

Blind Brook PTA
General Meeting
Thursday, November 12, 2020
Via Zoom
MINUTES

I. Superintendent's Update: Dr. Patrick Brimstein

- A. Regarding the November 6th early dismissal at RSS's morning cohort, my apologies for any disruptions caused by the decision to dismiss so suddenly. Next time, if there is an imminent threat, we will have an orderly evacuation followed by dismissal.
- B. Yellow Zone: Following an uptick of COVID cases in Port Chester, the state designated a Yellow Zone that included the Blind Brook MS/HS. When lines were re-drawn to more tightly reflect the uptick, our MS/HS was taken out. The medical advisory board is helping us to plan testing, should we find ourselves in need to test a percentage of the students and staff in the future.
- C. There is a new survey out regarding the Hybrid program. Please give us your feedback. You can fill out the survey multiple times, according to how many students are in your family.
- D. **Question:** Do we have any plans to improve on Google Classroom? Is there a plan to review how GC works, especially for the elementary school kids? Consistency throughout the day/week would help younger kids.
 - 1. Answer: That might be something good to put in the survey comments. If you see things that don't work, write it down and share with us. We want to learn from our experiences. We are getting ready for the eventuality of having full remote instruction. We are discussing what is pedagogically appropriate.
- E. **Question:** What would the proper protocol be if my child or I get a positive COVID test. Who would I notify? Is there an emergency number?
 - 1. Answer: In general, contact the school nurse, COVID coordinator Colin Byrne, and the building principal.
 - 2. At RSS, your child's classroom teacher should be notified, and notify the RSSattendance@blindbrook.org email address.
- F. **Question:** Are there contingency plans in place so that if school closes in the morning, the RSS afternoon cohort would have direct instruction?
 - 1. Answer: If someone tests positive, we are required to take a 24-hour period to clean the building. School would go into full remote mode. The remote plan is based on a regular school day. The remote plan might better reflect what's going on in the hybrid. It might make sense to keep the current routine/schedule in the remote plan.
- G. **Question:** Does it make sense to close schools proactively after holidays like Thanksgiving, to mitigate any spike that may occur due to the COVID risk of celebrating indoors?
 - 1. Answer: We may have communication on that this Monday.

- H. **Question:** Why are some other schools operating at full day and ours operating in hybrid? When do you think we'll get to opening fully? Why are some schools allowed to open fully now?
1. **Answer:** Some schools are able to do it now because they have the capacity to maintain social distancing. Some districts have additional rooms or buildings. They use their space and utilize staff differently, compared with their format before the pandemic. We don't have the capacity to spread out like that. We are using our resources in the best way we can. When will we get there? Right now, community spread is headed in the wrong direction to get where we want to be. It's the nature of the pandemic. To try to do anything that would increase risk right now would be foolish. We can open fully when the community rate slows down. When government orders are raised, when we can open safely, we will. This pandemic has taught us that a lot of the things we thought mattered doesn't matter. There are things we didn't think were important that really and truly are: the value of relationships. We want to get back there, but we need to do it safely and smartly. We first need to be assured that the kids are safe and we're not doing any harm.
- I. **Question:** Is there any plan for the RSS kids to have live instruction during the part of the days they're home? The asynchronous time is not enough to fill the day.
1. **Answer:** We've done tweaks to the schedule to maximize the allowable instructional time the teachers can have. Please include your comments in the survey.
- J. **Question:** Has there been consideration of doubling up grades during the RSS specials? That way the kids could have more live specials.
1. **Answer:** We haven't explored that. We will explore it.
- K. **Question:** The in-person schooling is very important to us. We would be willing to sacrifice going places in order to have more in-person classes. Would it be possible to test for COVID after Thanksgiving, rather than a 2-week quarantine?
1. **Answer:** We could consider having a shortened quarantine, with attendance contingent on test results. There is a lot about the disease we know; there is a lot we don't know. At what point would a test become positive, especially if someone is asymptomatic?
- L. **Question:** If one chooses to go away over a break, in order to come back to school, do you have to quarantine for 14 days? Or can you do what Cuomo recommends, test before leaving NY and test once you come back?
1. **Answer:** You have to get tested, and you need to quarantine until you get the results. The state's language has recently changed.
- M. **Question:** If we possibly go remote, will we have the same format and schedule?
1. The way the plan is set up for fully remote, it goes back to what school was like a year ago. At present, we are in a hybrid model. We are thinking of preserving the RSS hybrid schedule to keep the kids' routine consistent. We are discussing what is developmentally appropriate for our students.

