

# Liberty PTA – General Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 – 3:00PM

1. Call to Order at 3:00PM
2. Presentation on Autism Inclusiveness at Liberty Elementary by Vice Principal Becky Pierce and Dean Stephanie Worthley

April is Autism Awareness Month and today, April 2, is World Autism Day. In 2018, the CDC determined that approximately 1 in 59 children is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Boys are four times more likely than girls to be diagnosed.

Today we wanted to make sure all students were aware of what autism is, what it might look like, and how to include everyone in their class. Everyone was invited to wear blue today to show support for autism awareness. Two 5<sup>th</sup> graders from Ms. Peckham's class went on the "Mo Show" and gave kid-friendly basic facts on autism. They shared how children with autism learn differently and how some things may be different from them. Teachers were given starters for morning meetings. They chose to speak to their children about inclusiveness. It was about how to make kids feel comfortable welcoming everybody to do whatever it is we are doing.

Ideas for how to teach your children to be inclusive of others:

- Model inclusiveness and empathy. When my kids were little, we would volunteer at food pantries and help kids who were struggling. The kids would be embarrassed and hide, but they grew up a lot more empathetic. Just being aware every day; the little things we do the kids are watching.
- Supporting individuality and strengths; teach everyone that everyone has a strength. It could be a sport or music or being a kind friend. The boys will say that things "annoy" them but I'll say stop and think of one positive thing about them.
- Encourage your child to reach out to others. If there is a student in the lunch room sitting by themselves, ask to meet at the park. That may make all the difference to that one kid.
- Describe some characteristics of those with autism and the challenges that may present. Let them know that they may talk louder or may not like loud noises or may need to sit in a certain spot every day. It's okay to accept that and remind them that each of us is unique.

The School Board Proclamation is displayed on our trophy case. The LCPS school board put forth a proclamation about autism. They talked about 1 in 15 children has autism. On April 6, LCPS will host the Autism Community Day. On that day it'll be a county-wide event. It'll be a ConnectED with a sensory room, learn about the spectrum, etc. The county feels strongly about bringing awareness to our community members and making sure parents have all the resources they need to help parents of children with autism and help other families understand.

Helpful resources: We talk about having read-alouds. We have some books that aren't specifically related to autism but it's about how each of us is a little different but that's what makes us, us. Ian's Walk by

Laurie Leears is specifically related to autism. Other books include Since We're Friends by Celeste Shally, Some Monsters are Different by David Milgrim, and Susan Laughs by Jeanne Willis. Some helpful links include Autism Speaks – [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org), The Autism Society – [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org), and Disability Scoop – [www.disabilityscoop.com](http://www.disabilityscoop.com).

If you have questions, you can contact either of us. Becky: [rebecca.pierce@lcps.org](mailto:rebecca.pierce@lcps.org); Stephanie: [stephanie.worthley@lcps.org](mailto:stephanie.worthley@lcps.org)

3. Principal's Comments – *Alex Gray* – The only thing I had was a short survey for everyone to fill out really quickly about our summer device refresh, which includes 1:1 devices for all 3-5 students. What we want to do is get ahead of any questions that parents may have about rolling out these devices. I can answer some of these today but we want to capture the greater picture. If you have a device: [yellkey.com/make](http://yellkey.com/make) – here is where you can offer input. Each student will be assigned a Chromebook and it will come out with cable. Make sure it's plugged in and charged every day back to school. Hopefully this will start in the first week of the next school year. There are a lot more details: what happens if a student forgets a device, etc. that will be run through Ms. McNeive. We will compile those thoughts and questions. We'll have info coming out before this school year ends and again at Back to School Night about what this means for kids and what we will do in our plan going forward.

*Poonam Upadhyaya* – Children's data is protected by law unless parents sign a waiver. How will kids' data be protected here? How long will the data be saved (in the age of Internet)? Otherwise anyone can sue. We also request waivers for photos, technology, etc. How about location services?

*Alex Gray* – This will be protected under our LCPS domain. This is a very important answer to it. It's in the Acceptable Use Policy that all parents sign. All those kinks have been worked out. It's all about how devices are reused, etc. Be sure to put this question in the yellkey survey. Device lifespan is typically 5 years. There is a plan for proper disposal.

*Smitha* – You need to have an LCPS account to log into it.

*Jen* – Most of what they have access to on the Chromebook is already what they have access to at the school. It's locked down; you can't get through many sites. Chromebooks don't have much of a hard drive.

*Grace Bell* – I have a son going into 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Will he have the same one through 5<sup>th</sup> grade?

*Alex* – Yes. This yellkey form is open so put any inputs you have in there.

4. President's Report – *Jen Robinette* – Thank you, everyone, for coming! This is THE meeting to be at. We will be voting for those nominating for our next PTA exec board. I appreciate having quorum to pass the votes. For my own report, we have had some interesting things happen over the past couple months. We have some money we need to get rid of, which is a good problem to have. When I took over last year, we didn't have to purchase a lot of technology over the summer so we have a balance to reallocate. William and I looked in and out of the classrooms to look at entertaining grants for flexible seating.

