January 14, 2013

Called to order at 9:20 a.m.

Mari Anne Imhoff, President, opened the meeting by leading the Pledge of Alliance.

Mari Anne welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the new year.   She had some important 2013 dates she wanted everyone to put on their calendars.  Each year, Parents’ Council recognizes some of the amazing people who volunteer in our schools at the annual Exceptional Volunteer recognition event.  This year’s event will take place on Thursday evening, April 25 from 5:30 to 9:00 PM at the Hyatt DTC.  Honoree Selection forms were sent to the school principals last week.  The deadline to return the nomination form and a photo of your school’s honoree is February 25.  If there are any questions, please direct them to Wendy DeBell or to Parents’ Council.

Another annual event is the Parents’ Council Vendors Expo, scheduled for March 6 at ISF, from 9 AM to 1 PM.  This is a drop-in event, for when your schedule allows.  Details are contained in the flyers on the tables, and we ask everyone to help us spread the word.  This event is free and open to the public, and can be especially useful for PTO officers to attend, as well Booster Clubs, and any other organization looking for ways to conduct fundraising in support of our kids and their activities.  Typically, over 50 vendors attend, so this becomes a one-stop shopping opportunity to learn about new fundraising and support options.  For questions, please feel free to contact Sandy Roberts.  Her contact information is contained on the flyer, and more details can be found on our website, [www.ccparentscouncil.org](http://www.ccparentscouncil.org/).  The flyer is also attached as a PDF; please distribute to your school community to get the word out.  We appreciate it!

Jill Henden, Interim Director of the Foundation, spoke briefly about their big upcoming event, the annual Cherry Creek Schools Foundation Luncheon on March 15, 2013 at the Hyatt DTC.  Last year was a very successful year for the luncheon, with $65,000 raised, up $30,000 from the previous year.  The Foundation was please to be able to present a check for $25,000 to Mary Chesley for teacher enrichment from the additional funds.

Mari Anne provided a brief update on the activities of the Community Connection program, which Parents’ Council sponsors.  Community Connections was able to successfully provide opportunities for schools to partner with other schools over the recent holiday season.  Mari Anne shared a few examples:

Challenge School – immediately after the plea for help went out in November, Challenge held a last-minute food drive to help families for Thanksgiving.  Keeping with the spirit of giving, they chose to conduct an ongoing good and clothing drive through December, providing basic needs for others in the District.

Fox Hollow Elementary – after hearing about some of the needs from our November meeting, Fox Hollow began a coat/hat/mitten drive.  Multiple carloads of new and gently used items were gathered and dispersed in both November and December, helping children in two of our schools most in need.  Fox Hollow will also be partnering with a school to provide help on a weekly basis, beginning in February.  Their “Backpack Program” will assist families who need help with basic, everyday necessities.

Canyon Creek Elementary – last Friday, Canyon Creek turned their Snowflake Social into something more than just a fun social event.  Attendees were asked to donate a food or clothing items that would then be appropriately distributed through Community Connection.

Parents’ Council thanks these schools for their efforts, and Mari Anne reminded everyone that these needs do not go away just because the holidays are over.  For more information, please contact Mary Ann Hampton, who chairs Community Connection.

The Parents’ Council Executive Board is seeking volunteers to come on board for the 2013-14 school year.  Several openings are anticipated on the Executive Board: Secretary, Community Connection Coordinator, as well as an event coordinator for next year’s Vendor Expo.  We also anticipate one or two other positions becoming open as well.  She encouraged PTCO officers who are finishing up their term or know someone who is a terrific, reliable volunteer, to please contact Mari Anne for more information.  The slate for new officers will be presented at the March 11 meeting, and voted on at the April 15 meeting, with terms beginning June 1.

Minutes from the November, 2012 meeting were distributed electronically.  Mari Anne asked for a motion to approve the minutes as written.  A motion was made to approve the minutes, the motion was seconded and the motion was passed.

