

Blind Brook PTA
General Meeting
Wednesday, January 19, 2021
7:00pm
Blind Brook MS/HS IMC (In Person) and Via Zoom
MINUTES

I. Acting Superintendent Q&A and Update: Colin Byrne

- A. Update on Ridge Street School construction
 - i. Courtyard is coming along
 - ii. Once courtyard is complete, focus will shift to cafetorium
 - iii. Still plan to finish by the end of this school year
 - iv. District will renew the temporary certificate of occupancy periodically, which means periodic inspections
- B. We had 3 new hires recently:
 - i. Laurie Baum: Interim School Business Official. Will oversee district's finances and facilities this year
 - ii. Stewart Hanson: Interim Director of Health, Nursing, Physical Education and Interscholastic Athletics
 - iii. Kallie Edge: Covid Coordinator
- C. Snow days - RSS still has one snow day, the MS/HS has none.
 - i. **Q: I didn't know the power outage counted as a snow day. Will there be consideration of holding remote instruction the next time it snows, so that MS/HS students don't lose vacation days?** Yes, there will be notice and lead time in advance of a "remote instruction snow day," so that students and teachers can be prepared.
 - ii. I get emails from people who want no-instruction snow days, and from people who want remote instruction snow days. I read everything parents send me and take it into consideration.
- D. COVID update:
 - i. Things have been very confusing the past few weeks.
 - ii. I believe we have appropriate protocols and staff in place now. We will be getting back to parents more quickly.
 - iii. Regarding the testing program- we have revamped it from soup to nuts. We are still hammering out some pieces, like notifying students to pick up and drop off materials. I'm glad people reached out to me saying they didn't get a confirmation- hopefully everyone is caught up and on the list if you want to be on the testing cycle. I've had a few questions about when to expect results: usually it takes 2 to 3 days. The tests will be sent

out every Friday, usually we know by Monday/Tuesday. My goal is to notify everybody of their results, whether the result is positive or negative.

- iv. **Q: The state mandates that unvaccinated teachers be tested. Are we on track to test unvaccinated teachers now?** Yes, actually the testing of teachers was always going on. It was the voluntary testing of students that we lost track of. Also, more staff have submitted vaccination cards, so fewer need to be tested.
- v. **Q: We signed up for a program for tests we've had in school. Are we going to use them at all? There are a good amount of tests sitting in one of the schools, aren't there?** Based on the reply to the vaccination survey, we shouldn't need a Test To Stay program. Sometimes we supply a family with tests, if one child tested positive, and the family wants to test siblings. In addition, we'll plan to share out the tests broadly after the next break. Tests are hard to come by; we want to be cognizant of that.
- vi. **Q: What happened with the testing that wasn't going on? Where did that communication fall?** I can't exactly speak to that. I think someone didn't understand the full scope of the job, and I wasn't following up because I assumed they did, which was my mistake. I want to be sure when things get handed off, that someone understands the work they need to do.
- vii. **Q: There's been talk in the news regarding boosters and after school activities. Where does that sit in terms of Blind Brook policy?** If you read the NYS regulations, in order for students to participate in after school activities including sports, they have to be vaccinated and boosted. Local superintendents feel that doesn't make sense. We are waiting for the Westchester DOH to weigh in. We are not enforcing the booster part. Superintendents are looking to advocate not to have that piece in because it doesn't make sense, since we are already having students in school all day. For example, a student may be in Drama class during the school day, but not be in an afterschool play because they're not boosted? It doesn't make sense.
- viii. **Q: How can students sign up to attend Homecoming?** Check your email tomorrow. The PTA will have sign ups on Community Pass.
- ix. **Q: Regarding snow days, thank you for communicating the current status. Is there a page on the district website where we post the status of snow days?** No, we haven't done that. It's an interesting idea; I'm sure we could add that to the calendar page.
- x. **Q: Regarding STEAM at RSS: I know that kids have done paper airplanes for a while because the construction has been delayed. I understand that now kids can go to the classroom now and have**

proper instruction. I understand supplies are stored away somewhere. Can we have a timeline as to when students will have access to the STEAM supplies? Mrs. Taylor, the STEAM teacher now has a classroom, but she doesn't have the supplies. Our DICE facilitator, Mrs. Burke, is going to go through the materials with Mrs. Taylor and plan lessons with the actual supplies available. **Follow Up: Where are the supplies locked up, and could we ask parents to send in supplies?** Yes, I was explaining to Mrs. Burke that Mrs. Willig used to ask parents for bottles, shoe boxes, toilet paper rolls, etc, if a project required it. The supplies are currently in the maker space, a room that is not in use right now.