- N. **Question:** Has there been any assessment as to whether we are behind as a school? Is there a gap resulting from last spring? How do we compare this year as compared to other years?
1. Answer: I haven't been involved in the data analysis yet. Our focus is on the instructional quality now and going forward. We recognize there are real limitations to remote learning, but there are also opportunities we can take advantage of.
- II. **Approval of last month's minutes: Approved.**
- III. **Co-President's report: Cameron Sager and Correy Stephenson**
- A. Given the funds raised by the Scarecrow for Supplies fund raiser, Correy and Cameron delivered items from the teachers' wish lists, on behalf of the PTA. The teachers were very appreciative. We've gotten some really nice emails. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Scarecrow Fundraiser.
 - B. Head Class Parents at RSS: Please forward PTA emails to your class in a timely manner. This week, we are hosting a fundraiser to be done in time for Thanksgiving. Thank you to Debra for organizing the fundraiser. So far, we are at \$3095 collected. The MS/HS parents as well as Rye Brook Residents on Facebook have been contributing via venmo.
- IV. **Treasurer Report: Lynn Glantz**
- A. We basically broke even in October. Here is the breakdown:
 - B. Major Revenues: **Gross Profit: \$10,748.49**
 1. \$3356.09 - Clothing Sales
 2. (\$2257.32) - Membership (includes state fees and printing costs)
 3. \$180 - Dial-a-friend
 4. 1,115 - Membership Dues
 5. \$9649.72 - Plant Sale, additional clothing
 - C. Major Expenses: **Expense Total \$10,631.74**
 1. \$2,500 - Heard In Rye annual contribution
 2. \$3838.25 - Balance for hand sanitizers
 - D. Total Net Revenue - \$122.05
- V. **Ways and Means: Kate Marino and Alicia Scala**
- A. Thanks to our community for the overwhelming support! Our Scarecrows for Supplies fundraiser was hugely successful, and helped the PTA buy most of the wishlist items.
 - B. The PTA is partnering with Minted.com in an upcoming fundraiser: Minted will give back 15% of all purchases to the PTA. People will also save 20% off their purchase. See the PTA email regarding Minted for more information.
 - C. Spirit Wear: We are starting an online spirit store! You'll be able to purchase spiritwear directly from that site. Brands will include Nike and Under Armour, and clothing for Men, Women, and Children will be available. Look out for an email soon.

- D. We are planning a holiday pop-up sale, likely on Dec 5th. We are going to sell winter trees, flowers, and plants. We will pre-sell and sell on-site. We are looking into a fun truck to serve hot cocoa and more at the sale. Look for an email.
- E. MS pictures: Tuesday, Dec 1 and Thursday Dec 3rd. Mark your calendars. Kids who are remote can schedule an appt with Jodi Vickers.
- F. In the last month, we hosted a Caffe Bon food truck for the MS/HS teachers and the RSS teachers to show parents' appreciation.
- G. At RSS, we did a Guess the Candy Corn game.
- H. We've designed a Blind Brook umbrella that we will be giving to some RSS staff who dismiss children at the end of the day, sometimes in the rain.

VI. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Stacy Sakellariou

- A. Planning a Virtual Paint Night. Dec 2 (K/1), Dec 3 (2/3) Dec 4 (4/5). Holiday themes. \$27 per child. Look out for an email with further details.
- B. Beauty Bar needs to shut down due to the Yellow/Orange zone. They had been planning to offer hair extensions with proceeds to the PTA.
- C. Looking into a virtual magic night.

VII. Ridge Street School Liaison: Rachel Lerner

- A. Really important: if you think your child might have COVID, are awaiting test results, or have positive test results, please let the district know – teacher, nurse and RSS attendance, no matter what time it is. Definitely helpful!
- B. Make sure to take your child's temperature every day.
- C. Colin Byrne is the district COVID coordinator.
- D. Last Friday's (11/6/20) early dismissal decision was a district decision, not a building level decision.
- E. BMRSS is working on a rapid dismissal plan moving forward, including procedures.
- F. It is important for parents to start thinking about a plan if kids are dismissed early, regardless of the circumstance. Have plans in place.
- G. Remote learning: Over the summer, the district designed a remote learning plan in case schools needed to go all-remote. It is quite a different schedule than the current Hybrid Plan; there is intermittent on/off the computer and check-ins with the teacher throughout the day. When Blind Brook designed the remote plan last summer, no one knew how long the Hybrid Plan would last. There will be some restructuring the remote plan because the school wants the transition to be smooth for students. No one knows how many times we might be transitioning between hybrid/remote.
- H. Zoom links cannot always be provided on the spot. They take teacher planning and preparation. Be patient with the teachers on providing zoom links when requested.