Lastly, Mari Anne mentioned something new that we've started with the November meeting. Parents’ Council sends out our meeting minutes and posts them on our website, and hope that those of you who represent your schools will take the time to review them before voting each month.  But we also feel that there is so much good information discussed at our monthly meetings that we would like to help you share with your school’s parent community.  So Karen Fisher, our Communication chairperson, has developed a new short "recap" that we'll be sending every month, along with the minutes, for PC reps to forward to their newsletter or online news editors.  In addition to a brief meeting recap, with links if available, we are often asked to help publicize events that are open to families District-wide or outside of a specific school.  We appreciate your help, and would welcome your feedback on this new communications tool.

January is School Board Appreciation Month in Colorado.  According to the National School Boards Association website, “School board members are the dedicated few who you have elected to represent your community's values and thinking about public education in your community. And the bottom line for these individuals is keeping alive the dream of public education for every child and making sure students achieve and succeed.” The good news in Cherry Creek is that our Board of Education members go above and beyond that in so many ways. She asked everyone to join her in saying ‘Thank You’ to our CCSD Board of Ed, and in welcoming Claudine McDonald to speak on behalf of the Board this month.

Claudine grew up as a Denver Bronco fan because her parents were fans and they watched all the games.  As she watched the game on Saturday, she started to think the game would help her outline her talk for Parents’ Council.  First, she was thinking of strength:  The bonds approved by the passing of 3A/3B were sold to Bank of America at a rate of 2.6%.  There were 4 additional bidders, and the bonds were sold at a historically low interest rate.  The interest rate will be less than half of the interest rate approved by the voters in November.  The Cherry Creek School District continues to have extremely strong credit.  All bonds that were approved in November were sold.

The 2nd item Claudine tied to the Broncos was Security (as in Rahim Moore position as a safety).  She was talking about the safety & security of our students and staff.  With the tragedies we’ve shared in 2012 throughout the country, the School Board has been looking at all district buildings and their safety plans.  An important part of these plans is following thru on every rule to ensure everyone’s safety.  She knows many volunteers at the meeting and in our district are at the schools all the time, and she asked that we please help set a positive example when asked for ID or to wear a visitor badge.

With 11 players on the field, for the Broncos to execute plays they all need to know each other and what the others are doing.  Claudine felt the Broncos could take hints from CCSD from our feeder meetings.  The board gets to talk one on one with the community to know what’s needed and/or wanted.

Although the Broncos lost the game on Saturday, all is not lost because they still had a season of success, as did the District.  Claudine was proud to announce that 14 of the District’s schools received the John Irwin Blue Ribbon award.  Strict criteria has to be met to achieve this award.  14 schools also received the Governor’s Distinguished Improvement Award.

Claudine wrapped up her remarks by pointing out that although the Broncos season is officially over, they have to look to next year for staff needs, salary caps, and the draft.  The District, too, needs to look ahead to next year.  Our quarterback, Mary Chesley, is retiring in June.  The hiring of the new superintendent is probably the most important task of the School Board.  Each member of the Board has interviewed Dr. Bull individually, and they have also accepted input from other sources.  They plan on passing a resolution at their meeting tonight announcing that he is the sole finalist for the Superintendent position.

Mary Chesley, Superintendent, was then invited to speak.  Mary felt she was still mourning the loss of Cherokee Trail at the 5A football championship, as well as the Bronco game.  Looking back after the last 4 years of reducing the district budget, the passing of 3A/3B by the voters will make further reductions unnecessary.  The District won’t necessarily use all the money at once, but it will be there for future needs.  Looking at the upcoming Legislature session, there are two school budget bills to be passed this year; one for the next school year which hopefully won’t show any reduction.  The second bill is a Finance Bill to ask voters to go to the polls in November 2013 to fund schools differently.  CCSD hasn’t taken a stance on this bill yet; they are waiting for more information on the bill to see its impact on the schools.

Mary was recently asked by someone at the CCS Foundation: “How is it everyone in the district seems to be on the same page?”  Mary feels it’s because our district works hard with the School Board to achieve that.  The strength of the district is heavily based on the strength of the Board.  The Board is made up of 5 strong individuals with different backgrounds and knowledge that they all bring to the table.  There is never a rush to a decision; they are very thoughtful with every decision, ask for input, and with study and care, before every vote they always ask “What’s best for our kids?”

