

PLEASE NOTE:
THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE MEETING.
OFFICIAL MINUTES WILL BE POSTED ONCE APPROVED
BY THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP AT THE NEXT MEETING.

MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PTSA
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
SEPTEMBER 19, 2007

The meeting was called to order by President Andrea Shosfy at 9:10 a.m. She welcomed everyone and thanked parents for attending the Open House and Resource Fair last night.

Principal's Report: Mr. Weiner was happy to report that the Open House was a big success. He does not have a final count on the number of parents who attended but noted we did run out of parking spaces. He hopes parents enjoyed the kids' statements about the new Electronic Device policy. It was recorded the first week of school when the kids were really upset with him about the policy. Our kids are resilient, however, and understand why we made a move in this direction. The first week of school, an average of 25 devices per day were confiscated. That number is down to about 8 per day now. Ninety-nine percent of the parents that have come in to get the phones back appreciate the policy. So far, the policy seems to be working out and will benefit instruction in the long run.

The first phase of the construction is just about completed. There is talk once again of redoing the football field and installing a state of the art track. Some preliminary drawings have been made and are being reviewed. A parent inquired as to whether or not there were any plans to move the trailers on the field. Mr. Weiner explained that the one near 118th Street is the staging area for the construction crew and must stay. Other containers hold supplies, custodial materials, athletic equipment, etc. We need to keep them because we do not have anymore storage space available within the school. A lot of the original storage spaces in the building are now used as small classrooms, especially over the last 10 to 15 years. He knows the trailers are unsightly and is open to any suggestions as to making them not an eyesore.

Our average class size is at 24.82, beneath the 25 student requirement. In response to a question, Mr. Weiner said that the largest number of students in any one class might be in the low to mid-30s range. This is the last year we are being required to use an average. Next year, the numbers must be exact. His concern is that there are certain things that cannot be controlled, i.e. the number of kids and the number of classrooms available. We can get teachers from the District to reduce the class size, but we cannot get more classrooms. The numbers will change next year and it will be a challenge.

He wanted everyone to know that the machine at the main entrance by the security desk is now working. Some air conditioning work was being done in the ceiling and an electrical line was cut. It took 2 weeks to find the cut. A temporary line was run last night. He is in negotiations with the contractor and it is a "he said, she said" situation. The machine needs to be connected to an internet line because it is a web based program. A parent suggested ID tags in the interim and that every visitor be signed in. Mr. Weiner agreed and said he'd make sure it will happen.

Mr. Weiner explained the new attendance policy which is hard to understand. In an annual course, only 10 unexcused absences are allowed before a child risks final grades being withheld. Schools have been taken out of the loop in withholding credits. The Superintendent's philosophy is that an absence is an absence. You now have 72 hours, rather than 48 hours to bring in a written excuse. Students are allowed 5 unexcused absences per semester. Once 10 unexcused absences have been accumulated, the District computer is programmed to withhold credit. Traditionally, at the end of the year, attendance committee meetings were held where parents could justify, through documentation, the absences. Letters were sent out in May to notify parents to present documentation. Now, attendance review committee meetings are held every 30 days. AP Robert O'Connor will be in touch with parents if a child is getting close to the program limit. The school can go in and override the withhold of credit. Schools are being forced to have attendance review committee meetings every 30 days. He feels it is a good idea.

A parent questioned why there can be conflicting information about absences on report cards (number and amount of excused and unexcused absences). All absences are unexcused until the student returns with a note to the Attendance Office. If a student is issued an admit, they must show the admit to teachers and the teachers must enter it correctly in the system. Problems occur when kids forget to show the admit to all their teachers or the teachers do not correct the attendance record. To correct attendance errors, go to the Attendance Office and get a corrective paper from them to show to the teacher. If this doesn't resolve the issue, send him an email, and he will sort it out.

If pre-approved by the administration, a school field trip or educational excursion will go in as a special note not an absence. Many students attending this school are involved in extracurricular activities out of the state or county (for example, youth leadership groups through religious organizations). Spread the word that if documentation is presented to him or AP O'Connor for prior approval and the outing is in fact approved, it will not count as an absence. If a senior is looking at a college and is trying to plan a weekend visit come and say, "I am going up to Gainesville and won't be here on Friday." Then, bring him back something (a flyer, brochure, etc.) to show that he went to that place. They will provide an excused absence as an educationally valuable excuse for the student.

