

Ben Franklin Elementary PTO

September 2024 Meeting Minutes

WHEN: Monday, September 16, 2024

WHERE: BF Library **Facilitator(s):** Megan Coopersmith

PTO BOARD: Megan Coopersmith, Petra Crevier, Lindsay Walsh, Nicole Bottrel, Ilana Hernandez, and Kristen Paladino

ATTENDEES: Principal Geoff Hewitt, PTO Board, Ben Franklin Parents and Guardians

START TIME: 7:05pm **END TIME:** 8:16pm

Topic and Spokesperson	Discussion Points
<p>Introductions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Megan Coopersmith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Board introduced themselves: Megan Coopersmith - PTO President, Petra Crevier - 1st VP, Lindsay Walsh - 2nd VP, Nicole Bottrel - Corresponding Secretary, Ilana Hernandez - Recording Secretary, Kristen Paladino - Treasurer
<p>Principal Update</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mr. Hewitt</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Hewitt acknowledged the substantial turnout to the first PTO meeting indicating that it has been wonderful to welcome new and returning students for the new school year. - The PTO was thanked for decorating the front of the school, providing welcome back gifts to students and staff. He also expressed gratitude for the PTO hosting Popsicles on the Playground at the end of August. - Presently, BF is the largest elementary school in the district with 348 students from Pre-K to 3rd grade. - Over the summer, lots happened in the building. Kindergarten Jumpstart was held in July allowing for incoming kindergarteners to get an introduction to the school. The summer flight program and ESY programs were held in the building hosting students from grades K through 6th grade from the different district schools. The parking lots were repaved and the “Kinder Garden” lot was renovated with a safer, cushioned ground instead of asphalt. The gate for this lot is expected to be added soon. - The school mascot, Amos the Mouse, has been rebranded. There is a new look to the logo for the school and other LTPS schools. New banners were installed in the school parking lot last week. - Security drills will continue to occur throughout the school year; these are separate from fire drills. Drills are required at all NJ schools. Currently, there are three types of security

	<p>drills that are carried out in the school building. Shelter in place drills (1) require that students stay in their classrooms while in-class instruction continues until all is cleared. Evacuation drills (2) follow fire drill procedures; however, students and staff are expected to walk further away from the school. Lastly, lockdown drills (3) require students to hide and be quiet. Teachers and staff take an approach where the students are playing a hiding game or engaging in whisper reading. A lockdown drill has been conducted this year already. Something new pertaining to lockdown drills is that a message will now appear on the board in each classroom notifying staff of what is happening in the building (i.e. drill or actual emergency).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There have been new changes for this school year. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Starting this year, there will be two 45 minute lunch periods instead of three 40 minute sessions. These lunch periods will be split with one grade attending recess, while the other eats their lunch. Presently, Kindergarten and 1st grade are together and 2nd and 3rd grade share a lunch period. - Library will no longer be a special; instead the librarian, Ms. Offery, will be visiting classrooms and collaborating with teachers. Students will continue to have five special periods each week. Kindergarten and 2nd grade will be having two periods of art, two periods of gym, and one period of music this year; while 1st and 3rd grade will be having two periods of music, two periods of gym, and one period of art this year. Classes will continue to have an extra special once a month that will rotate allowing for grade level meetings and collaboration amongst teachers. - On Oct. 29, there will be a district wide community conversation mostly focused on the referendum. This provides families a chance to meet with central office administrators and discuss what is happening in the district. - Lastly, it was shared that the Lawrence Township School District was rated by the NJ DOE to be a high performing district based on the NJQSAC.
<p>PTO President Update</p> <p>Megan Coopersmith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The PTO is a volunteer run organization. All of the PTO board members are unpaid parent volunteers. We are always in need of volunteers and any help we can get is appreciated. Petra Crevier, VP1, is responsible for getting volunteers for different events. Volunteer requests via signup genius will be posted on social media and in the newsletter. - The PTO is responsible for fundraising throughout the year to pay for things that are not in the school budget. Each year the PTO needs to fundraise enough money to pay for the standard things we provide each school year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - \$8,000 for field trips (one for each grade - 5 total field trips including bussing costs) so every child can go on a field trip [\$4000 is for bussing alone] - \$2,000 for 3 assemblies each year - \$4,000 3rd grade class items (free yearbook for each 3rd grader, free special t-shirt, free party)

