

Akins ECHS PTSA Meeting

February 5, 2025

5:30 – 6:30 PM

In attendance:

Beth Pasko (Delegate), Trudy Richards (Treasurer), Melissa Contreras (VP), Robin Sanchez, Cynthia Luna, Connie Miralrio (VP), Angelica Ancira (President), Paula Hawn, Marios Croque, Jhoximar Crouque, Jeff Greene, Carin Greene, Jayden Brown, Symi Valenzuela, Thomas Loving, Breelyn West, Brennan West, Joshua Taylor, Marquell Williams, Ceci Vazquez (Chair), Michael Herbin, Esley Gomez, Taylor Mena

Meeting called to Order: 5:34 PM

Minutes Review/Approval:

- The minutes were reviewed, and it was noted that the spelling of some names were incorrect, likely due to transcription errors. Apologies were given, and corrections will be made.
- Motion to approve the minutes with these corrections was made Melissa Contreras with a second from Paula Hawn. Motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

- **Adopt an Eagle Shoe Drive**
 - Miss Connie shared the success of the Eagle Shoe Drive, which was organized quickly after a last-minute decision when the usual sponsor for the Angel Tree program backed out.
 - In just two weeks, \$1,575 was raised, which allowed the purchase of 21 \$75 gift cards for students to get shoes for Christmas.
 - Suggestions for future initiatives include bulk shoe purchases or having students submit requests for shoes in advance.
 - The program could become an annual project.
 - Special thanks to the teachers who sponsored students.

Reports:

- **Treasurer's Report:**
 - Two reports were provided, one for December and one for January.
 - For January, there was \$195 in income and \$9.98 in expenses, with a bank balance of \$7,591.70.

- Most of the spending occurs in the spring, with funds allocated for teacher appreciation and student grants.
- **Membership Update:**
 - Six new members joined in December and January, bringing the total to 81 members. The goal is 120 members for the year.
- **Fundraising Update:**
 - Partnership with Kam's Clothiers and Tux Shop
 - A partnership with Kam's Clothiers and Tux Shop was established after the previous program with Men's Wearhouse ended. If 50 tuxedos are rented from Kam's for prom, the PTSA will receive a \$300 donation.
 - Tuxedo rental prices range from \$190 to \$270, with upgrades available for designer brands. Purchases start at \$299. Kam's also offers in-house alterations, and their services cater to sizes up to 74 inches.
 - Reservations for prom tuxedos are recommended by mid-February and should be made at least two weeks before prom, with pickup on the Wednesday before prom and return the following Monday.
 - Flyers about the partnership will be shared with Student Council and via parent communications.
 - A \$400 check was received from Blue and Gold Night, adding to the fundraising total.
 - Nikki, the current fundraising chair, is preparing for the next year with a spreadsheet of corporate contacts and a fundraising timeline calendar to ensure timely planning for future events.
 - Suggestions for new fundraising events can be emailed to the PTSA, and the group is open to ideas.
- **Advocacy Update:**
 - Beth shared updates from the Austin Council of PTAs (ACPTA) regarding legislative priorities. Key issues discussed include funding for schools, with many districts in Texas facing a funding crisis, and concerns about attendance-based vs. enrollment-based funding.
 - The state of Texas currently funds schools based on student attendance, but this system is considered outdated, and there is push to move to an enrollment-based funding model.

- Rally Day at the Texas Capitol is on February 24th, a key event for advocating public education.
- Students' voices are considered powerful when advocating for educational issues, and families are encouraged to participate.
- **Principal's Report:**
 - Parent Conferences will be held on February 17th, with a goal to continue the successful practice of connecting with parents. Akins High School is unique in hosting such conferences at the secondary level.
 - African American Heritage Celebrations - Akins will host its own African American Heritage Celebration on February 20th and is also the host campus for the District African American Heritage Celebration on February 26th. Akins students will perform at the event, showcasing the full orchestra, jazz band, dance groups, and choir.
 - SAT Testing will take place on March 4th, with juniors testing and interventions for other grade levels.
 - Achievements in CTE (Career and Technical Education) include winning grand champion at the Travis County Youth Show, as well as big wins for HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America) and Color Guard.
 - New Assistant Principal: **Serena** will replace Barerra, who retired due to family issues.
- **Academy Updates:**
 - ECHS (Early College High School) students began their semester in January, with freshmen taking classes on campus and seniors nearing completion of their associate degrees.
 - The ECHS Ambassadors represented the program at the Academy Fair in January.
 - Criminal Justice students are preparing for state competitions, and the Green Tech program continues to compete in various events.
 - The African American Heritage celebration will take place on February 20th with performances from Akins students.
 - Teacher of the Month for New Tech Academy is Mr. Manning, recognized for his work in computer science.
 - Device Management: Preparing for testing season and ensuring readiness for TELPAS testing.
 - Newspaper: Students are finalizing their 4th issue.
 - Animation: Students are working on portfolios and software certifications.