*Becky* – Did you see Paul’s email?

*Jen* – Not yet. I haven’t seen his idea in terms of... we had asked about what kind of things the teachers use in the classroom for flexible seating. There are a lot of teachers who would love to do it but cannot afford it. As a PTA, we think our next project will be that.

*Alex* – We were thinking of things the whole school would benefit from. Flexible seating is on the rise. We were talking about \$250-\$1,000 grants based on teacher experience. Paul has a formula that I haven’t looked at yet. There is a certain number of grants for K-2 and 3-5 rooms. The admin team would select classrooms based on predictive change and improvement in instruction. Setup in May for use in August. That is a line item of \$20,000.

*Lisa* – We would need this to be spent by the end of July.

*Jen* – In making it a line item, at our next meeting... I want people to sit on this today... at the May meeting, we would bring it to the table and add it to our budget as a line item. Mull it over as it is being entertained. We need to figure out how to incorporate this huge chunk of money into the budget.

*Becky* – And we are proposing an additional \$5,000 as a line item to finish the mural in the atrium. This would be paid to the artist.

*Alex* – One thing we want to create is ownership of the school. There’s a beautiful building that shows what our community speaks to here in the progressive nature of instruction. Having the hallway look as good as instruction would be awesome. Paul sent a short video on flexible seating about how flexible classrooms can boost student achievement. Flexible classrooms do raise test scores according to a study in England. They change teaching and learning habits. Changing furniture must go hand in hand with changing teaching. Teachers are retrofitting their furniture with things they find in their house and yard sales to make flexibility work. Investing in the classrooms will be a huge bang for our buck. This is something we won’t get from the county. They are adding these options for new schools being built but won’t go back and give us new furniture.

*Jen* – Flexible seating isn’t going away. We want to get ahead of it. Things like technology: Liberty was one of the ones to recognize we needed to provide this to our students. We used the funds from Laps for Liberty. We are looking at where the county isn’t giving us funds and that’s flexible seating. There is a ripple effect of moving down to the kids. We are thinking along the line of Laps in the future for this.

5. Treasurer’s Report – *Lisa Geurin* – Other than the major new line item, we did come in under budget for STEMmerday in March, which was great. Matball was over but we had \$1,000 donations so we were only over by a couple hundred and made exactly what we projected. Both those main events were great for budget. We don’t have the numbers from last week’s spirit night.
6. VP Committees/Volunteer Coordinator Report – *Poonam Upadhyaya*. We had two major events in March. Apart from the volunteers, the major work was done by all our teachers and their family. I really

wanted to thank you all. I don't know if it was mandatory or optional, but I observed 2 weekends out of your 4 is a lot. Thank you so very much.

7. VP of Events – *Smitha Tumuluri* – I don't have much today. We will talk about more with committees.
8. VP of Fundraising – *William Perry* – Chuck E Cheese's is on May 31. We made a lot of money last time. We had it on a school holiday last year. We will get Chuck E in the bus line for the end of school. It'll be awesome. That's a Friday night so hopefully that works out. Experimac, one of our vendors who still owed us money, is no longer in business so we won't get that. It might be something to think about next year is how we spread out payments.
9. Recording Secretary Report – *Jill DeLorenzo* – Motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 2019 by Lisa Geurin. Motion to approve seconded by Smitha Tumuluri. All in favor, none opposed.

10. Committee Reports:

- a. After School Enrichment – *William Perry*. We have gone through 6Cricket, the online portal. I like it as a parent. Feedback is: LOVE IT! It makes it easy as a teacher to run rosters. We just had a couple hiccups (name change from one kid to another kid on the same account) that got fixed. We had some vendors not want to use them but the PTA is paying them. In the fall, we will require 6Cricket. It's not difficult. It just takes 30 minutes to set it up. As far as getting all the reports, the front office had everything. We had 5 teachers this semester for the program. They're receiving a total of \$4,000 - \$800 each. PTA is taking \$600. The year-long chess was not included because that was before all of this. The vendors took a little over \$8,800.

*Jen Robinette* – We are hoping to add more teacher-led programs to benefit the teachers (something equitable for their time after school) and the school benefits as well. If you look at the breakout between vendors vs. teacher-led programs, the difference is about three times as much. I'd love to see that money directly impacting our teachers and students. As much as I don't like to ask them to do more work outside of school, the programs this spring have been amazing. The students are loving them, the parents are loving them. We need to see this growth continue for the fall. I'll have our teachers consider before the end of this school year so we can get the programs set for fall. Even before they set up their classrooms ... then they have more time this summer to put together their program.

