



Wellington Elementary School Parent Teacher Organization Annual Report 2017-18

The Wellington Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is an all-volunteer 501c3 charitable organization that relies on the generous involvement of parents and teachers. By working together, we are able to make a big difference to the school!

The purpose of the PTO is to enrich the educational experience of the children; build a stronger school community; and facilitate and foster communication between the home and school. We are pleased to report on this year's progress towards these goals.

Thank you for your ongoing support of the PTO! Have a great summer, and see you next year!

Lynne Standish & Meryl Junik

Wellington PTO Co-Presidents 2017-18

Enriching the Educational Experience

A significant portion of the PTO's budget supports experiential learning opportunities to enhance the curriculum in grades Kindergarten through four. This year, the PTO funded over \$34,000 to support a wide variety of in-school enrichment programs and field trips (see box on right).

PTO events also provided opportunities for families to come together and celebrate learning. Science Night saw enthusiastic participation from amazing third and fourth grade scientists and a broad range of hands-on activities for all ages. This year's Song & Dance themed Multicultural Night had the largest number of family-sponsored tables ever and was an impressive display of diverse culture and backgrounds.

The PTO also ran an outstanding After School Enrichment (ASE) program that offered a wonderful variety of after school clubs to complement and enhance students' learning experience. In addition to being a modest fundraiser, ASE provided students with opportunities to explore enriching activities and socialize with other students in a fun, no pressure environment. For the 2017-18 school year, there were:

- 265 individual students in the program; 46% of K-4 students
- 22 choices in the fall (with 235 registrations), 22 choices in the winter (with 261 registrations) and 20 choices in the spring (with 255 registrations)

Science & Math Enrichment

- Mass Audubon Habitat (K)
- Push & Pull by Acton Discovery Museum (K)
- Weather by Acton Discovery Museum (1)
- Sound by Acton Discovery Museum (1)
- Aquatic Invertebrates by Mass Audubon's Habitat (1)
- Rainforest Reptiles Show (1)
- Soils by Mass Audubon's Habitat (2)
- Mass Audubon Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary (2)
- Electromagnetism by Museum of Science (3)
- Weather by Museum of Science (3)
- Sound Workshop by Techsploration (4)
- Energy Workshop by Techsploration (4)
- New England Aquarium Field Experience (4)
- Honey Bee Presentation (4)
- Peabody Museum & Harvard Museum of Natural History (4)

Language Arts & Social Studies Enrichment

- Cinderella by the Tanglewood Marionettes (K)
- Puppet Showplace Theater (1)
- Sled Dogs by Patriot Siberian Husky Rescue (2)
- Jambo Africa by Gail LaRocca (2)
- Brian Lies Writer Workshop (2)
- Plimoth Plantation (3)
- The Owl Lady (3)
- Freedom Trail, Old North Church, & Swan Boats (3)
- Boston Tea Party Ship & Museum (3)
- Colonial Day (3)
- Sharon Kennedy / Mill Girl (4)
- Lowell Mills (4)

Music & Art Enrichment

- Worcester Opera Company (2)
- David Coffin (3)
- Handel and Hadyn Society (4)

Building a Strong Community

The PTO builds community at Wellington by helping families connect with each other and with the school.

This year, the PTO spent \$1,750 on community programs and social events. Friendships deepened as we picnicked together, walked to school together, and supported our children's education. We saw terrific participation by families, from our first day Welcome Back Coffees to a fun-filled Movie Night and meaningful Coat & Gift Card Drive to support Wellington & Boston families in need.

The PTO nurtured school pride by providing every kindergartener and new student/staff with a Wellington t-shirt to welcome them to our community. New for 2017-18, the PTO supported funding for each 4th grader to receive a t-shirt with the names of their classmates & a memory book, both historically funded by the 4th grade families. We also held Spirit Wear sales so families can show off their Wellington pride!

Though funded independently from our general budget, PTO volunteers also coordinated the annual Fourth Grade Send Off (4GSO) celebration. This annual event was held just for the fourth graders and their parents/guardians to celebrate the end of the students' time in elementary school and the transition to middle school. All students received small souvenirs.