- Photography: Preparing post-district staff headshots and entering photography competitions.
- Audio/Video Production: Students are submitting their UIL Film Festival entries. Two students advanced to Round 2 for the first time.
- Health Sciences: Students made it to the regional mental health promotion project. They've been helping at the Special Olympics and preparing for upcoming competitions and internships.
- STEM: Robotics team had a tough but rewarding competition. STEM Academy's Grumbles nominated for Library of the Year. Mr. Rodriguez published a book on students and reading.
- BioMed: Students are working on science fair projects for the upcoming science fair on February 20th.
- **Student Council Update:**
 - Prom Theme: "Timeless Elegance" (Old Hollywood) was chosen.
 - Volunteering: Plans to volunteer at the Black History Month event.
 - Fundraising: Working to fundraise for the State Convention, including a Spirit Night at P Terry's on February 12th.
 - Underclassmen Event: A movie night organized by underclassmen on February 19th.
- **A+ Federal Credit Union Update:**
 - Tap Cards: Excited for students to create their own tap cards.
 - Scholarship Deadline: Applications are due by February 7th at 11:59 PM.
 - Classroom Presentations: Offering presentations for classrooms, clubs, or student groups.

New Business:

- **Board Selection Committee:** Committee members needed for identifying and nominating next year's board members.
- **Student Mini Grants:** PTSA typically offers mini grants for student organizations needing financial help. The question was raised whether at least one sponsor needs to be a PTSA member to apply for a grant. After a unanimous vote, the decision was made that at least one student or sponsor of the group must be a PTSA member to apply for a Mini Grant.
- **Teacher Support Budget:**
 - The group discussed how the \$500 allocated for teacher support each year has been used in the past, notably last year when the budget went toward buying

items from a teacher's Amazon wish list only \$198 of the budget was used to purchase supplies and items were placed in the teacher workroom for distribution, but there were concerns about how effective that process was.

- A new proposal was suggested by Mrs. Contreras, advocating for rotating the support annually by department. Each department would submit a wish list, and the funds would be used for their specific needs on a rotating basis. This would ensure resources are distributed fairly, and no department would miss out. However, there were concerns that with 9-10 departments, it would take too long for any one department to get support again. The suggestion was made to support two departments each year with around \$300 each, increasing the budget to \$600.
- A motion was made by Connie Miralrio to approve an amendment to increase the allocated budget for Teacher Support to \$600. This motion was seconded by Paula Hawn and passed unanimously.
- **Teacher Appreciation Ideas:**
 - The group discussed ideas for teacher appreciation events. Past events included ice cream socials, taco bars, baked potato bars, and nacho bars. The goal was to come up with cost-effective yet enjoyable ideas that would serve about 300 people.
 - Ideas suggested included:
 - Breakfast tacos or a taco truck
 - Coffee or flavored water bar
 - A dessert charcuterie (a selection of desserts for teachers to grab)
 - Veggie trays or healthier options
 - A charcuterie with a mix of sweet and savory options
 - A vote will be taken from teachers to determine which option they prefer at the Parent Teacher conferences via a QR code.

Announcements:

- **Smore Discussion:**
 - The board considered continuing the use of S'more (a platform used for the PTA newsletter) which costs \$149 a year. This service includes a translation option for multiple languages, including Spanish.
 - The group also discussed the distribution and flexibility of the newsletter, which includes updates through text, email, and social media.

- It was decided to continue using S'more for now due to the benefits it provides.

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 PM.