Program on School Services:

Bonnie Hannemann, Chairperson, Student Service Department:

The Student Services Department manages personal, social, and educational issues that students confront. Counselors are here to help students develop skills that will help them be successful in life. Ninth grade students all have a single counselor, Ms. Dorothy Kennerly, because it is required by downtown. Through the social studies department, Ms. Kennerly does presentations on study skills, time management, and conflict resolution. Presentations are made throughout the year, at least one time each 9 weeks. After 9th grade, counselors are assigned alphabetically. Students have the same counselor for the next 3 years. At the end of 9th or 10th grade, it is advisable to have the student sit down with their counselor and work out an academic plan to steer them in the direction they want to go. They need to select classes to get the academic credentials to go to the college they want. Counselors do more than just change schedules. The department has already faced some major issues (severe problems at home, cutting, etc.). On occasion, you may have a scheduled appointment with your child's counselor canceled due to an emergency situation. Students in crisis will always come first. We appreciate your understanding in this regard. Parents need to get to know your child's counselor one-on-one as well.

Sally Coords, College Assistance Program: Ms. Coords is here today as our school's CAP representative and on behalf of Wendy Christopher, Career Specialist, who had to supervise a field trip. The main job of the CAP advisor is to help your child do everything they can do to get in to the right place. We try to guide them through and ease the stress. Every 6 weeks, CAP advisors are retrained and kept up to date on admission requirements in colleges. This is one of the free programs in the country because things change so quickly. We help them find a good match, seek financial aid, write essays, or anything to do with the college process. They visit the junior and senior classrooms in the English classes. We give them a very comprehensive college guide book. They also visit 9th grade classes and inform students of what they do and what resources are available throughout their high school years. She recommends you go to YourClassPage.com through the school's website and look under "Coords" to access the college information and scholarship pages.

Mmes. Coords and Christopher coordinate colleges coming to the school, provide new information on college admissions, and advise about colleges coming to the Miami area. The scholarship page is updated weekly as to what is available and many include an application online or a link to the form. Last year, \$8,000,000 in scholarships were offered. This year, the students need to be aggressive and check them out. The scholarship nomination process is handled through CAP. Colleges are listed on the webpage (MIT, Yale, Princeton, etc.). Students are urged to go to these presentations and hear what the colleges want. College information is

presented to the kids during expanded lunchtime presentations, the College Fair, Junior Night, Senior Night, the Junior College Assembly, Bright Futures and financial aid presentations.

Ms. Coords stated that Wendy Christopher has been at Palmetto 9 years. Her job is to educate the students about careers and choices for their future occupation. She helps in the preparation of resumes, career portfolios, and job fairs. She works closely with Student Services and dropout prevention programs, is a community liaison, Dade Partner liaison, and manages vocational careers. Finally, she conducts exit interviews for all seniors upon graduation and sets up educational programs for 11th and 12th graders during FCAT testing (for 9th and 10th graders).

Robin Tassler, TRUST Specialist: Ms. Tassler has been a trust counselor since the 1980s and has been at our school for 4 years. She works with all students. She is not an academic counselor, but handles problems students face with their family, alcohol or drug abuse, grief counseling, relationship issues, etc. She takes a 3-prong approach, working with individual students, families, and support groups. She coordinates Red Ribbon Week activities (with guest speakers), peer mediation and training, and student based conflict resolution to help try and resolve conflicts without fighting. She is the sponsor for SADD and their prevention activities. Lastly, she develops workshops for parents on teen issues, health classes, and helping kids feel included.

Referrals are usually made to her by the guidance department, self-referral, or referral through a friend or teacher. It is a confidential process, including the families involved. Life-threatening situations, however, must be reported. HRS must be called if suicidal or homicidal behavior is presented or in a crisis situation, involving drugs or alcohol. She tries to gain the child's trust first, but ideally wants their family involved. Ms. Tassler was asked about the school's involvement in the Listener's Program. Ms. Hannemann advised that Ms. Wendy Christopher is in charge of it, but the school hasn't had a lot of luck with the program because parents are hesitant to sign off on allowing their child to go with another parent to talk.