Our Green Team had a very busy year! At lunchtime, Wellington 4th graders helped to reduce the volume of waste and garbage bags by stacking their used trays before they were tossed. The goal will be for all grades to stack trays by the end of next school year. To help make our community a little greener, the PTO sponsored the Trex Recycling Challenge, to recycle as much plastic film as possible. Additionally some K-2 students learned about the environment through the Planet Protectors ASE club.

Facilitating Communication

New for 2017-18, the PTO provided an upgraded, more durable plastic Home-School Communication Folder to every student. Many thanks to the volunteers who helped stuff and bundle the folders for delivery to each classroom on the first day!

The PTO also held four alternating morning and evening meetings during the school year to share updates about school happenings as well as to provide an opportunity for parent learning. This year, we hosted the following special guest speakers: teachers Kristen Bell and Colleen McBride, who presented about number sense and math fluency; Superintendent Phelan who shared an update on the principal search, Belmont High School Building Committee developments, space/classroom issues, and Student Care; teachers Cindy St. Clair and Devin Mailloux who gave a presentation about Social Emotional Learning through literature and the use of Playworks to promote healthy play at recess.

Moreover, we modified our communications to reduce redundancy and streamline our messaging. In addition to a short blurb in the principal's weekly electronic newsletter, we provided a monthly newsletter with a summary of PTO news, upcoming events, and opportunities to get involved; and news and events were also posted on the Community Bulletin Board and lettered sandwich boards near the main entryways.

The PTO created and distributed the School Directory (using information the school district shared with the PTO), a great resource for connecting with your student's classmates and other Wellington families, planning play dates, birthday parties, etc.

The PTO offered an end-of-year survey to gather information from parents & caregivers re: member & volunteer experience, meeting & program participation, as well as fundraising & spending priorities. We received 81 responses, and 56 of the respondents were PTO members (i.e. paid annual dues). Here is a summary of key feedback:

- 95% of respondents felt very or moderately informed about PTO activities
- The most preferred method of PTO communication were: monthly newsletter, weekly newsletter, and room parent email. The most common thoughts shared indicated that:
 - People preferred reading content directly on their device instead of clicking an additional link/attachment. We will explore options for sharing content more directly while still maintaining the rich formatting.
 - Parents & caregivers were inundated with communication from the school. We agree! We worked to streamline our communications this year to send no more than 3-4 notices per event/program, but there's still room for improvement. Please note that subscriptions to multiple channels (e.g. school listserv and district listserv) may increase redundancy.
- The most popular reasons for not attending PTO meetings were: too busy and inconvenient time of day. Interestingly, an equal number of respondents indicated a conflict with evening meetings and daytime meetings. Our community has varying needs, and we will continue to alternate evening and daytime meetings as we always have in the past. In addition, we will explore alternative meeting formats. Please join us when you can!
- 58 respondents (72%) volunteered with the PTO and shared the following feedback.
 - Ease of signup - 99% satisfied
 - Advance notice - 93% satisfied and 2% unsatisfied
 - Adequacy of instructions - 82% satisfied and 5% unsatisfied
 - Feeling of appreciation - 78% satisfied and 9% unsatisfied
 - Overall level of involvement - 80% satisfied and 6% unsatisfied

Our volunteers make everything possible and we will work to improve levels of satisfaction with: adequacy of instructions, feeling of appreciation, and overall level of involvement. As a first step, we will be working with all event & program coordinators to provide clear guidelines/checklists to help ensure our volunteers feel well-prepared, organized and recognized for their involvement.
- Regarding fundraising preferences, little support was shown for selling products or a parents night out, and the PTO will continue to focus on other options. Respondents favored large community based fundraisers (e.g. Fun Run), grant writing, smaller fundraisers (e.g. Bingo Night) and write one check and be done. As shown in the open comments, families have varying budgeting needs - some would prefer to write one check because ongoing fundraisers are hard to manage while others prefer spacing out their contributions and consider fundraisers "fun".
- Regarding spending, respondents overwhelmingly prioritized enrichment and teacher/staff support over community programs and helping families in need. That said, more than 50% of the open comments indicated that the ranking was very challenging as they felt supporting all areas should be weighed fairly equally.