	<p>- The PTO also fundraises to make money for free events/school enhancements/student gifts/teacher appreciation. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offering smaller free events throughout the school year in addition to the paid events such as Science Night. - giving new books to every student on their birthday and at the end of the year. - purchasing items that need to be replaced such as the new high traffic rubberized front entry way mat for the school - providing small student gifts given throughout the year to every student from PTO - hosting Teacher Appreciation Week
<p>Recaps Respective Chairs</p>	<p><u>Popsicles on the Playground</u> - Megan Coopersmith spoke. - Popsicles on the Playground is a free event put on by the PTO to allow for students and families to gather and socialize before the start of the school year. There was a great turnout this year. It is always a fun way to start the year.</p> <p><u>Chalk the Walk</u> - Megan Coopersmith spoke. - Chalk the Walk is a BF tradition where families are invited to decorate the front walkway of the school with kind messages and drawings before the 1st day of school. Families were able to enjoy popsicles too.</p> <p><u>Welcome Back Gifts</u> - Megan Coopersmith spoke. - The PTO put together welcome back gifts for each student. Each teacher also received a welcome back basket with stickers, utensils, supplies, etc. The faculty lounge was also stocked with snacks for the 1st day of school.</p>
<p>Ongoing Events Respective Chairs</p>	<p><u>Coin Wars</u> - Nicole Bottrel spoke. - This year's Coin Wars will take place from Sept. 16 to Oct. 4. - Today was the first day. Buckets are outside of the all purpose room where students can drop off coins or dollar bills into their grade's corresponding bucket (Pre-K/K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd). The amount of money inside each bucket correlates to a number of points. - The winning grade will receive an extra recess with popcorn.</p> <p><u>Teacher Clubs</u> - Megan Coopersmith spoke.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher clubs are after school clubs hosted by BF teachers and staff. Teachers decide on the club topics and the exclusions. The clubs offered can change each session. - Fall registration opens Sept. 23 at 7:30pm. A signup genius link will be sent out to all BF families. - An email was sent out to all BF families with club descriptions. Reach out if you didn't receive this email. - Parent helpers are needed to supervise students while teachers are completing dismissal duties. If clubs don't have helpers, they will be canceled. Parents who volunteer will receive a \$10 refund once the session is over and their child will automatically be enrolled in the club.
<p>Upcoming Events</p> <p>Respective Chairs</p>	<p><u>Dine to Donate</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Petra Crevier spoke. - This year's first Dine to Donate will be at Chuck E. Cheese on Friday, Sept. 20 from 3pm to 10pm. - Bring the flyer with you and present it to the cashier. 20% of the proceeds will be donated to BF PTO. Flyers were sent out to families with coupons on the flyer for families to use. - There will also be a special offer for educators this time including a free teacher meal. More details for educators to come. <p><u>Ice Cream Social</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kristen Paladino and Petra Crevier spoke. - Our annual Ice Cream Social will be taking place on Wednesday, Sept. 25 at 6pm in the BF all purpose room. - Families are encouraged to come and socialize. Bowls of ice cream or water ice will be on sale for \$2 per bowl. There will be ice cream, water ice, toppings and whipped cream. - A big thank you to local businesses, Captain Paul's and PJ Pancake House, for donating ice cream and water ice for the event. <p><u>Fall Fest</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Megan Coopersmith spoke. - Fall Fest will take place on Sunday, Oct. 6 from 1pm to 4 pm. There will be pumpkin decorating, fall themed games, prizes, and raffles. The magic show will begin at 2:30pm. Students will also have an opportunity to mummy wrap Mr. Hewitt. - Admission is \$5 per child; there is no fee for adults. Separately, refreshments will also be for sale. <p><u>Trunk or Treat</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nicole Bottrel spoke.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our annual Trunk or Treat will take place on Saturday, Oct. 26 from 6:30pm to 7:45pm in the BF parking lot. This is a free event for BF families to attend - We are looking for volunteers to host trunks. A volunteer form will be going out soon via email. There will be a gift for the winning trunk.
<p style="text-align: center;">Updates</p> <p>Respective Chairs</p>	<p><u>Homeroom Coordinators</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lindsay Walsh spoke. - Homeroom coordinators and helpers are parent/guardian volunteers who help out in the classroom. Ideally, there will be two homeroom coordinators per classroom plus helpers. - A form was sent out with the welcome packet at the start of the year. Currently, there are some classes still in need of a homeroom coordinator and helpers. These classes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pre-K - Docheff - Kindergarten - Fredericks - 2nd Grade - Piliere/Basmagy - All special education classrooms - If you have a child in any of these classes and would be interested in being a coordinator or helper, reach out. <p><u>Warm Clothing Drive for HomeFront Begins</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Petra Crevier spoke. - Our annual warm clothing drive will begin Oct. 14 and will last until Jan. 13. - The PTO will be collecting gently used fall/winter clothing and blankets/bedding donations. These donations can be dropped off in the entrance vestibule or near the all purpose room. All contributions will be going to HomeFront. <p><u>Charleston Wrap Fundraiser</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Petra Crevier spoke. - This year the PTO will be sending out brochures for a fundraiser with Charleston Wrap. Families can purchase good quality wrapping paper, ornaments, food products, etc. Orders will be shipped directly to homes. Incentives will be available to students who participate. - 40% of the proceeds unless custom which is 30% will be donated to the school.
<p style="text-align: center;">Treasurer's Report</p> <p>Kristen Paladino</p>	<p>*Please scroll to the end of the Meeting Minutes for Kristen's Treasurer's Report and 2023-2024 School Year Summary</p>

