

Marshall Road Elementary



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Marshall Road Elementary PTA Minutes  
April 4, 2018 @ 7pm  
MRES Library

Attendees: Anna Moore (President), Andrea Kramer (Vice President), Amanda DuFrayne (Vice President), Laura Parker (Treasurer), Helen Lee (Secretary), Sue Kirby, Yesenia Argueta, Cait Thrasher, Anne Doggett, Lisa Hoffman, Diane Cooper-Gould

- I. Call Meeting to Order – Anna Moore called the meeting to order at 7:08pm.
- II. President's Report
  - A. Nominating Committee: Anna asked that program chairs respond by April 13 so we can plan PTA positions for the 2018-2019 school year. Anna announced that the three nominees for the nominating committee are Andrea Kramer, Lisa Hoffman, and Mona Kamel. Andrea Kramer moves to have nominating committee approved with the three nominees stated; Amanda DuFrayne seconded the motion. Motion passed.
- III. March Meeting Minutes – Helen made a motion to approve the March 2018 meeting minutes and there were no objections.
- IV. Treasurer's Report – Laura presented the latest budget. She noted that we are on target, that spirit wear campaigns have done really well this year, and that Read Across America will be closed out soon (we used most of the Read Across America budget on the author speaker this year). The budget will be posted by the end of the week on our website.
- V. Nominating Committee – Slate of Candidates

Andrea Kramer reported that the nominating committee has been looking for PTA members for the 2018-19 academic year. The committee needs to post a slate of candidates thirty days in advance of voting, so although the slate is not complete, the committee presented the current slate at this meeting. The nominating committee nominated Anna Moore as President, Laura Parker as Treasurer, and Helen Lee as Secretary. Anna Moore reminded everyone that you can nominate someone else or yourself and that teachers may serve as Board members too!
- VI. Program Reports
  - A. School Play: *Lion King Jr.* was a huge commitment for everyone involved beginning as early as January. Thanks to everyone for their flexibility in rescheduling the first evening performance due to the late March snow. Thanks to the talented and dedicated cast and a special thanks to Urvi Desai, our parent liaison that oversaw all registration, communications, and issue resolution! Thank you to directors Ms. Yazzy and Ms. Kraus and other volunteer teachers. Please note that we will need a school play program chair next year.

- B. Autism Awareness Day - Cait Thrasher reminded the attendees that today was Autism Awareness Day at MRES. She noted that the “Everyone is different” message seemed to resonate well with the kids today. The Autism Speaks fundraiser did very well, as we have almost sold out of all the bracelets (nearly twice the amount as last year). What’s left of the bracelets is in the front office for purchase at \$1 each!
  - C. Scholastic Book Fair (Olga Hernandez / Denise Gargano): Anna reported that the Spring Book Fair will be held in two weeks from Wednesday, 4/18 through Friday, 4/20 (845am-445pm daily); the last evening will overlap with Spring Family Fun Night. The Spring Book Fair is Buy One Get One Book Free and there will also be a raffle! A Signup Genius went out in April for volunteer opportunities (the biggest need is for cashiers - 18 and older only). We are getting a new cash register so there will be a training session for cashier volunteers on Tuesday, 4/17 at 9am.
  - D. Spring Family Fun Night (Amanda DuFrayne): Amanda shared that Spring Family Fun Night will be a dance party. We have contracted out for DJ Danny, a Physical Education teacher. The dance will only play fast music! We are still looking for volunteers, so please check out the April Signup Genius (or eNews or the PTA website). Volunteers are needed for setup and takedown, photo booth supervision, pre-event DIY decorating, etc.
  - E. Teacher Appreciation Week: Anna Moore noted that Teacher Appreciation Week will be the first full week of May, 5/7 through 5/11. The week will have an overarching Hollywood/Oscars Red Carpet theme, and there will be a “Dress for the Red Carpet Day” to kick-off the week. More details to come!
  - F. Summer Camps (Andrea Kramer) - Registrations are open! There will be two weeks of Art Camp based on grade level that are limited to twenty students each; there will also be a Sports Camp that is for all ages that can accommodate up to fifty students. Registration closes mid-May but may fill up before then.
- VII. Principal's Report – MRES Assistant Principal Sue Kirby provided the report on Principal Heiges's behalf. She thanked the PTA for making the school a great place to be and for making the school play such a success. She also thanked Cait Thrasher and all the volunteers on a great Autism Awareness Day. She reported that Emily Burke has been recognized as an outstanding new teacher for Region 1 (the Outstanding Teacher Award in Fairfax County is like a Teacher of the Year award). Emily is a first year teacher in one of the enhanced autism classes. Congratulations Emily!
- VIII. Panel on Supporting Special Needs Children (Cait Thrasher, MRES PTA Special Needs Liaison; Sue Kirby, MRES Assistant Principal; and Diane Cooper-Gould, Fairfax County SEPTA President)

