart Board in the library. Literacy Specialist Lynn Currier as well as social studies teachers have been focusing on both Inauguration Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Day activities.

The School Board approved a budget Monday January 5th. The final budget is below the Superintendent's recommendation, and slightly above the base budget of what would be the consumer price index (CPI) increase, as dictated by the charter change guidelines passed in 2006.

The increase "comes to about 4.3 -4.5, percent," he noted, and the impact on FHTMS is relatively small." Highlights:

- Administrative team costs will be cut by 20 percent
- Physical Education will be cutting by 0.4; while there won't be staffing cuts, instructors will teach 6 periods rather than 5.

Other news: 8th graders will be taking the Youth Risk Behavior Survey in February.

3. Presentation: Karen Krupa, Will Bugbee, and Heather Slattery, SBHS SADD student members, and Mariah Larkin, SBHS Prevention coordinator

Ms. Krupa, Mr. Bugbee, and Ms. Slattery described how the SBHS chapter of SADD started last fall, following a car accident involving SBHS students. SADD (formerly Students Against Drunk Driving) is a national organization with the following goals:

- Young people helping other young people through positive peer pressure, role models and other strategies.
- Helping students recognize that their actions are their own responsibility, not others'.

The SBHS program efforts:

- A "Red-Ribbon" campaign just before winter break: Red ribbons were hung on every HS locker as a reminder to stay safe over the holidays.

- A Spring Prom campaign: Fifth graders from the DARE program will write postcards to every SBHS student asking them to "drive safely." These will be distributed as students leave the prom.

-White Out Day. To mark the fact that every 33 minutes someone is killed by a drunk driver, SADD member will pull a student out of class every 33 minutes, make them wear an armband and remain silent the rest of the day.

- SADD is currently working with Ms. Merrick and PACT (Parents and Adults Celebrating Teens) to have a place for kids to go to after school.

Ms. Larkin reported that the two Dialogue Nights last fall, both well attended, “really helped bring about adult-student connections on many different levels... I’m confident that there will be changes in our community, not just in our schools.” “For the first time, all ages are involved, from elementary students to seniors.”

For younger students, “the peer to peer messages are powerful,” she added, “especially when they come from peers whom the younger students respect enormously.”

Talia Glesner noted that the FHTMS VKAT (Vermont Kids Against Tobacco) program is looking for ways to motivate middle schoolers in a similar way. It sponsors “Kick Butts” day in spring, and also recently did a red-ribbon campaign. “The goal is to help kids make a good transition from middle school to high school.”

High schoolers are also involved in SLAM (student-led advisory meetings), which team high school senior peer leaders with younger students in activities designed to foster dialogue and connections. “To know a senior is pretty cool when you’re a freshman,” explained Ms. Krupa, currently a SLAM leader. “For kids it’s always better to confide in a SLAM leader than a teacher.”

Parent Julie Beatty noted that her middle schooler was “really happy to participate in Dialogue Night” and hoped that there would be opportunities for middle-schoolers to be “ambassadors” for SADD. Many parents would also like to be more involved, she added.

Susie Merrick noted, “PACT’s job is to honor and listen to teens. As a parent, I work for the teens.” Also, the administration is behind this effort all the way, so it will be sustained. Maybe PACT could include VKAT (ms kids) to speak at some events.

Action steps: Ms. Glesner and Ms. Larkin will meet with 8th grade parents on what to expect with the high school transition and brainstorm with parents on how they’d like to be involved. Ms. Merrick will look into including VKAT in PTO and PACT events.

4. Treasurer’s Report by Nan Daudelin:

Ms. Daudelin noted that the current budget reflects that Gift Wrap (\$2908) and Family Fun Night (\$617) produced slightly less revenue than was budgeted. Other highlights:

- Entertainment Books have netted \$1600 so far, approximately \$1400 under expectations.

- Staff Appreciation Day expenses came to \$145 and a compost fence cost \$481 (to be offset by a \$200 donation from Friends of Burlington Garden Club).
- Teams will soon be sending PTO their funding requests.

Group discussed other ways to get funding or support:

- Advertise in Other Paper, other community venues, for donations of instruments
- Could solicit donations to a “band instrument fund” at concerts (could also charge a small “entry fee” donation)

Action steps:

Ms. Merrick will ask Mr. Grippo to detail what the band program needs, and look into ways to get more support.

5. Other business:

- Joyce Hendley reported that the first “Family Food Night” at Nothing but Noodles was well attended; final tally is not yet available. Based on the successful turnout, the PTO will continue offering the program on “third Thursdays” through May.

- The FHTMS cookbook is progressing fairly well; about 60 more recipes are needed by January 30. A raffle will start next week to encourage more entries, especially among students.

- Ms. Merrick reported that county-wide publicity is strong for the upcoming Internet Safety Night. Patrick Burke will do the introduction, and SBHS administration is solidly behind it. “It will be a powerful night” that middle and high school parents, students, administrators and teachers should attend. The event will be taped and CDs made available at school libraries.

Meeting adjourned 2 PM.

Upcoming Events:

- 1. Tues. January 27: Internet Safety Talk, 6:30-8:30 PM, SBHS Auditorium**
- 2. Wed. Jan 28: Late Start Wednesday**
- 3. Thurs. Jan. 29: Linda Lantieri “Bulding Inner Resilience” book group, 6:30-8:30 PM, Community Library**
- 4. Thurs. Feb. 5: PACT (Parents and Adults Celebrating Teens) Meeting, 12:00-1:30 PM,. Community Library**
- 5. Fri. Feb. 6: FHTMS PTO Meeting featuring VKAT (Vermont Kids Against Tobacco) students, 12:30-1:30 PM, FHTMS Library**

