

**Walt Whitman High School PTSA Minutes
September 16, 2008**

Minutes

Welcome

PTSA President Sue Kanter called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She introduced Vicki Strella, Co-President for the 2008-09 school year.

Minutes The motion to approve the minutes of the May 2008 PTSA meeting passed.

Student Government Association

Doug Acker, President, and Elisa Jacome, Vice President, were introduced. Doug Acker gave the SGA report. The Homecoming Dance, Saturday, October 25th, is the first major SGA event of the year. Fifteen parents have volunteered to chaperone the Dance but 15 more are needed. Notices will go out on Whitnet soliciting help. During Homecoming Week, the SGA sponsors Battle of the Classes on Tuesday, October 21st. The Freshman elections will be held on Friday, September 19th. Student speeches were impressive according to Officers. The SGA continues to go "Green". There are now recycling bins in the cafeteria, as well as, around the school for cans and bottles. If students have issues they want addressed by the SGA, they should talk with their 2nd period delegates who will report to the General Assembly at their monthly meetings.

Principal's Report

Dr. Goodwin welcomed everyone. He recommended reviewing the Class of 2008 College List handout. He noted that there is a great selection of schools that Whitman grads attend including some fine institutions close by. The start school has been good. Scheduling changes are almost complete at this point. Traditionally, scheduling changes come from oversized classes. This year a tremendous effort was made to keep class size as low as possible. Whitman was allotted an extra ESOL teacher, as well as, an extra Special Education teacher. The largest class size is in Multivariable Calculus at 37 students. Dr. Goodwin recommends that if a student is having difficulty in a class or with a teacher to talk to the teacher before trying to switch out of the class.

Extra Curricular Activities are off to a great start. Welcome to Whitman Night, school wide fair that showcases all student clubs, will be held September 23rd. Parent volunteers are needed to help sponsor some clubs.

Installation of software for the new computers is not yet complete. The new Language Lab, provided through funds raised by the Whitman Foundation, should be up and running by early November. The new Language Lab will provide Internet access from any lab in the school.

Issues. Thus far, there have been 2 suspensions for drugs. The penalty is 10 day suspension from school and/or a recommendation for expulsion. There has been 1 fight between two male students. Last year there were a total of 14 suspensions for drugs.

Whitman has the lowest rate of suspensions in the County. Underage drinking remains a problem for high school students. Whitman has a Zero Tolerance policy for campus events but encourages parents to be vigilant with students off campus.

Stress is an issue Counselors routinely address with kids as they work on class schedules, etc. The Stressbusters Committee meets to provide strategies for students to reduce the stressful climate.

Whitman again had the highest SATs in the County as well as 15 National Semi Merit Finalists. Dr. Goodwin is looking forward to the continuing accomplishments of the Music and Art Departments.

Administrators are introduced in order of Seniority.

AP Kathlyn Carroll has been at Whitman for 10 years. She works with current 10th graders and will track them through graduation.

AP Kathy McHale taught at Whitman for 24 years as a PE and Health teacher. She did an interim year at a middle school and has been back for 2 years at Whitman as an AP. She currently works 12th grade students and shares responsibility like all other APs for the 9th grade students.

AP Jennifer Webster is a 2nd year administrator who works with the 11th graders.

There is an effort in the works to secure a 4th AP for all High Schools but not expected to see one any time soon.

MCPS offers the PSATs to all 10th and 11th graders at Whitman on October 15th. Ninth grade students will take a practice PSAT, offered by Kaplan, the same day. Kaplan will offer a review night to discuss results with 9th grade families.

Narrowing the achievement gap among students continues to be a challenge. It is addressed in our Local School Improvement Plan. There are new programs for Special Education students who graduate LFI certified. In an effort to involve all students in the life of the school, mainstreaming is done whenever deemed possible. Starting this year, LFI students are running a Starbucks Coffee stand during 1st and 2nd periods for faculty and staff.

There has been press about Fees in County schools. Fees enhance the courses. There is no way the County can cover the cost of the extras that are paid for with fees that are asked of parents. Whitman has traditionally provided to incoming Freshmen, an Agenda planner, a Grammar book and a Book of Walt Whitman poetry. Fee structure should be transparent allowing parents to see what their money is being used for. Fees for same material from High School to High School should be the same. Fees are covered by Principal's discretionary funds if a family is unable to afford them. The Whitman community has fewer families that need the funds so it has not been a problem to fund those that do, however, for schools that have more financial disparity there is a perceived equity issue in the county.

Stuart Shifrin – Edline Presentation on Edline

The position of Staff Developer was created at all high schools for 2008. Stuart Shifrin, a Whitman Science teacher, has taken on that role and was introduced by Dr. Goodwin.