- I. Going on vacation is not the same as being in quarantine. There is an attendance policy and vacations are unexcused absences. Zoom links are not to be provided to those on vacation. Any work that is missed is provided.
- J. Assessments took longer this year therefore parent teacher conferences are going to be held in December either on zoom or over the phone. Conferences are over 2 dates and there will be ½ days on those dates.
- K. **Question:** Why don't teachers use the same zoom links every time?
 - 1. Response: The issue is that some teachers have not been teaching 100% remote students. They may need to get materials/procedures organized.
- L. **Question:** The principals should remind people how to notify the school that a child has COVID.
 - 1. Response: I think that has been sent out, but yes, there should be separate email.

VIII. Middle School Liaison: Alex Boruch

- A. Quarter 1 ended on Tuesday 11/10.
- B. Report cards will be posted Mon 11/16.
- C. The debate team had their first debate. Blind Brook won its first school award, coming in third in the tournament! Debate team is accepting new members.
- D. We received tentative approval to hold a virtual Middle School musical.
- E. AIS has started for students identified as in need of remediation.
- F. Additional STAR testing is taking place in math and ELA for students who have not been demonstrating expected progress.
- G. We ask parents to help keep school open by curtailing risky indoor social activities.

IX. High School Liaison: Jen Savner

- A. Assessments: Parents have expressed concern that so many assessments are taking place on in-person days. Some kids are stressed. There is a test calendar, to help subject teachers plan around one another's tests. If your child has many assessments scheduled for the same day, he or she can reach out to a teacher to look into rescheduling.
- B. Next parent/principal discussion is Nov 18 at 7pm.
- C. The HS staff and Dr. Charles would like to thank the PTA for the Caffè Bon food truck, the hand sanitizer, and the scarecrow fundraiser supplies!
- D. Decisions on going out for lunch and using lockers are pending.

X. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. We held our parent coffee last month with Harry and Jen, on zoom. It was well-attended and well-received. To those who missed it, a recording can be found on the PTA website, under the SEID drop-down menu.
- B. We'll keep you posted on coming events.
- C. Let me know if there are questions you'd like to ask Pupil Services.

XI. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner

- A. We have 627 members (last meeting, we had 612). This includes parents and faculty. 496 families have joined the PTA to date.
- B. All DAF books were handed out last week. We handed out over 200 personally and the rest were handed out in the school for the kids and faculty who ordered. There were 167 hard copies ordered. We have a few extra that were printed and even those are going fast. In total we collected \$3,340.00 for the DAF (that is not the net profit- some was used towards printing costs).

XII. Community Coalition: Debra and Monique

- A. On 10/30, we co-sponsored a drive-in movie night with the Village. 115 cars registered. The drive-in movie provided an opportunity for people to do something safely in the community. We tried to provide a safe, social opportunity. Monique had 9th graders vote on the movie.
- B. Mon 11/16: Know to Prevent, which is a block of coalitions in Westchester, is hosting a vaping prevention talk. Also, November is healthy lung awareness month.
- C. Follow Community Coalition on facebook. The Community Coalition Facebook account posted a hotline to call if people are concerned about underage drinking or unsafe socializing. 914-937-0090. We are working with police on a video to show the call comes in as anonymous.

XIII. Heard in Rye has an event Thursday, November 19th, 7:00pm--

- A. Screening the documentary “Like.”
- B. Followed by a panel discussion with the executive producer, narrator, and a psychologist.
- C. Should be an interesting discussion. Look for details in PTA email.

Attendance		
Eli Adelson	Stacy Kapner	Jennifer Savner
Rebecca Amado	Lori Kron	Patricia Schofield
Nethra Bhatt	Rachel Lerner	Samantha Smith
Stephanie Biderman	Karen Lin	Tina Steinberg
Alex Boruch	Feliks Koyfman	Correy Stephenson
Bree Candee	Yvette M.	Marla Striar
Hedy Cardozo	Kate Marino	Monique Tricario
Jen Chirles	Dylan Mittelman	Erica Wiener
Debra Cohen	Jennifer Nates	Katie Wolff
Robyn Cohn Deutsch	Rebecca Newman	Sara Wolf
Kiki DeBari	Rebecca ReissPerri Ross	Cindy Zahl
Mindy Friendman	Cameron Sager	Rebecca Zaltas
Johanna Gonzalez	Stacy Sakellariou	Jayna Zelman
Katherine Hallissy Ayala	Sari Sakofsky	Luci Zimmerman