

Blind Brook PTA
General Meeting
Thursday, February 11, 2021
Via Zoom
MINUTES

I. Superintendent's Update: Dr. Patrick Brimstein

- A. As we consider returning to in-person learning (RIPL), we have shared a survey in order to learn everyone's interest and comfort level. We always want to know what you are thinking, and we will plan according to the numbers we are dealing with.
- B. RIPL committees include stakeholders at every level, including students in the HS.
- C. All of the details will depend on how many kids we are dealing with in various contingencies.
- D. We are going to build on the safety record we have. I'm grateful for everyone's efforts.
- E. All options are on the table. We are looking at how to offer the best program for our students.
- F. We are looking at the goal of May 3rd, if everything goes well, we would get full in-person learning. On March 1st, we plan to start an interactive, phased approach.
- G. We have three different schools, and three different plans are being developed. There are a lot of moving parts to this. Adjusting the Wednesdays on the MS/HS may be a possibility.
- H. **Q: Is there a date by which we will know whether Kindergarten is going back full time March 1?** The week after the break, we have one more week of February. We will try to let you know before Friday 2/26. We need to give the committees time to do their work. We want to be respectful of the input of all of the parents.

II. Questions addressed by Ashley Welde, Board of Education President

- A. **What are the timelines for returning to in-person learning?** There are no guarantees. It depends on how covid plays out. In January, we did well, but right now we are seeing an uptick in cases. With covid, everything is a moving target. There is going to be a plan that is going to have to be flexible for all of the schools.
- B. **How were the RIPL committees formed? Has there been any thought of the Board of Ed asking people to fill out a form and submit a resume? Then, the board would know who's out there when they need them.** Each principal

organized their own committee, with the goal of a balanced representation. We will keep your idea in mind for the future.

- C. **Dr. Brimstein mentioned at the upper levels having students involved. If our kids are going to be involved in the decision making process of the school, can we be informed so that we can have a family conversation?** At the HS level, students are often involved in conversations and surveyed. At the MS, follow up surveys were sent to parents.
- D. **Has any thought been put into putting polycarbonate around students' desks in RSS?** The plan won't be to throw 22 kids into a room in close contact. Definitely not less than 3 feet apart. Tents are being discussed. As weather gets warmer, students can eat outdoors. The barriers are things that can be considered, and those discussions will be discussed in the committees.
- E. **Has there been any discussion about using space in Rye Brook that is not actively being used? Could the little ones be sent to the HS? The little ones are missing out on a lot. If we all pushed ourselves to brainstorm collectively, how would you collect ideas? We need to think of cohesive plans.** Last summer, we considered a lot of spaces in Rye Brook, we ran into a lot of regulatory issues. We can look into them again.

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

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

- A. It is time for us to update our by-laws. We are reviewing them. There aren't significant changes we need. We are thinking of changing "Corresponding Secretary" to "Communications Secretary." Please reach out with any other ideas you may have.

V. Treasurer's Report: Lynn Glantz

- A. We had some revenue come in from Tricky Tim and the Cookie Night, about \$2500 in deposits.
- B. January was fairly uneventful, financially.

VI. Ways and Means: Alicia Scala and Kate Marino

- A. Our main focus right now is Boosterthon. It's going to run March 15-25. March 15th will be the main event. We have goals and sponsorship requests, but we want to ask the community about everyone's feelings on fundraising.
- B. We have set our fund-raising goal lower this year because of the situation we're in. It would be easier for the community to reach our goal, and Mrs. Taylor has agreed to be slimed if we reach our goal. We are hoping to raise the kids' spirits.

- C. We would use some of the money earned to buy round, colorful picnic tables. They would look really nice in the new RSS courtyard when construction is done. We would create an area where a class could have lunch or have a lesson. All kids would get a Boosterthon t-shirt. We are looking for corporate sponsors for the t-shirts, at a sponsorship rate of \$150.

VII. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Stacy Sakellariou

- A. We had Tricky Tim at the end of January. There was a great turn out. He entertained kids from grades K-5. The kids really liked him.
- B. We had kindergarten night in for kindergarten parents. Parents had a chance to get to know each other.
- C. This week, we had a cookie decorating activity on Zoom. 120 families signed up. Thank you for helping with everything. We'll have the MS/HS cookie decorating on Friday.
- D. We will share some exciting ideas for spring at the March meeting.