Mary spoke about 3A/3B being a difficult campaign, but in the end the votes to pass the two actually came out ahead from votes during better times.  She thanks the entire CCSD community for passing the bills.  Because of that the District hasn’t had to cut anything that directly affects the kids in the classrooms.  Even with budget cuts, the schools and kids accomplished what they were supposed to, but everything was stressed to the breaking point.  Without the bills passing, there was not much room left to reduce the budget without something getting left behind.

Mary was proud to say that every high school in the district has shown improvement in graduation rates, which has been a goal of the District.  Anybody can give “grades” to schools, but not all do so with permission from the Colorado school board.  The awards being given tonight are authorized by the State (John Irwin & Governor’s Award), but she wants to give some too.  At the recent PIN meeting, she gives the students:

A in athletics, not only for the athletics but for first identifying with the district

A in arts; shows, music, events in schools are terrific

A in activities; all activities continue to grow at the high school level

A in community service; the efforts thru Community Connections in November were terrific

Mary wanted to share that the events at Sandy Hook are with everyone in the District every day, and in their thoughts.  The safety of our kids is so important.  Since 1995, every teacher gets training in safety that used to be just for cops.  There are 5 different police agencies across the district, and they are all committed to working together.  Everyone wants to continue the level of visibility that they’ve been able to do the last month, but that may not be feasible.  The District Safety Committee has met and went thru the District’s Safety Plan again.  They don’t have the final report from Sandy Hook yet, but the last comment in the most recent report was that everyone at the school knew what to do when security was breached.  Another comment was that no matter what security/technology bells and whistles may be in place, we can never foresee everything.  Please be a leader and an example in the district by following the safety rules, such as signing in at each school, and be assured it is nothing personal.  While mental health support has been reduced in community in the last 10 years, the District has been trying to keep it at a good level in the schools but it’s hard.  The police agencies have been really good about reaching out to the district and wanting to everyone to have the same plans.  The District has asked law enforcement to walk thru each school in the district with a district administrator to address each school’s specific needs/issues.  Monthly agendas provided for schools & staff report on what drills/reports expected each month.  Another $7million has been spent on technology, specifically in the area of school safety.  Mary asked for parent’s support in taking another look at the involvement you have with your kid’s social media.  Every threat to a school that is reported, whether called in to the school or found on social media, is investigated.  Mary asked if the group knew that most threats are usually written in bathrooms because there are no cameras in bathrooms.  Campus security does rotate thru the bathrooms and watch the security cameras outside of the bathrooms to figure out who might be culpable.  If someone is found to have started a rumor regarding safety, it will be followed up on and there are consequences, all the way up to expulsion.  They track down the rumor to the source if possible, by talking to students and back tracking.  If they find a credible threat, Mary assured us that school would be cancelled.  Social media is a factor in the safety issues.  If you have a middle schooler, they need to be taught the importance of this.

Mary concluded by wishing everyone a happy new year and assured us the district is ready to finish the 2012-2013 school year strong.

Mari Anne welcomed Dr. Elliot Asp, Assistant Superintendent, and Richard Charles, STEM Director, to the meeting to speak about the district STEM program.

Dr. Elliot Asp opened the STEM presentation by explaining the fact that STEM is the economic driver for jobs, and STEM-literate students will enter all careers (even non-technical) as better decision-makers.  He asked Richard Charles to share more.  Richard stressed that in CCSD, we consider every student to be a STEM student, and every school to be a STEM school.

In teaching students, we use an interdisciplinary approach with real-world problem-based lessons.   Mr. Charles introduced John Eyolfson, K-12 Science Coordinator, who led us through a hands-on lesson.  We also heard from Joanie Funderburk, Secondary Math Coordinator, and STEM Instructional coaches Denise Goldin-Dubois and Sherri Dennstedt about Common Core state standards, the PARCC Assessments (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), and examples of instruction within CCSD.  Then Kathryn Eyolfson had students from her 4th grade Science class at Coyote Hills share a recent problem-based learning lesson in Archeology.  More about the STEM program can be found in the attached power point presentation.

Mari Anne wrapped up the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and reminded them the next meeting is February 11, where we’ll be hearing more about how the funds from 3A/3B will be used in the district.  The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

 Respectfully,

Alicia Speer

Secretary