Supporting the School

An important aspect of the PTO's work is to support Wellington staff and their excellent teaching. With that in mind, the PTO provides funding for numerous supplies and programs not covered by the Belmont Public Schools budget.

This past year, the PTO worked closely with Principal Spangler and Interim Principal Stewart to respond to staff needs and support progress towards school goals. The PTO provided: \$14,629 in funding for classroom equipment & materials; \$11,433 for Chromebooks for 3rd and 4th grade; \$3,150 toward district-wide professional development and parent presentation on executive

functioning by Sarah Ward; \$2,315 for teacher initiatives; \$1,796 to support the school library; \$1,964 for the Principal's discretionary fund; \$1,322 for an all-staff summer read focusing on anti-racism and inclusion; \$1,176 for two years worth of incoming Kindergarten Brain Builder Bags; \$1,044 for RAZ Kids; and \$800 for Jump Start Lite.

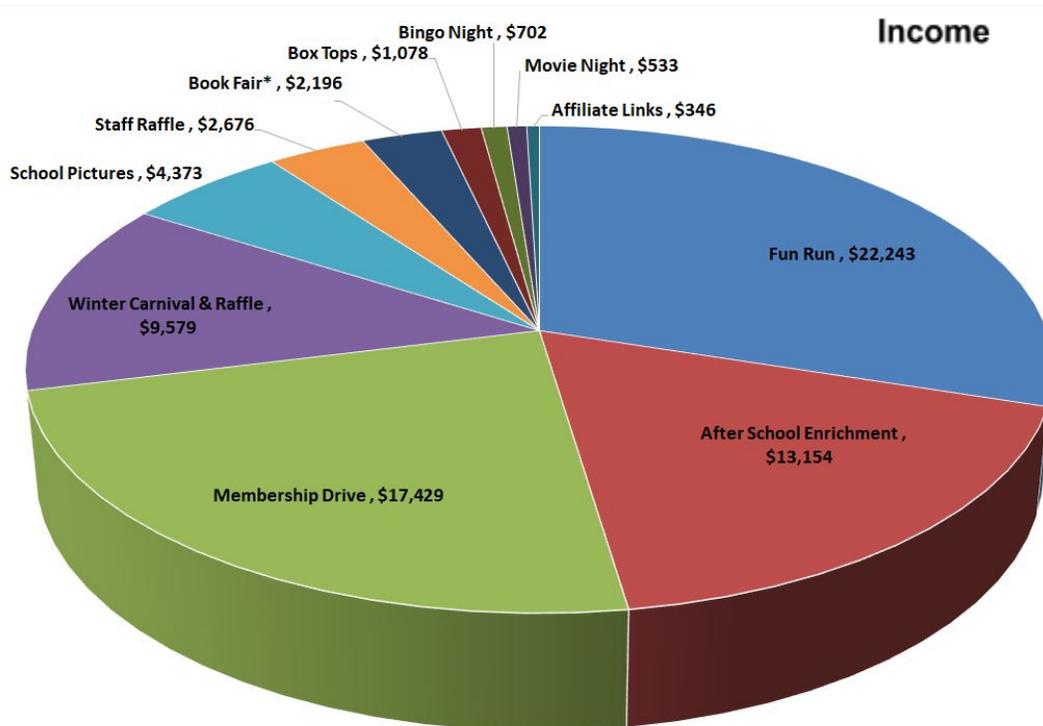
We also organized and funded \$1,288 for a staff appreciation luncheon for all Wellington teachers and staff and had expenses of \$572 to provide healthy snacks for all 3rd and 4th graders taking the MCAS test.

PTO volunteers staffed 25 shifts in the school library each week! Many thanks to the 100+ parents and caregivers who helped re-shelve books, tidy the shelves, and process check-outs. Your contribution of your time made the library a wonderful place for children to develop and continue their love of reading!

Thank you for making it possible for the PTO to go above and beyond to support the entire Wellington community!

Financials

The PTO is funded through the generosity of our donors – primarily Wellington families. In addition to our annual Membership Drive, we also coordinate a handful of community-oriented fundraisers each year.



** Book Fair 2017 rewards taken predominantly as product instead of cash, for better value and to supplement classroom libraries.*

Expenses