<p>Questions or Comments</p> <p>All</p>	<p>Q: When will the results from last school year’s state testing come out? A: During the latter part of the school year, 3rd graders throughout the state of NJ undergo state testing for ELA and math. At this time, the school has received preliminary results from the state. Home reports are expected to be mailed to families soon. The district is waiting on the state to release these results (answered by Mr. Hewitt).</p> <p>Q: After reviewing the fall teacher club offerings, have kindergarteners been excluded from clubs? A: Teachers decide on their club exclusions based on what they think is appropriate for the content of their club. The PTO does not have control of whether or not lower grade levels are included; however, we can provide this feedback to teachers for future club sessions.</p> <p>Q: When it comes to teacher clubs, should we sign up for only one club to save spots for others? A: Right now, there is no limit on the number of clubs that one person can sign up for. Limiting the number of clubs that someone can sign up for would be difficult for us to monitor.</p> <p>Q: When it comes to Trunk or Treat, how much candy does each trunk need if you volunteer? A: It is recommended that each trunk has 700-800 pieces. There is quite a big turnout for this event and students often bring siblings with them. If a trunk runs out of candy, Nicole does keep spare candy purchased by the PTO with her. We ask that the candy be nut-free and that you have candy alternatives on hand to accommodate children with dietary restrictions/allergies.</p> <p>Q: It is great that you’re helping HomeFront but what about underserved students at the school? A: The PTO is mindful of the underserved families at BF and often looks for ways to provide support to those in need. For our events, we provide golden tickets to Mr. Hewitt so he can distribute them to students and their families allowing them to attend at no cost. For our fall and spring book fairs, we also give out vouchers for these students to get a free book from the fair. The school puts on a thanksgiving drive collecting food products for BF students and their families to have a meal during the holiday. The PTO supplements this drive each year. We have even had enough to donate to other families in need at the other schools in Lawrence. For field trips, we also cover the entire cost for students in need so they can attend. As a PTO, it is important to us that there always be the option to support families when it comes to financial access.</p> <p>Q: Is library no longer a special? Will kids get to bring books home? A: Starting this year, library will no longer be a special. Instead, library services will be utilized as a tool or resource to support learning. Students will still get to engage in a book exchange and bring books home (answered by Mr. Hewitt).</p>
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	<p>Q: When it comes to Back to School Night, is it recommended to bring children along or is this meant to be an event for the adults?</p> <p>A: Back to School Night is an event meant for teachers to share information about thwart will be happening in the classroom during the school year. This year we will be returning to a presentation model as opposed to an open house one. Teachers will be doing presentations in the classrooms for parents. We ask that children remain in the all purpose room for an indoor recess set up and be supervised by teachers while parents are viewing their presentations (answered by Mr. Hewitt).</p> <p>Thank you all for coming! Stay connected with us:</p> <p>Ben Franklin PTO Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/BFLawrNj Ben Franklin PTO Twitter: @bfpto Ben Franklin PTO website: http://bfpto.org/ Ben Franklin PTO email address: bfptorocks@gmail.com</p>
<p>Next Meeting</p>	<p>Monday, October 21, 2024 at 7pm</p>

9/16/24 Summary

1. Collected \$2,325 in Donations.
2. Sold \$1,100 worth of last year's Spirit Wear at Popsicles on the Playground. Purchased new Teddy Bears (\$437).
3. Spent \$485 on Teacher Welcome Baskets & Stock the Fridge, \$54 on Family Welcome Packets, paid \$315 for our Zoom Subscription and Website Hosting (both Annual).
4. \$798 for Teacher Club Expenses is Carryover from last year (check cashed in 24-25 FY).
5. Spent \$91 on Popsicles on the Playground; started purchasing for Ice Cream Social (\$133 so far), student Welcome Back gifts (\$63).

