

Wellesley Middle School - Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)
Minutes from the FRIDAY, SEPT. 26, 2014 Meeting

Welcome -- Andrea Doglioli welcomed everyone to the PTO Meeting; reminded parents that if they have any questions or concerns that they should reach out to her or Catherine Mirick. She also told parents that she and Catherine had passed around a sheet and people should write down any topics they will like to have addressed at a future PTO meeting.

Speaker: Kathleen Dooley, Wellesley Public School's Director of Technology --
(To see Ms. Dooley's presentation, please click here.)

- Focus of presentation on the 1:1 Initiative and its implementation at the WMS.
- Mark Ito used the iPad at "back to school" night and demonstrated how easily it can be used.
- The District will be hosting a meeting on October 9th at 6:30pm for all 6th grade parents and students on the implementation of the 1:1 Initiative at WMS. (Students who purchased an iPad through the District will be able to pick up their iPads at this meeting.) Both parents and students should attend. However, because of space limitations, it is requested that only one parent attend the meeting with their child.
- KM reviewed the timeline (which can be found on her presentation) for the implementation. She explained that this summer, they provided professional development for staff. She further explained that the 6th grade teachers actually received their iPads last year and have received training and coaching on using the iPads in their classrooms.
- Parents of 6th grade students were also given an option of using their own iPad devices and this week those students have bringing their devices to school so that the District can prepare those devices from home for app installation.
- All 6th grade students will be using their iPads in the classroom as of October 14th.
- One of the clusters in grade 7 will also be piloting the use of iPads. This is an in-class pilot and iPads will only go home for specific projects.
- As a result of the 1:1 Initiative, mac book carts that used to be shared by the entire school will now be used exclusively for grades 7 and 8.
- Two years from now, the 1:1 Initiative will be completely rolled out and all students at the middle school will have iPads.

Question & Answer –

What is the plan for older kids who have missed the pilots and/or the 1:1 Initiative?

KD explained that the District is working on a 5 year technology plan which will address those questions. KD explained that is difficult to put together a program that can go live for all students at the same time. Unfortunately, it has been the luck of the draw if your child has been in a pilot or been part of the 1:1 Initiative. The District does believe that each student having his or her own device which is available to them at all times is better than the cart system (classes checking out devices for specified periods of time). Unfortunately, for those kids who are not part of the initiative or the pilot, the cart system is the best that the District can do at this time. The District simply does not have the capacity to roll it out all at once to all students.

She stated that she feels a particular urgency to get a 1:1 Initiative pilot at the high school. Since most kids at the high school have their own devices, the District is looking into a program where students would bring their own technology to school. However, before that can be done, the District needs to work on putting into place a learning management system into which the various devices can connect. (One parent commented that it would be helpful if the District could provide that information to parents as soon as possible so that such information could be taken into consideration by parents as they make technology purchases.) KD said that there would be some devices at the high school that kids could use (at school) if they did not have devices to bring in. While students can bring their own device to the high school, the District needs to put into place a management system to support the use of the devices at school, all educators need to have devices and there has to be support system in place for such a program.

[Maura Renzella explained that while the Dept. of Education has issued guidelines that schools go to a 1:1 Initiative, they are not funding the initiatives.]

Can parents of students not part of the 1:1 Initiative be made aware of the Apps that are being used in the program so that parents can purchase such apps for their personal family iPad?

KD stated that the information on student apps is available on the 1:1 Initiative page of the District's website.

Is there a portal where parents can check their student's grades and assignments?

PowerSchool is the District's portal. At the high school, parents can use the PowerSchool portal for grades. KD said that the District wants to give parents more information through the portal. The District is currently looking at giving parents attendance information through the portal. It is also exploring the grade piece for other schools.

Are the computers at the High School MAC or PC? The computers at the high school are primarily MAC but there is a computer lab that is PC based. KD believe that we are seeing a trend toward MACs but acknowledged that engineering and programming students prefer PCs so the District needs to use a platform that will accommodate both types of technology.

What is the cost for the all-in-loaded iPads for the 6th graders? The District charged \$459 which includes the iPad, sleeve, case and \$50 worth of apps.

What are you going to do with the 6th grade iPads as they become more obsolete? Why not move to Surface tablet which is less expensive and works better with google docs or use Chromebooks? KD said that the District re-evaluates the platform used each year and that they have to put their stake in the game somewhere. She explained that the District uses google docs as well as other things and that google docs works well with the iPads. Much of the information that is used is stored on google drives with no issue.

What have we learned from the 1:1 Initiative? KD believes that the 1:1 Initiative has improved learning. However, the District has not yet tied the use of these devices to MCAS scores or grades. Such a task is difficult and the District is still exploring how to do it.