- xi. Comment: Regarding the STEAM class, it has been super disappointing. Our fifth graders have been making paper airplanes for months. Our children tell us how boring it is, and the new Red Riding Hood unit in STEAM is not an appropriate level - it's kindergarten level. Kids do not have access to an engineering program; it's just not fair to our students. Parents are supplementing by paying for the Junior Jellies program at the High School.**
- xii. Q: There is a date on the calendar for the 5th grade moving up. Is that the final official date?** We've historically done the last Thursday for all of the ceremonies. I'll take a look and get confirmation on that.

II. Co-Presidents' Report: Cameron Sager and Correy Stephenson

- A. We are in the process of electing our new board. Thank you to Alicia for spearheading the nomination committee. The application process will begin soon. One note: in order to be co-president, you need to already be on the executive board.
- B. Patricia is our New Families Ambassador. She is going to pass the baton. If you'd like to play that role, please get in touch with Cameron or me. Patricia reaches out with a phone call and information to new parents who move into the neighborhood. She has lots of materials to hand off to our new ambassador.

III. Acceptance of last month's minutes: Approved.

IV. Treasurer report: Lynn Glantz

- A. December 2021 - Net gain of \$7250
- B. Major Revenues: Gross Profit/Loss of \$8857

Book Fair	\$5700
Clothing Sale	\$1485
Holiday Boutique	\$1514

- C. Expense Total: \$1607

Programming (Jester Jim)	\$900
Various Fees	\$315
Water Reimbursement	\$335

- D. **Total Net Revenue (Loss): \$7250**

V. Ways and Means: Alicia Scala and Kate Marino

- A. We are planning Square Art drawing and orders just in time for Mother's Day.
- B. Spring plant sale - the week before Mother's Day. We are hoping to have it in school, as it used to be.
- C. ASA started - going smoothly.
- D. Please let us know if you have any additional ideas.

VI. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Shana Koransky

- A. Feb 3: Jester Jim! The kids loved it last time.
- B. Feb 10: painting night for 4th and 5th graders
- C. Talking with Harlem Wizards. Looking for a space that works, where we can have a lot of people together.
- D. Looking forward to spring, where warmer weather should allow us to get more people together!

VII. RSS Liaison: Rachel Lerner

- A. After school programming started this week.
- B. Kindergarten registration is going to be online this year instead of paper. This process is taking a little longer than anticipated. Incoming kindergarten screenings are hopefully going to be held in person in April. Kindergarten parent orientation and maybe a tour of the school would also be in the spring.
- C. The first marking period ends January 31st. Report cards will be available in early February on the parent portal.

- D. This month's bluebird chat date is TBD and the topic is going to deal with the social/emotional piece for kids. Maybe RULER.
- E. We are going to be collecting donations for Feeding Westchester's "Warm Your Hearts on a Cold Day" again this year. Last year our community donated over 300 gallon sized Ziploc bags filled with requested donations. Hopefully we can match that! More details to come next week.
- F. The 4th graders have planned a fun school spirit week next week. Monday is stuffed animal desk pet day, Tuesday is Show and tell, Wednesday is sunglasses day, Thursday is crazy or favorite hat day and Friday is pajama day.

