V.A.S.E. MEETING
December 6, 2007

Board Members Present: Rania Lavranos, Melissa Morrill, Suzy Taylor, and Christine Winters

Other Members Present: Rebecca Baldwin, Julie Bangs, Michelle Chandler, Diane Hartley, Maria Keegan, Dona Mahoney, Jane McCarthy, Geri Owens, Trina Waniga and Peter Winters.

The meeting was opened at 9:00 by Rania Lavranos.

Secretary’s Report – Suzy Taylor reviewed the highlights of the November 1st meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer’s Report – Christine Winters distributed the VASE account balances. We currently have 42,414 in our accounts. She noted that we received a $1,300 donation from a local family. A VASE member asked how our balance compared to previous years at this time. Christine felt that it was a similar amount but would report back with exact findings. A discussion on fundraising then occurred. It was noted that fundraising throughout the district was down the last few years.

Principal’s Report – Dona Mahoney started her report continuing the discussion on fundraising. She had attended a recent meeting with representative from all the ORR schools. She gave a listing of fundraising being done – the list included: phone-a-thons, magazine drives, calendar sales, box tops, soup labels, The Challenge (a Rochester fundraiser in which parents are challenged to donate money), concession stands, basket raffles, cookie dough and NStar light bulb sales. The NStar bulb sales provide a 100% profit. VASE will be checking into this.

At the fundraising meeting it was also discussed how the PTO organizations spent the money that was raised. Enrichment programs were where the bulk of the money was spent, along with sports, prizes, in-school performances, and supplies.

Dona noted that the greatest issue that was discussed at the meeting was how to get parents involved. The consensus was to get Kindergarten parents involved early. Rochester has a BBQ and signs up the parents to be “members” of the PTO.
Dona also addressed the upcoming budget. She stressed that it is important for parents to stay informed. Dona has been asked to “maintain current levels of services”, which means she can not add anything new. And, in order to keep the spending level, she will probably have to reduce staffing, and eliminate any spending on new technology or copiers, etc. Again she encouraged parents to keep informed on this process so their voice can be heard.

Dona has been meeting with Lynne Parks Kuhl to begin plans for the SEAS (Sippican Elementary Art Space). The back hallway (by the Indian mural) will be set up to highlight both student, teacher and parent art. If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Dona or Lynne.

Rania asked Dona if we had plans for celebrating with the children their excellent performance on the recent MCAS tests. Dona assured us that the students have been told how well they have done. She was not sure what could best be done to reward them – usually sweets are used, but it presents problems for some children and parents. It was discussed perhaps giving them “smart food” popcorn and a fun pencil. VASE will follow up with this.

**Teacher Liaison** – Julie Bangs informed the group of a fundraiser called a Math-a-thon in which students receive pledges for how many math problems they can solve in a minute. She is aware that this is successful.

The schedule for Lyn Hoopes coming in was also discussed.

Julie noted that the Great Source Book catalog had Reading and Science books that looked interesting. However it is hard to tell just by the description if they would be beneficial. Rania will be ordering a sample copy so that the teachers can review them. We will then take orders for the books next year.

Julie also thanked Rebecca Baldwin for helping in the teacher’s book room.

Lastly, Julie expressed concern with VIBES only being on-line. Some student’s families do not have computers. A discussion ensued regarding the benefits of VIBES. It was concluded that VIBES would go on-line with a hard copy sent home for the first edition. Then, it would go paperless. With the rising cost of copying and the decreasing budget, Sippican would be wise to begin conserving their copying usage.

**VASE Updates**

**Raffle** – Suzy conducted the raffle drawing for the $25 Target gift certificate. All parents that have logged their volunteering hours into the PTO Manager database were entered. Terry Allen’s name was selected - - Congratulations Terry and thanks to all of our volunteers.
Bingo – Rania highlighted the great evening of Bingo we had last month. We made a $375 profit from the evening. A parent suggested we offer more snacks so that the profit would be greater. It was discussed that Bingo is not really set up as a fundraiser but rather a fun night out for our families – so we try to keep the need for parent spending to a minimum which is why we only offer the water and popcorn.

Poinsettias – Thank you to Maria Keegan for organizing this. We had 191 plants ordered this year. Again, this is not designed as a large fundraiser, but rather a service VASE offers our parents to make getting a beautiful poinsettia convenient.

Drama Club – Suzy quickly gave an update on the club. There has been an overwhelming response to the original inquiry – 110 kids expressed interest. Suzy will be meeting with a representative from the Priscilla Beach Theatre to see how we can partner to bring more theatre to Sippican.

School Store – the cart has been ordered. Trina will be the VASE volunteer working with Stacey Soucy to finalize plans for the store. It will be opened Wednesday afternoons in the HardWork Café. It will be a supply based store (no food items). It is not designed as a fund raiser, but a fun tool for enrichment. The kids running the store will learn about inventory, pricing, profit, etc.

The Providence Bruins Night is January 25th – flyers will go out next week.

2008-09 Board Members - - we are looking for a Treasurer and Secretary to replace Christine Winters and Suzy Taylor for the next school year. If you are interested, please contact the VASE Board. We will gladly explain what is involved with being on the Board.

ACE – Marissa Ortiz is still looking for a co-chair for our After School Enrichment program.

Skip the Screen Week – will be the week of April 7th this year. We discussed different option for the week. YoYo Man was suggested! We will continue to finalize plans for the week over the next month or two.

MOP – Betsy Kaplan is chairing this event and has two 5th grade parents helping. We would like to find a 4th grade parent that can “shadow” as a volunteer so they will understand how it works when their children participate next year.

Performing Arts – Rania highlighted that the Kindergarten had Eyes on Owls last month, the 3rd grade had a Wampanoag visitor and the 4th Grade had a Marco Polo speaker.
Other Discussions....

Dona Mahoney quickly informed us that the YMCA program will be starting a much needed before school program in January.

A parent asked about the HardWork Café and asked if it was being used. Dona informed her that it is being used – however not as originally planned. It is being used more as a resource center. A discussed took place about ways to use the Café. It was suggested that perhaps children could be rewarded and use it during indoor recess time.

Regarding indoor recess – plans are in the works to map a trail in the school that children can walk during indoor recess. They could keep track of the mileage and have incentives for walking.

Jane McCarthy discussed issues revolving the budget and the SpED program. There are many people concerned with the increase in SpED spending which results in the decrease of spending on the other students in Sippican. She encouraged parents to attend a meeting of the School Council, December 19th at 5:30 in which Teresa Hamm will present information on how we handle our SpED program. Following at 6:30 the regular School Council meeting will discuss the MCAS scores.

Also, at the Sippican all-school meeting on December 21, the school committee will have the honor of presenting an award to the Braitmeyers. The Braitmeyer Foundation was selected from all the schools in MA as the recipients of the award. The Braitmeyer funds are used at Sippican to help with the RIF program and the enrichment programs. Parents are encouraged to come and show their support and appreciation.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:08 a.m.