Mr. Shifrin gave us a brief bio. He taught Science at Whitman for 14 years. Position of Staff Developer includes working with new teachers, gathering data from school wide tests, and training teachers in technology. He spoke about Promethean Boards, a new teaching tool, that will be in 65% of classrooms (55 Boards) when installation is complete. Teachers will be trained to work with the Promethean Boards on 3 separate days. The Boards offer interactive teaching which keeps kids more engaged. Edline was the subject of the presentation by Mr. Schifrin. He showed us how to navigate Edline. If you need to get an activation code you should email Geoff Schaefer, Geoff.Schaefer@mcpsmd.org. Mr. Schaefer is referred to as a Super User and can answer any question that parents may have about Edline function. Shifrin described Edline as a wonderful tool to facilitate communication between parents and students. He warned that how much a teacher posts on Edline (ie homework assignments, curriculum, etc) is not a measure of how good a teacher is. He encourages teachers to use Edline as much as possible and to update grades at least every 2 weeks. He advised that if you have a question about a grade on Edline, talk with your student first before emailing the teacher. Teachers are not required to post due dates on assignments. He will explore with Mr. Schaefer whether teachers can use a dash instead of a zero or an X to indicate a missing assignment. Apparently, a dash does not register as a zero but rather indicates that an assignment has either not been graded or is missing. An X indicates that an assignment was excused. It was suggested that using a dash results in a more accurate assessment of a student's grade at any point in time. Some new teachers have not gotten access to the network account and therefore have not been able to access Edline. That problem should be remedied very soon. Ms. Webster is reviewing Edline use by teachers to ensure that all are taking advantage of it.

Treasure's Report

Janice Mehler was introduced as the treasurer. She presented the proposed PTSA budget for the 2008-09 schoolyear. She explained that income was expected to stay about the same. The report reflects carryover income from the 2007-08 year. The carryover income pays for start-up expenses before membership dues are collected in September. Treasurer will get PTSA authority to spend the Grant money listed in line item as \$5000. Dr. Goodwin said he might petition for some of the grant money to hire substitute teachers when there is reason for a teacher to need a day off to write student college recommendations, etc. The County only allows teachers to take a day off for county wide professional days. There was discussion about Viking Voice printing as relates to cost and environment. Dr. Goodwin mentioned that Whitnet reaches 80% of parent body. There is a need to communicate with all families so the initial and final editions are mailed. There was discussion re following Pyle model of allowing families to opt out of mailings. Karen Clarkson said this was a real possibility now that labels are printed in-house rather than County wide. There was a motion to approve the minutes followed by a 2nd. The Budget was approved by the PTSA.

President's Report

Sue Kanter thanked volunteers who have worked on the Staff Appreciation, New Parents Coffee, Pizza Party, Guidance Advisory Committee, and Executive Committee for work done already this fall. She recommended that parents review the college list as well to see the breadth of schools Whitman students attend. PTSA is still looking for a Post Prom Committee Chair. It has traditionally been a senior parent but junior parents are welcome to volunteer for the job. Sue encouraged all families to join Whitnet. She also explained a policy change to Whitcom for the 2008-09 year. Alumni families will be allowed to stay on Whitcom but as "read only" members. The School Directory, produced by the Senior Class again this year, will be ready in the next few weeks. Notices will be posted on Whitnet and the website.

PTSA Committee Reports

Jay Kaufman, PTSA VP Membership, explained that 100% of PTSA income comes from the fall membership drive. Membership is down but it may be related to the delayed Summer Mailing. Contributions are tax deductible. Jay will look into online membership payment as a means to facilitate membership for next year.

Anne Hollander, representative from the Stressbusters committee, reported that Whitman with Walther Johnson and Wootton is sponsoring a presentation by speaker, Lloyd Thacker about the College admissions process and how families can take back control. The presentation will be held at Whitman on Thursday, October 23rd at 7:30 in the Auditorium. He is the author of a book that explains how parents can do quantitative research about schools rather than using reputation to determine what is best for your student. Fran Landau, Guidance Counselor, has heard him speak to sold out crowds with standing room only. Suggested donations are \$5/individual or \$10/family to cover the cost of the speaker. Everyone is welcome.

Carley Lee, Guidance Advisory Committee Co-Chair, explained how GAC supports the Guidance Department and families alike. Throughout the year they sponsor relevant grade-wide meetings. The next meeting is a Senior Class Parent meeting on the College Application process to be held Monday, September 22nd at 7:30 in the Auditorium. She recommended reviewing the Tip Sheets that have been written on various issues relevant to Whitman families. They can be found on the GAC link on the Whitman website. Topics covered include Drugs and Alcohol, Edline, and Homecoming.

New Business

Parent suggested that posting Draft PTSA minutes on the website in an expedited manner would be useful to families who have not been able to attend meetings.

Parent asked Dr. Goodwin to check on whether a student who has been granted but not yet received final approval for IEP be given extra time during the PSAT or freshman practice PSAT offered by Kaplan.

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Parent expressed an interest in the Guidance Office inviting colleges that have programs to support Learning Disabled students to make presentations at Whitman. A presentation on How to Cope with High School as a Learning Disabled Student was also suggested.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Noelle McHugh, Recording Secretary