VIII. MS Liaison: Alex Boruch

- A. This Thursday at 9:00 AM, Mr. Horowitz will be hosting his monthly Principal's Conversation via Zoom (Zoom link sent earlier today). Topics will include an overview of recent and upcoming events, a review of the recent Thought Exchange which asked parents to identify areas we should prioritize and focus on for the future, and a sneak peek at some things being planned for next year.
- B. This week we are wrapping up the filming of our Band and Choral performances. Stay tuned for information about our upcoming viewing party to celebrate the work of our students.
- C. Mid-Year assessments begin next week. Students in all three grades will take a math assessment on Wednesday (1/26). Please refer to the email sent on January 12th for the full schedule of assessments.
- D. Our 8th graders will begin their high school transition at the beginning of February. 8th grade parents are invited to join the high school team on Wednesday, February 2nd for a parent orientation. This will be followed by meetings with our school counselors and information sessions designed to introduce students to the opportunities they will have next year.
- E. We are excited for our upcoming performance of *Beauty & the Beast Jr.* on Saturday, February 5th. Students will be performing in front of a limited live audience. The performances will also be live streamed in real-time to allow for a broader audience. Stay tuned for more information...
- F. Mark your calendar! Parents are invited to join a team of Middle School educators on Tuesday, February 8th for a parent workshop focused on social media. We will review the results of our recent survey data and provide parents with some tools to help ensure that students are using social media positively and productively.
- G. The MS is working with the Community Coalition to organize a fun student event which will take place the evening of Friday, February 11th. Stay tuned for more information.
- H. Also stay tuned for information about a School Spirit Week being planned for February 14-18.

IX. HS Liaison: Jen Savner

- A. Covid protocols are fluid, but things seem to be settling down.
- B. Recording the Band and Chorus concerts. The date that it will be streamed is TBD.
- C. Pep Rally and Dance canceled for this Homecoming weekend.
- D. Spirit week has still been on... Tomorrow is Jersey Day.
- E. Hoping that in the spring some of these canceled events can happen.
- F. Trying to figure out spectator parameters for this weekend's basketball games.
- G. As a part of spirit week, there has been a badminton tournament happening this week where a senior is paired up with a teacher.
- H. Dr. Chirles is thinking about implementing One Book, One School where the entire school reads the same book. Would be over the summer.
- I. Course selection for next year is beginning.

X. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. Meeting with Harry and Amelia tomorrow. Interested in updates to ICT and planning for next year.
- B. We're also talking about services for students who are quarantined. We'd like to learn how students will receive their services as well as instruction. We want to be sure parents with this concern know who to reach out to.
- C. If you'd like to receive our emails, please email our email address:
BlindBrookSEID@gmail.com
- D. We have an event tomorrow from 7:00-8:30, and then we'll have a SEID parent discussion from 8:30-9:00.

XI. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner-Lerch

- A. No updates.

XII. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen

- A. Planning a film night in the auditorium where MS kids can have something safe and fun to do on a Friday night. Thanks to the PTA who will help us sell the tickets for that.
- B. Mrs. Tricario has been going into classes to do "escape the vape," where kids have to solve puzzles that teach them the dangers of vaping. They work together

in small groups. As they uncover facts in puzzles, it really opens their eyes and surprises them.

- C. MS Youth Leadership Club - a group of students came to listen to a speaker on mental health, reducing the stigma around mental health struggles, how you can help a friend, etc. Kids were very supportive of each other.
- D. Also at our next meeting on March 2nd on zoom, Kimberly Vale is going to lead a discussion on parents, mental health for teens, and anxiety. We want to help people get all of the resources they can.
- E. **Q: Does Community Coalition extend to RSS to start talking with kids about drug and alcohol use? I've heard stories about the drug and alcohol use in the village. I know the fifth grade is starting DARE soon, but I'm a little worried. I'm looking for something directed at parents as well as kids, to get them prepared for what they might be in store for in the MS.** We're funded by a grant that is focused on high school, but we can also work with MS. We are not funded for elementary. DARE helps the kids with refusal skills in an age appropriate way. If we suggested a speaker to Mrs. Taylor, perhaps the PTA would help fund the assembly.

Attendance	
In Person	On Zoom
Correy	Nethra Bhatt
Johanna	Alex Boruch
Lynn Glantz	Hedy Cardozo
Alicia	Catherine
Debra	Robyn Deutsch
Monique Tricario	Concetta D'Inverno
Shana Koransky	Meredith Dolgins
Colin Byrne	Andy Frieman
Zach Dore	Katherine Hallissy Ayala
Stacy Kapner	Seth Horowitz
Alicia Scala	Kerri James
Bree Candee	Katie
	Rachel Lerner
	Karen Lin
	Lisa
	MCD
	Yvette Montvelisky
	Nancy Parra

	Ella Rosenfeld Perri Ross Cameron Sager Patricia Schofield Samantha Smith Stone Anne Weisz Erica Wiener Sara Wolf Laura Wolther Jayna Zelman Luci Zimmerman
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