Kathleen Dooley ended presentation with final thought that in today's world, kids have technology and they need to learn how to use it in an educational setting.

Speakers: Maura Renzella and Jean Walsh, WMS Directory Chairs, explained the directory process and how it can be customized by parents for their use.

- MR and JW explained that they are currently in the verification step of the directory which means that since we do not want people outside of Wellesley to access directory information, we need to send out a verification email to all families to verify children still at WMS.
- The verification email will provide parents with a link that they can use to put the directory on their phones. (Not an app but works similar to it).
- The verification email will include a password which you can keep or change. This password will then be used by families to access the directory.
- Prior to the verification stage, we had the confirmation stage. At that stage, we asked families to confirm the information in the directory.
- MR and JW have a list of families who did not confirm information. Please check with them and they will let you know if you still have to complete this step. This step must be done before the directory can go live.
- All of the school in the District (except for one elementary school) is using MySchoolAnywhere directory. That means the same login will work for all of the schools your children attend.
- System is very easy to use. You can search by school, student, faculty, family, etc. You can create favorites – those families/individual you contact more regularly.
- While this system does not have an app – because of security concerns – you can use a link to it from your phone and it will work much the same way as an app.
- There will be no hardcopy of the directory printed this year. Families will, however, be able to print from the online directory – class lists, grade lists, cluster lists, by homeroom/teacher, etc.
- You can also update your family information under the “My Account” section if you have changes during the academic year; doing so will your information up-to-date and accurate.
- When the confirmation emails were sent, parents did not know homeroom teachers. Since we all have that information now, please update your account and include homeroom teacher’s name so that if someone is looking up the homeroom by the teacher’s name, you child’s name will come up.

Question & Answer

What happens to families who do not have technology? MR and JW explained those families can simply reach out to them and they will print a copy of the directory for them.

When will the verification email go out? It has not yet gone out but we hope to do it soon. Hopefully in early October. (Please click here so that you can see a copy of the verification email).

Can you explain the opt-out option as it caused confusion? Opt-out option was presented by the District not the PTO. We understand that it caused some confusion and some people did not understand that they were opting out of the directory. MR clarified that the District’s directory and the PTO’s directory are separate and distinct and that the PTO does not share the information with anyone.

Speaker: Stacy Braatz, Wellesley Education Foundation

WEF is a nonprofit that supports, enhances and promotes innovation in the public schools. WEF provided \$125,000 in grants district wide last year plus an additional \$42,000 to support the 1:1 Initiative. The grants cover all areas from technology to professional development. WEF is getting ready for its annual Spelling Bee which will be held on Thursday, November 6th. This is the 25th year for the bee. WEF hopes the community will support it by sponsoring a team or making a donation. Look for more information on WEF's website, Facebook page or twitter (@wellesleybee). The registration deadline for the Bee is October 24th and the cost is \$500 per team. Mr. Ito is exploring having WMS student team at this year's Bee. [Jen Maiona clarified that the WMS PTO is sponsoring two teams].

Speaker: Jen Maiona, (PTO Treasurer)

JM presented the budget and explained that if the PTO takes in \$60,000 in PTO contributions (a goal that we are close to but have not yet achieved so we encourage all families that have not yet contributed to do so) we expect to operate in the black. In response to a question, JM explained that to date the PTO has taken in \$53,000 in PTO contributions. Question was asked about the cafeteria tables and JM explained that the cafeteria tables were paid for in the current fiscal year from cash reserves but the cost of those tables is not being supported by this year's PTO contributions. Cash reserves are currently \$39,000.

Vote taken and budget approved.

Announcements: Andrea Doglioli made a few announcements –

- Update information on directory.
- Look for information about upcoming events on the PTO website
- Please email PTO Presidents or Vice Presidents with any questions or concerns questions.

Upcoming Events –

- Saturday, 9/27 Teen Center Dance 7-9pm
- Monday, 9/29 Activities Fair, 2:30 pm WMS Cafeteria
- Wednesday, 10/1 Early Release Day
- Thursday, 10/2 Parents' Discussion Group 8:50 -9:40
- Thursday 10/9 6th Grade Parent/Student iPad Orientation 6:30pm, WMS Auditorium
- Monday, 10/13 No School – Columbus Day
- Thursday, 10/16 Grade 8 Class Photo
- Friday, 10/17 PTO meeting w/Mark Ito 8:45am
- Friday, 10/24 Halloween Dance 7pm – 9 pm
- Wednesday, 11/3 Katie Greer parent presentation, 7pm, WMS auditorium

Minutes submitted by Connie Burton