

Newburyport PTO General Meeting Minutes

Held virtually via Zoom

11/17/2020

7:00pm

Board Members Present: Andrea Eigerman, President; Trish Boateng, Vice President; Pam San Antonio, Treasurer; Shannon Cormier, Assistant Treasurer; Christine Cioffi, Secretary; Joanna Fernandes, Cultural Enrichment Co-Chair; Katie Suchecki, Nock VP; Adriana Kosten, Molin VP; Amy LeBlanc, Pre-K/K VP

Special Guests: Jay Murphy, Nock and Molin Teacher; Heather Bell, Dietician and Life Coach; and Melissa O'Brien, Fitness Instructor and Massage Therapist

Meeting called to order at 7:00pm by Andrea Eigerman, President.

I. Welcome and Introductions (Andrea)

Andrea opened the meeting and welcomed the PTO and guests. She explained that this General Meeting will focus on wellness and the importance of staying healthy in order to support our children.

Andrea also requested suggestions for future meeting topics of interest to the school community. In addition, she mentioned the PTO's effort to recruit more teachers.

II. Special Topic: Wellness/Fitness/Nutrition

- A. Jay Murphy, Nock and Molin Teacher – Jay introduced himself and referred the group to his PowerPoint presentation. He then explained the workshop he held with the sixth, seventh, and eighth graders on self-care, which they appreciated and needed. He shared some of the students' responses by grade on the topic of what they define as self-care:
- a. Sixth Grade – playing sports, eating well, and spending time with friends, family, and pets
 - b. Seventh Grade – pampering yourself, getting off screens, warm showers, and the meditation app: *Calm*
 - c. Eighth Grade – skin care, punching a bag when playing video games, and getting outside

Jay recommended simple things to parents like checking-in to talk with their children, encouraging them, asking about their feelings, showing them love, and helping them when needed.

He then discussed "The Four Agreements" by Don Miguel Ruiz. These are agreements everyone can make daily with themselves.

1. Speak your truth – understand we are responsible for our words
2. Don't make assumptions – ask questions and practice clear communication

3. Don't take things personally – people's opinions can hurt; can distract you from the absolute truth
4. Do your best – it is mind-set; having a positive/optimistic attitude

He summarized by stating that how we look at things is very important. Remember your point of view.

- B. Heather Bell, Dietician and Life Coach – Heather introduced herself and spoke about reengaging with possibility. She noted the low-energy level and disconnect people are feeling. Stressors come with quarantine life. She turned the group's attention to her presentation and introduced the Hexaflex, the key model of the acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) Framework. This Framework is used to increase psychological flexibility. The brain is built for creativity and activity. The farther it gets from creativity and usefulness, the less energy a person has, which creates a downward spiral. This often leads to feelings of guilt about what is not getting done, and then even more is avoided.

Heather summarized by recommending being present and focusing on the here and now, shifting from impossibility to possibility, taking a little bit of space and thinking about what it would look like and feel like, and then experimenting with what it could look like.

- C. Melissa O'Brien, Fitness Instructor, Massage Therapist – Melissa introduced herself and explained that her focus is on self-care and physical activity – bodies functioning properly. This should not be considered a luxury. Melissa recommended: talking a walk, getting enough vitamin D, sleep and the importance of a healthy sleep pattern, a warm bath in Epsom Salts to remove toxins, Yoga, foam rolling, five stretches before bed, and setting boundaries. She stated that we need to remind ourselves that it is okay to say no and to take time for ourselves. Physical activity is self-care. Exercise increases endorphins. Meditation apps such as *Headspace* are useful.

For those working from home, she suggested setting boundaries by lighting a candle on your desk during work hours. The candle is then blown out when the work day is over. This is a signal to others in your household as well as to yourself.

She then introduced the concept of "Feel better in Five". This process starts, for example with doing five jumping jacks a day, then increasing it by one each day. This should be incorporated into your daily activities. Take more trips up and down the stairs. Lack of exercise is the primary cause of chronic disease, muscle loss, and loss of bone density. It is important to skin care, brain function, and the flow of oxygen to the brain. Increasing the metabolic rate helps to lose weight. Start by exercising one to two times a week. Choose something you like to do. Be sure to schedule it in your calendar like an appointment in order to not miss it.

III. PTO Business (Andrea)

Andrea turned the meeting over to Pam San Antonio, Treasurer to report on the Financials.

- A. Treasurer's Report (Pam) – The expenses are running higher than fundraising, which is to be expected. Pam indicated that the PTO is focusing on supporting the schools, snacks at the nurse's stations, mask donations, and teacher appreciation. The PTO is looking for ways we can be supportive to the schools. Some of last year's budget was reserved for this year knowing it would not be an ideal fundraising year.

- B. Resources – Resources to the school community are listed on the new PTO website. Also, the ECAB Network has mental health experts, which is also linked on the website.

The next meeting will be held virtually at a date to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.