- b. Fifth Grade Celebration – *Coy Taylor/ Smitha Tumuluri/Grace Bell*. *Grace Bell* – I am working on the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Promotion Ceremony video. I am trying to get a photo of every student from kindergarten and from 5<sup>th</sup> grade. My vision is just one photo per child but it will be a collage with their name on it. I'll have the teachers' name first, put it to music. Maybe when we have the spring class photos, I can throw that in there as well. Any suggestions? I've never been to a promotion ceremony but I can add anything beyond photos.

*Jen Robinette* – Typically it's kindergarten and flips right into 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Grace Bell* – I can change it to that format. There are six 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes, so it'll take time. At least a few second per photo means several minutes per class. It's so nice to see them when they were young and now. My thing is I only have 60 or so photos from the kids, out of 150 or so kids. I've sent a couple emails to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers asking for the complete class lists to make sure everyone is included.

*Becky Pierce* – We can get you the class lists.

*Grace Bell* – I have 4 of the class lists. I set a deadline of March 31. I want to give myself time to put it together. Now I have to extend the deadline. I don't know what to suggest to parents.

*Jen Robinette* – My only other suggestion is something hard copy. We don't get much of a response with digital communications. A hard copy, even a half sheet, something bolded.

*Grace Bell* – Then I would give it to the teachers.

*Smitha Tumuluri* – From Melinda. Talent show will be on Thursday: "Liberty's Got Talent". A flyer will be sent home about instructions to sign up and rules.

- c. School Supply Kits – *Lisa Morales*. Alex Gray on her behalf: We were still working on finalizing them. They are being confirmed by the vendor. There are just a few items they want to confirm with us. We are reaching out to grade levels to make sure they look good. I don't have a date.
- d. Teacher Appreciation Week – *Alisha Vaughn*. Our theme is baseball. I have already got catering on lockdown, the same company as American Education Week. Everyone will get their mac and cheese! We are working on other treats and things. I'll have a flyer drafted by the end of next week. I'm thinking of instead of flower-gram, doing a baseball instead. "We hit a home run with you!" On the flyer last year, there was a supply list. I don't want to miss that.

*Jen Robinette* – Last year and the year before, we asked for STEM supplies – the things we were running out of. We can ask team leads what they need. The last run of school, we tend to run low on things. There are a lot of creative things happening at the end of school.

#### 11. PTA Board & Chairs Elections - \*=Board Position (vote needed)

- a. William Perry – President\* (no other nominees). Voted in unanimously
- b. Lisa Geurin – Treasurer\* (no other nominees). Voted in unanimously
- c. Tez Nettimi - Corresponding Secretary\* (no other nominees). Voted in unanimously
- d. Poonam Upadhyaya – Volunteer Coordinator\* (no other nominees). Voted in unanimously
- e. **Recording Secretary – VACANT\***. The position itself is really just recording the minutes and participating as a board member. If you have parents you know that are really great at typing, keep those in mind.
- f. Smitha Tumuluri – VP of Events\* (no other nominees). Voted in unanimously
- g. Jill DeLorenzo – VP of Fundraising\* (no other nominees). Voted in unanimously

12. 2019-2020 Committee Chairs – *Jen Robinette* – We don't have to vote on these positions; we just have to make sure they are filled. Unfortunately, what tends to happen is that these fall on the exec board if they aren't filled. Then the exec is being burnt out or not doing things they should be doing. We don't ask a lot of people, but if there are ways to incorporate people into PTA, we want to have more voices being heard. Alisha has taken on a lot for next year, which is fabulous. Alisha likes parties. But she can't do it all. Matball also needs to be on there. The very first one we need to look at is Laps for Liberty. Anne Corej needs a co-chair because she can't do it full-time. That is really just kind of collecting and making sure things are being taken care of as the money comes in. It's the largest fundraiser we have and it's critical. It's why we aren't selling wrapping paper and cookie dough. A good portion of those other fundraisers didn't come back to the school. Anything to keep our money inside Liberty makes sense to all of us.

- a. **After School Enrichment – VACANT**
- b. American Education Week – Alisha Vaughn
- c. **Bingo – VACANT**
- d. Box Tops – Karin Lisack
- e. **Children's Diversity Night – VACANT**
- f. **Eagle Eye Dads – VACANT**
- g. **Fifth Grade Celebration Parent – VACANT**
- h. **Laps for Liberty – Anne Corej/ Co-chair VACANT**
- i. **Matball – VACANT**
- j. MSAAC – Natalia Beardslee
- k. Newsletter – Jill DeLorenzo
- l. **Odyssey of the Mind – VACANT**
- m. **Reflections – VACANT**
- n. **Room Parent Coordinator – VACANT**
- o. **School Dance – VACANT**
- p. School Supply Kits – Lisa Morales
- q. SEAC – Alisha Vaughn
- r. Spirit Wear – Jeff Geurin
- s. Teacher Appreciation Week – Alisha Vaughn
- t. Teacher Welcome Lunch – Alisha Vaughn

13. Adjourn at 3:53 p.m.