Ben Franklin PTO 2024-2025

Budget Categories

Income Categories	23-24 Actual	24-25 Recommer	Actual 24-25	Dif
Cash Donations	\$ 2,210.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,325.00	\$ 325.00
Coin Wars Income	\$ 1,556.60	\$ 1,500.00	\$ -	\$ (1,500.00)
Color Run Income	\$ 960.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ (2,000.00)
Dine to Donate Income	\$ 1,823.83	\$ 1,800.00	\$ -	\$ (1,800.00)
End of Year Carnival Income	\$ 4,171.70	\$ 4,500.00	\$ -	\$ (4,500.00)
Fall Fest Income	\$ 1,348.90	\$ 1,250.00	\$ -	\$ (1,250.00)
Field Trip Offset Income	\$ 1,216.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ -	\$ (1,200.00)
Fundraising Activity Income	\$ 2,113.50	\$ 5,100.00	\$ -	\$ (5,100.00)
Insurance Refund/Reimbursements	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
No-Cost Fundraisers	\$ 18.10	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Other Income	\$ 100.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Raffle/Gaming Income	\$ 1,468.50	\$ 2,500.00	\$ -	\$ (2,500.00)
Scholastic Book Fair Income	\$ 8,689.51	\$ 8,800.00	\$ -	\$ (8,800.00)
Spirit Wear Income	\$ 7,590.90	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 1,100.15	\$ (7,899.85)
Teacher Clubs Income	\$ 28,024.50	\$ 24,500.00	\$ -	\$ (24,500.00)
Third Grade Party Fundraising	\$ 1,348.70	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ (1,000.00)
Trenton Thunder Income	\$ 2,652.00	\$ 2,750.00	\$ -	\$ (2,750.00)
Winter Event Income	\$ 1,419.00	\$ 1,250.00	\$ -	\$ -

Expense Categories	23-24 Actual	24-25 Recommer	Actual 24-25	Dif
Assemblies	\$ 1,815.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00
Bank Fees	\$ 165.36	\$ 160.00	\$ 62.29	\$ 97.71
Coin Wars Expenses	\$ 36.00	\$ 50.00	\$ -	\$ 50.00
Color Run Expenses	\$ 477.32	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00
Day of Service	\$ 237.72	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00
End of Year Carnival Expenses	\$ 2,769.26	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00
Fall Fest Expenses	\$ 1,240.33	\$ 1,250.00	\$ -	\$ 1,250.00
Field Trips	\$ 6,710.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00
Fundraising Activity Expenses	\$ 859.58	\$ 1,550.00	\$ 133.30	\$ 1,416.70
Insurance Expenses	\$ 466.00	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00
Misc Family School Activities	\$ 541.76	\$ 700.00	\$ 91.48	\$ 608.52
Misc In-School Activities Expenses	\$ 5.98	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Operating Expenses	\$ 856.49	\$ 850.00	\$ 392.13	\$ 457.87
Other Expenses	\$ 1,838.72	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
PTO Gift to School	\$ 2,533.87	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00
Scholarships	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00	\$ -	\$ 200.00
Scholastic Book Fair Expenses	\$ 7,399.64	\$ 7,500.00	\$ -	\$ 7,500.00
Screen Free Week Expenses	\$ 269.87	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 500.00
Spirit Wear Expense	\$ 5,560.95	\$ 8,500.00	\$ 436.95	\$ 8,063.05
Student Appreciation	\$ 289.07	\$ 500.00	\$ 63.59	\$ 436.41
Teacher Appreciation Activity	\$ 2,664.11	\$ 2,650.00	\$ 485.03	\$ 2,164.97
Teacher Club Expenses	\$ 16,341.24	\$ 14,000.00	\$ 798.94	\$ 13,201.06
Teacher Request Fund	\$ 1,165.45	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ 1,000.00
Third Grade End of Year	\$ 5,205.15	\$ 4,000.00	\$ -	\$ 4,000.00
Trenton Thunder Expenses	\$ 1,694.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ -	\$ 1,750.00
Trunk or Treat	\$ 161.61	\$ 200.00	\$ -	\$ 200.00
Volunteer Appreciation	\$ -	\$ 250.00	\$ -	\$ 250.00
Winter Event	\$ 1,547.33	\$ 1,400.00	\$ -	\$ 1,400.00