Ms. Thrasher opened up the panel. She informed the attendees that both her kids are in MRES and are autistic. She introduced the five boards that she prepared for Autism Awareness Day and she went over what she discussed with the students earlier in the day:

- (1) Brain Development Board: the message is that everyone's brain is different

and that we are all good and bad at various things

(2) Cartoon Board: suggests looking at the spectrum not as linear but as a circle, so there are no labels such as high-functioning or low-functioning

(3) Collection of Symptoms Board: likens autism to a collection of symptoms with many different causes, like an allergy; also includes a list of great and influential people who also happen to be autistic (e.g., Albert Einstein)

(4) Sensory Overload and Stim Board: includes a sensory dashboard with various sensitivity levels; discusses stimming and behaviors that may look weird or different but likens them to things that people use to calm themselves or feel better (like shaking one's leg or biting one's nails)

(5) Things You Can Do to be a Good Friend to Your Autistic Friends Board

Ms. Thrasher mentioned that "Amazing Things Happen" (<https://youtu.be/7JdCY-cdgkl>) is a quick video that is a great place to start learning about autism and that Sesame Street shorts with Julia (the new muppet character with autism) are also a good conversation starter with your kids.

Ms. Kirby was the next panelist to speak. She noted that the information on the boards is accessible yet very deep. Also, if you do have more questions, FCPS has resources at the Parent Resource Center, including ongoing regularly scheduled workshops for people including siblings of those with autism, thousands of books, and liaisons there to help you find what you need. You can Google "Fairfax County Parent Resource Center" to reach their website.

Ms. Cooper-Gould was the third and final panelist to speak. She introduced the Fairfax County Special Education PTA (SEPTA) and informed the attendees that anyone is welcome to join (annual dues are \$6-7). Their website is [www.fairfaxcountysept.org](http://www.fairfaxcountysept.org) and they have a Facebook page as well as a group that you can join to find out what's going on in the community. SEPTA awards grants to SEPTA members for anything that can improve the lives of autistic kids or help them be more included in the school, including after school activities. SEPTA most recently awarded FCPS's Parent Resource Center a grant for their sibling workshops which will start this spring. SEPTA is also currently accepting nominations for awards. There are lots of categories - not just teacher/administrator, but also bus driver, librarian, etc. Award recipients don't have to be SEPTA members to be nominated. SEPTA is looking for new leadership for the upcoming school year. One goal for this year is to improve the website and to make information more inter-connected (e.g., cross-referencing resources).

Ms. Cooper-Gould further informed attendees of the advocacy work SEPTA does for kids with special needs and for their inclusion in the community. She noted that special education vacancies were the highest in the state as of last year and that, as such, SEPTA is advocating for higher pay for staff.

Andrea Kramer asked if there was a sense on whether, among the special needs population, more of these students have developmental needs or physical needs. Ms. Kirby responded that we see a mix of both and that no matter what the need, the goal is to make sure the student can access the curriculum. Ms. Cooper-Gould noted that developmental disabilities, particularly autism, are on the rise.

Helen Lee asked how autism was typically diagnosed. Ms. Thrasher noted that general pediatricians often do not catch autism. She informed attendees that Fairfax County has an early intervention program that will provide services

(called Infant and Toddler Connection) even without a diagnosis; NIH is another good resource where you can take part in a bunch of different studies for evaluation and intervention.

Amanda DuFrayne asked what the PTA can do to help with the special needs population at MRES. Ms. Cooper-Gould made several suggestions: sensory overload is a big thing, so having an alternate location with low lights and a quiet space as a break room; a detailed schedule of events because some kids may not be able to handle the entire event; thinking about specific events and what kids may need for that specific event (e.g., having lower basketball hoops for kids in wheelchairs).

- IX. New Business – no new business discussed
- X. Meeting Adjourned by Anna at 8:09pm.
- XI. Next PTA Meeting with Volunteer Recognition is on May 16, 2018 @ 7pm.

Parents and Teachers Please...

- JOIN the PTA! <http://marshallroadpta.org/join>
- DONATE to Friends of Marshall Road! <http://marshallroadpta.org/direct-donations>
- SIGN UP for ENews! <http://marshallroadpta.org/news/subscribe-to-enevs/>
- LIKE us on Facebook: MRES PTA

PTA Board Contacts

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