Susie Overholt, School Nurse: Ms. Overholt is employed by Jackson South Community Hospital but her services are donated by Jackson to our school. She has been here 11 years and her job is to help your children during the day with medical emergencies. Unfortunately, too many kids get hurt over the weekend and come to see her Monday morning for her opinion, stating "I just wanted to see if you think I should go home." She is not allowed to administer any medications unless they are preauthorized by a physician.

When you fill out and sign the emergency contact card at the beginning of the school year, many times that card doesn't get to anyone but the Attendance Office. If your child has a serious medical condition, please let her or their guidance counselor know. She wants to be informed of a medical condition beforehand. She has an authorization form that must be filled out and signed by a doctor if the child regularly takes medication. There are only 2 things that a student can keep in their possession, an epi-pen and an asthma inhaler, but they still need to have the proper forms on file in the clinic.

In response to a parent inquiry, Ms. Overholt said sexual relationships are discussed in health classes. Kids do ask her questions, but she does not substitute her judgment for a parent's judgment. She wants kids to get accurate information and always encourages them to talk to their parents. School nurses are not allowed to give out any over-the-counter medications, including condoms.

Student Report: There was no student council report today.

PTSA Website: Mark Smith is the sole founder, CEO, president, secretary, janitor, etc., of Cruz Web Design (www.cruzwebdesign.com). It is a one-man shop designing websites for small and medium sized businesses. He got involved with our school through the baseball team and has set up the sites for the baseball and football teams, the PTSA (www.palmettoptsa.org), and now, the school. He hopes to have the website for the school up and running in the next couple of weeks. The address will remain the same: <http://mpsh.dadeschools.net>. Links from that site to the PTSA website are planned, but need approval.

Treasurer's Report: Isabel McBrayer briefly reviewed the budget through September 12th. It was noted that the Book Sale Income is much higher as of this date. If you have any questions, contact her.

Board/Committee Reports:

Book Sale: Becky Herget stated that the Book Sale is ongoing and parents can purchase their child's books in Room 307 after the meeting. Students are also sent down from their classrooms to purchase books during the school day. Books are sold at cover price which allows the PTSA to achieve a profit of 20%-25% per book. There are links on the PTSA web site to find out what books are required. The sale ends Friday.

Membership/Business: Becky Herget said that our membership goal to have the largest PTSA in the State is on target. Students can join even if their parents do not. One dollar of every \$6 student membership is donated to their senior class activities fund. Mercedes Sorensen stated we currently have 900 members, although student membership has not increased over last year's number. A video directed to the students to increase membership will be shown to them soon. A lot of membership forms were handed out at last night's Resource Fair and in classrooms during Open House. Membership is open to anyone in the community, i.e. grandparents, uncles, businesses, etc. They would like to establish a committee to solicit community business membership. If you are interested in helping, contact Ms. Sorensen.

Donations/Special Projects: We are planning to form a "Special Programs Committee" to create a procedure where teachers or departments can approach the PTSA with a proposal of what they need money for after receiving approval from Mr. Weiner and their department head. If EESAC can pay for it, fine. If not, then the PTSA will consider doing it. Plus, we want to let every teacher know they have this potential source of funding. Randy Trazenfeld volunteered to be a committee member. The committee will be chaired by Becky Herget.

We have approximately 180 teachers and 107 have joined PTSA to date. One of the planned questions on the funds application form, will be "Are you a PTSA member?" Karen Kett, Special Projects co-chair, reminded members that any donation, large or small, is accepted. Once we see how much we have by January, we want to spend it to benefit the students and faculty. The "thank you" cards being sent out acknowledging donations include a statement that it is tax deductible. Treasurer McBrayer advised we have over \$1,000 in staff appreciation donations and \$8,000 in general donations. For those that do not know, vending machine revenues were used to support teacher appreciation events and various sports programs. Now that more healthy snacks are being offered, vending machine revenues are down. We expect the school to ask us for help in making up the difference.