Income Total	\$ 65,292.74	\$ 69,150.00	\$ 3,425.15
Expenses Total	\$ 59,648.87	\$ 64,510.00	\$ 2,463.71
NET	\$ 5,643.87	\$ 4,640.00	\$ 961.44

Teacher Appreciation Monthly		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
Total	\$	-
Budget	\$	400.00
Remaining	\$	400.00

2023-2024 Summary can be found on the next page.

In 2023-2024 School Year Summary:

We budgeted \$2,550 for 6 FREE Family Events and 3 mini ones:

- Ice Cream Social
- Trunk or Treat
- Multicultural Night
- Science Night
- Screen Free Week (5 Nights of Fun!)
- 3rd Grade Service Project
- Popsicles on the Playground (September)
- Chalk the Walk (September & June)
- Total Spent: \$1,848

We budgeted \$12,049 for Student Gifts including:

- 3rd Grade Party, T-shirts and Yearbook
- Buses for Field Trips
- THREE Assemblies
- Small Gifts for Students Three Times (Start of Year, Leap Day, End of Year)
- Book Exchange
- Two \$100 Scholarships for Graduating Seniors that went to Ben Franklin Elementary School
- Total Spent: \$9,961

We budgeted a total of \$6,050 for School Improvements and Teacher/Staff Appreciation:

- Teacher Appreciation Week (5 Days of Spoiling!)
- Trout Chiller, New Entry Mat and Fall Mulch for Front Gardens
- Principal Day Gift, Nurse's Day Gift
- Teacher Baskets & "Stock the Fridge" for First Day of School
- PTO Gift Wrapping "Gift of Time" in December
- Teacher Requests approved: Teacher Book Club Books, Chick Hatching, Canvas Bags and Ice Pops for Field Day. We've also purchased Calm Strips for all students' desks to use in the next school year.
- Total Spent: \$5,815

Operational Expenses & Supplies Totaled \$1,727. This covered Bank Fees, State Registrations & Permits, Subscriptions to Signup Genius and Zoom, Insurance and Supplies used for All Events, like new Walkie Talkies.

We budgeted \$4000 for Field Trip Entrance Fees. We spent \$2,710 (the third grade trip was FREE) and thank you for your contributions totaling \$1,216 to offset that amount.

In order to SPEND all this money, we completed 16 Fundraisers and a summary of the profits is below:

- Fall Spirit Wear - \$1,258
- Coin Wars - \$1,521
- Fall Teacher Clubs - \$3,983
- Fall Fest – \$663
- Fall Book Fair – Scholastic Dollars (used to purchase 4 books per child this school year!)
- Holiday Shop - \$258
- Movie Night - \$397
- Winter Teacher Clubs - \$3,764
- Spring Spirit Wear - \$772
- Turkey Trot Fun Run - \$1,398 (includes \$915 collected for Teacher Experience Raffles)
- Spring Book Fair - \$1,723
- Spring Teacher Clubs - \$4,128
- Spring Carnival - \$1,402
- Trenton Thunder - \$958
- Amerikick Parent’s Night Out (2) - \$1,107

Finally, we earned \$1,824 through our Dine to Donate Fundraisers (thanks for being hungry!) and collected \$2,228 in cash donations.

We are looking forward to trying some new fundraisers in the next school year, while keeping family and student favorites going (and maybe retiring those that were not hits!). We were glad we could offer so many FREE events for families this year and hope to be able to offer them again next year!

Thank you for your contributions, whether it was donating money, attending our events or (most importantly) offering your TIME to help run these events. We really couldn’t do it without you...enjoy the summer and we’ll see you next year!

With Appreciation,

BF PTO Executive Board

Megan Coopersmith, President
Petra Crevier, Vice President #1
Lindsay Walsh, Vice President #2

Ilana Hernandez, Recording Secretary
Nicole Bottrel, Corresponding Secretary
Kristen Paladino, Treasurer