

Kennedy PTO - January Meeting Minutes

January 27, 2026, 6:30-7:30 PM, Kennedy School Library

Welcome & Introductions

1. Reach us at *JFKcougarsPTO@gmail.com*
2. All Kennedy family members, staff, and friends of the school are part of the PTO
3. Working on the name change: ***Kennedy Families & Friends***

The PTO's work at Kennedy

1. We **host free family events** to help students and their families feel like they are part of the school community.
2. We **support school staff** with grants, meals, appreciation days, and more.
3. We **serve families** by hosting guest speakers at our monthly meetings, free community meals, and supplying gift cards for the social workers to distribute.
4. We **advocate for school needs** with the district or school board.
5. We **fundraise** in order to be able to do all those things!

Updates on PTO work

1. \$4224 in classroom grants awarded to seven staff members (Bonner, Graham, Kuehl, Leaf, Rogers, Shanti, Symes)
2. Staff breakfast & coffee provided on Dec. 1 work day
3. \$1637 received in Giving Tuesday online fundraiser
4. \$223 earned at Ian's Pizza Dough-Nation Night
5. Advocacy group is working on action steps

Upcoming events and how you can help

1. Advocacy group meeting Feb. 3
2. Teacher Appreciation Week, May 4-8
3. Help at the Kennedy Fun Run - May 15 (rain date May 22)
 - a. Suggestions for businesses to ask for sponsorships?
 - b. Help with recruiting sponsors

Guest Speakers: Blair Mosner Feltham (assigned to Kennedy for 25-26 school year) and Nicki Vander Meulen

Conversation with MMSD Board Members:

Ashley Parker, Occupational Therapist at Kennedy shared how things are going at Kennedy

Glows

- BHS/Counselor - providing therapist at school

- Strong MTSS process
- Staff climate survey overall positive
- Community events and after school programming have been very successful

Challenges

- 10% of population experiencing homelessness
- High concentration of needs in classrooms
- 39% of students are not meeting academic benchmarks, often treating the lowest of the low, kids in the middle are getting missed
- One classroom is 47% special ed
- Need to think about boundary changes - what can be done to solve the challenges right now, trauma weighting special ed allocation

MMSD Board of Education members provided introductions

Blaire Mosner Feltham - teacher in Sun Prairie, teaches at Alternative High School, prior was the MTSS coordinator, prior to that was working at Madison West, has two children at Emerson Elementary

Nikki Vander Meulen - been on Board for 9 years

What do other schools contact the Board for - are the requests as dire?

- Transportation concerns come from all schools
- Parents with students with IEP's
- Employee issues

What are your thoughts on the allocations?

- Vander Meulen - need to look at allocations, Board sees them after they are done, there are a lot of subjective decisions
- Mosner Feltham - Allocation system has been opaque - hope and belief that that is shifting - Superintendent Gothard has indicated he would like to make changes to the process.
- Kennedy's advocacy has been successful - know what to do - advocate for policy change rather than specific position requests
- There are a lot of line items that don't necessarily meet the needs of a principal - there are other school districts that have a model of the principal getting a set amount of money that they decide the needs (Chicago public schools for example)
- Change would require policy and administrative issues - Board and Human Resources

Does the district have a stance related to ICE?

- Resolution reaffirmed at 1/26 School Board meeting. Will not voluntarily share information with ICE, federal agents of any type are not allowed in the building, warrants need to go to the superintendent

What is the communication with MPD for ICE?

- There are established communication channels - don't want to comment on MPD's position

Expectations for boundary review process? What can the Board commit the district to do reviews of the boundaries?

- Board will make decision at the end - there will be committees, schools will be asked views - there will be surveys - Board wants to hear from families regarding what Kennedy needs
- Community input based on scenarios will be taken in May, trust the team that is doing it, personal expectations is that it will be well done

Talk of building a new school - will the boundary review be delayed waiting for a new school to be built?

- Don't believe they will wait until a new school will be built

What could MMSD and the City do to improve coordination more?

- MMSD senior leadership team is holding weekly meetings with City planning

How do we keep educators, not burn out in a school like Kennedy?

- Mental health days were created
- Need to look at surplus process
- District does not have a good way of looking at the intellectual and spiritual limits of staff

Pay stipends for staff that go to schools like Kennedy - is that a policy that is possible?

- For compensation - the Board passes the budget
- Idea about location based stipends is interesting

Could Kennedy leverage teaching assistants more?

- Village Builder is an example of how community members can work in the school
- Discussion around what is the capacity to offer sabbatical? What if PD days were more about professional development than software training? Believe professional development should change to allow teachers and educators to grow their craft

blfeltham@madison.k12.wi.us
nkvander@yahoo.com