Legislative/Convention: Cheri Ball and Andrea Shosfy attended the PTSA training on September 9th at Howard Drive Elementary sponsored by School Board Member Evelyn Greer. Ms. Ball advised a more extensive training will be held at Coral Gables Senior High School on September 29th with comprehensive workshops. Registration starts at 8:15 a.m. and the programs begin at 8:50 a.m. Contact Ms. Shosfy for more information or to register. The Florida PTSA convention is another opportunity to learn and contribute your knowledge to our group. It is being held at the Hilton Hotel in Daytona Beach from November 3rd through 5th. We have money set aside in the PTSA budget to pay for the conference. Talk to Ms. Shosfy, Ms. Ball, or Jennifer Wollmann if you are interested in going.

We want members to understand that the PTSA focus is not just on education, but on the whole child. Pending Legislative issues, such as the extension of Kidcare (a program providing health care to uninsured children), have an effect on students. If kids aren't healthy, they are not learning. Check in with your senator, representative, school board member, or village council member on important issues effecting education, i.e. class size, reliever high school being built, etc. A vote is coming in January on the proposed property tax amendment. The Florida PTSA and the Dade County PTSA Council have taken a position opposing the amendment. We want to share information on this issue that could affect educational programs in our school. Please stay

informed and monitor it so that, if the vote does take place, you are prepared to make an informed decision.

Legislative co-chair, Jennifer Wollmann, told us that the Florida Legislature may go into special session on October 3rd to decide how to cut 1.7 billion dollars from the State's 71 billion dollar budget. The Senate backed off of a 4% across the board cut in funding for K through 12 education. The House wouldn't accept any cuts in education funding. She recommends keeping your eye on it.

E-Mail Distribution: Lynne Schaefer is busy with the Book Sale this morning, but she also handles E-Mail Communications for the PTSA. If you have not been receiving notices from us, check your spam folder and be sure to add phsptsa@bellsouth.net to your address book. If you still experience trouble, let Andrea Shosfy know.

EESAC: Nancy Harter reported that the EESAC committee met yesterday. Anyone can attend the meetings which are held the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 2:45 p.m. The committee approved \$3,000 for the library (representing one-half of the requested accelerated reader program funds). Mr. Weiner will pay the balance. In addition, \$1,500 was approved for professional development (AP and pre-AP teacher training). Finally, \$1,000 was approved to allow the Math Department to purchase the "Dynamath" subscription. It is a monthly Scholastic publication promoting Algebra. EESAC has allocated \$5,500 of the \$38,000 in its budget.

Old Business:

SAT Testing: Claudia Glasson let us know that Kaplan Test Prep is offering practice SAT testing on December 8th in the Media Center. It is mainly for juniors, but sophomores are welcome. It is especially helpful if your child is not going to take the PSAT. The test results go to no one except you and your child. Scores are usually back in 1 to 2 weeks along with the test booklet (so you can see where your child is having trouble). The actual SAT is administered in January and June. Email her at Glasson@bells.net to register. By the end of the week, the information should be on the PTSA website. The exam starts at 7:30 a.m. and ends around 12:15 p.m., including a break. Kids need to bring a calculator and two No. 2 pencils. The fee will be \$5.

If your child is a sophomore, she highly recommends they go to the College Fair set for October 9th in the gym starting at 7 p.m. The student can talk to an actual person from the college and get an idea of the GPA needed to apply, required SAT scores, etc. It is getting harder to get into colleges, in part, due to budget cuts.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the August 22, 2007, General Membership Meeting were presented. A motion was made by Nancy Harter to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Norma Miller and approved without corrections.

Announcements: Ellen Genet advised that the Drama Club production of "The Diary of Anne Frank" will be at 7 p.m. on September 27th and 28th in the auditorium. To raise money, the Drama Department is selling discount cards at a cost of \$10. The cards afford you a 10% discount at many local businesses. Also, a Garage Sale is planned for November 10th. If you have items to donate, contact her to arrange a pick up (Efg929@aol.com). Media Center personnel ask that if you volunteered to be a judge for the t-shirt contest for "Teen Reading Week," please stay an extra 30 minutes after this meeting.

Progress Reports will be issued on September 20th and the College Fair is set for October 9th beginning at 7 p.m. in the gym. The Panther Prowl is scheduled for October 10th, the Homecoming Game for October 11th, and the Homecoming Dance for October 12th. Our next general meeting is October 17th at 9:00 a.m. in the Media Center featuring guest speaker, District 9 School Board Member, Evelyn Greer.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Roxy Lancellata, Recording Secretary

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