Newtown High School of the Performing Arts P&C Association

Minutes NHSPA P&C Meeting
6pm Tuesday 11th May 2010
Staff Common Room

Chair: Darren Mitchell – President

Attendance: The meeting was attended by 24 parents, Stephen Gray Principal Peter Shields and Betty Romeo Deputy Principals

Apologies: Edi Condack, Jaqui Fine, Sharon Micale, Steven Allen, Jenny Shay

Minutes of March Meeting: Read and accepted (moved by Mary Mooney and seconded by Lisa McManus )

The meeting opened with a welcome to all present and an introduction to the P&C process.

Matters Arising: Parents raised issues from the parent/teacher interview night, including difficulty getting appointments, some teachers not being able to keep booked appointments (due to high demand) and how appointments are managed (ie. not keeping to 5 minute allocation per appointment).
Stephen Gray has agreed to again review the system with the aim to better marry demand and access.

Correspondence:
- Annual Conference of Federation of P&C Associations call for delegates.
- Marrickville Council Grants Program.

Principal’s Report: (Stephen Gray)

Parent/Teacher night
- The parent teacher night process was restructured a few years ago and Stephen wants feed back from parents on their experience. Stephen asked if three years in one night is too much and if having two, year groups per evening might work better. The general feeling was that this would potentially work better.

U.S. Dance Tour
- The students were fabulous. The features of the tour are one week of dance classes; Visits to our sister school in Dallas (a school with dazzling facilities); U.S. National Dance Festival in Miami. Also, Year 12 students have the opportunity to audition for college scholarships. Stephen is communicating with the Board of Studies to investigate the possibility of successful Year 12 students sitting their HSC exams in the U.S. as the scholarships commence in September
of the year they are awarded. This conflicts with commencement of the HSC exams here in October. Scholarships cannot be deferred.

**China Tour**
- 105 students from music and drama will attend the tour accompanied by 9 teachers.

**Annual School report**
- Is complete and due to be on the web site in two weeks. It will be available online only.

**NAPLAN**
- Started the day of this meeting and will conclude in two days. Stephen stated that the NAPLAN test has definite diagnostic benefits.

**School Executive Conference**
- Student engagement was the focus of the conference. This is a current focus for our school executive. Betty Romeo conducted a School Quality of Life survey and will present the results at the June P&C meeting in the library.

**Pilot Program School Budget**
- The school has been involved in a pilot program which gives the school greater control over budgeting and spending. The school now has funds to spend on additional human resources. A new Office Manager has been appointed and a temporary head teacher will be appointed to focus on Student Engagement.

**Showcase Ticketing**
- The ticketing program required an upgrade to handle the new seating configuration. A new version is being developed but was not available for the current Showcase season. Consequently there has been a delay issuing tickets and some tickets will have to be hand written.

**Issues Raised on Google Groups**
- Stephen was asked by the P&C Executive to address the meeting in response to dialogue on google groups regarding the co-curricular company/ensemble program and formation of independent musical groups.

- A target of the existing School Plan 2009-11 is to increase the numbers of students involved in extra/co-curricular PA programs by 5%.

- New strategies implemented in 2010 to achieve this increase have been: the development of Year 9 Showcase electives; an additional dance ensemble has been added to cater for new Year 11 students; an extra Year 7 drama company has been established.
An ongoing initiative is the staging of a major performing arts production every 2 years. In March 2010 this was ‘BUGS – The Musical’.

In recent years the percussion and guitar ensembles have been established. The percussion ensemble is now regarded as a major ensemble.

Music has 270 ensemble places, Approximately 200 students came into the school for music.

Dance has 150 places an increase from 135 places eighteen months ago.

Drama has 20 companies, which includes an additional 30 places over the last few years.

Stephen spoke of the focus for the school being on excellence and the school does and will continue to audition students for the co-curricular program in line with this focus. Therefore the situation exits where not all students who audition are allocated to a company/ensemble.

The number of NHSPA students accepted to participate in the School Spectacular is set by the event’s organisers.

A question from the floor of the meeting…. “why, if a student wants to be involved in a minor ensemble do you have to be in a major ensemble?” Answer- “this is to support the school’s major program/s and show commitment to this first”.

Stephen expressed that he wants the parents to know he is listening to what is being said and to what concerns some parents.

The Showcase electives including ‘Create your own musical’, ‘Up in lights’ and Showcase Catering and Hospitality have started slowly and it is hoped that the choices will broaden and provide an even greater number of opportunities.

Independent musical groups that wish to rehearse at lunch time require access to a room and to a supervising teacher. There must be a teacher present to satisfy the school’s duty of care responsibilities.

Stephen agreed that some students would have more performance opportunities at other schools and he will place more emphasis on this during the audition process so that families are better informed in advance.

Stephen was asked about the particular opportunities (or lack of) for vocalists who have been accepted into the school on the strength of their vocal ability. Stephen confirmed that there is a junior and senior choir, which is the entry point for vocalists to audition for the ensemble program. All vocalists who audition are
placed in one of these choirs. From there they can audition to be part of specialised vocal ensembles.

- A discussion about student disengagement took place and Stephen again encouraged parents to attend the June P&C meeting to hear Betty Romeo’s presentation of the results of the Student Engagement survey.

- A question from the floor – “why do students have to choose if there is a clash across ensembles/companies” Response “simply not enough time and resources available to avoid some clashes”.

- The next three year School Plan will be discussed and developed early next year and teachers, students and parents will again be invited to participate in its formation.

**Action to be taken to address the issues raised:**

- Stephen will document more extensively how the school curriculum operates and how the co-curricular company/ensemble program works. This will be available for the upcoming auditions and will also be posted to the school website.

- Darren suggested that Gemma Thomas, head teacher music, be invited to address a P&C meeting. Stephen Gray agreed to pass that request onto Gemma for the meeting after next in August (No meeting in July due to school holidays).

The discussion was bought to a close so that other agenda items could be attended to.

**Treasurer’s Report:** (Jeremy Challen)

| INCOME | $8,900 | mainly comprises memberships and grant |
| DONATIONS TO SCHOOL | $9,420 | the largest single item was Yamaha sound mixing desk for $5,168 |

The P&C received a NSW Gov’t grant for $4,036, of which only $1,550 has been spent to date (BBQ). P&C assessing how to allocate remaining funds.

The P&C Voluntary Fundraising Contribution letter will go out in the next week with the Yamaha sound mixing desk listed as a priority although, as already noted, the P&C has acquired the module in anticipation given exceptionally good price quoted for immediate purchase.

**President’s Report:** (Darren Mitchell)

- Darren referred the meeting to the P&C news in the newsletter.
P&C Sub-Committees:

- Environment Committee- involvement welcomed and encouraged. Convener John Caley
- Performing and Visual Arts – The refurbishments to the Studio Theatre continue. The Guest Director program has begun with a UWS student directing a drama company during the current showcase season. Co-convener’s Michael Manuell and Mary Mooney.
- Faculty Committee – to ascertain what support the parent body may be able to offer non-performing and visual arts faculties. Convener – Gina Richter.

Meeting closed at approx 7:40pm.

Next meeting Tuesday 8th June at 6pm in the School Library