VIII. Ridge Street School Liaison: Rachel Lerner

- A. My appreciation to the class parents as well as the community for all of their efforts in making the Feeding Westchester voluntary community service project such a success. Over 300 bags were donated and all had beautifully decorated Valentine cards in them with the donations. Feeding Westchester was blown away by the community's generosity- they are deeply grateful.
- B. Reopening plans are in the works. Safety is the #1 priority. RSS has been open this whole school year, and there has been a lot of effort to accomplish this. Mrs. Taylor has formed a committee to get feedback from stakeholders, including faculty, SRPs (school related professionals), and parents representing a wide range of grades as well as special education needs.
- C. The current schedule would have to be reworked as a whole day schedule because there are many factors to consider such as: lunch, recess, specials, AIS, ENL and enrichment. These things have all been done remotely this year. Reopening is a process that needs a well-thought out, executable plan. The biggest piece related to safety is when the kids are eating (maskless).
- D. We also need to consider how to incorporate children who are completely remote and how that can be managed when the teachers will have a full class of students in the classroom and zoom.
- E. We have discussed polycarbonate barriers between students. There are a lot of parts and pieces to consider.
- F. If anyone is planning to travel over break, for everyone's safety and well-being, please make sure to follow the travel rules and be transparent with the school! Let your child's teacher, Tracy, the nurse and RSS attendance know. This also helps

to make sure your child has all the necessary materials to go with their zoom links.

IX. Middle School Liaison: Alex Boruch

- A. The qualifying rounds for the National Science Bee, National International Geography Bee and the National History Bee took place yesterday. Thirty-seven students took the exams. Many students took several exams. Qualifying results are not expected until after break.
- B. This week, the student council sponsored pajama day for both cohorts to raise money for Operation Gratitude. Operation Gratitude is a national event to show support for essential workers. Students are writing letters to local police, hospital workers, firemen etc. to show appreciation for their work. Money raised will be used to buy gift baskets for the personnel at Greenwich Hospital. We are very proud of the leadership exhibited by the student council executive board - Abby Goldstein, Matty Zimmerman, Isabella Montesano, and Hailey Mallah.
- C. A survey and letter regarding parents' feelings about a safe return to full time in person learning was sent to all middle school parents on Wednesday. The response rate has been impressive. Thank you to all parents who recognize the urgency of gathering this information and took the time to complete the survey so promptly. The survey remains open for additional input.
- D. The middle school RIPL committee has been formed. Thank you to Correy Stephenson for helping to secure volunteers. The first meeting will take place on Friday.
- E. The middle school will begin alternating in-person learning on Wednesdays beginning Wednesday, March 3rd with the Monday/Tuesday cohort.
- F. We plan to begin the 1st phase of "RIPL" (return to in person learning) on March 1st. Details to follow.
- G. **Are there any parents who would like to be approved to substitute? Or do any families have a college student a home interested in subbing?** In order to have students in the building on Wednesdays and increase the number of students in the building as of March 1st, the MS needs more staffing. The MS has been running ads, with no responses.

X. High School Liaison: Jen Savner

- A. Dr. Chirles held a principal's coffee yesterday, focused on how to get back to school full-time. Many parents want their kids back in school; they feel the structure and routine is very important.
- B. The survey will help with the facilitation of getting the numbers and how to best space people out. The Board of Ed and the administration and HS parent body felt they needed a more cohesive plan.

- C. The HS has begun preliminary plans for the prom and graduation. We are looking into whether a yacht club would be available. Prom plans will begin, but it can be canceled if needed.
- D. Senior options: During the spring quarter, seniors go find internships and jobs. This would alleviate the number of students in the building, as an entire grade would be pursuing a project/internship outside of school. Maybe seniors should be phased in first?
- E. A question arose as to whether Senior Options are safe? A suggestion is that kids stay in school and do a community-based project.
- F. The HS plans to bring students back on Wednesdays, in alternating cohorts, starting March 3rd. **We need substitutes.** We posted an ad 2 weeks ago.

XI. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. Tina and I had our monthly meeting with Pupil services. We shared an up-dated Q&A from this meeting with our SEID Committee. As usual please let me know if you are interested in being added to the e-mail distribution list.
- B. Tina and I also raised concerns at this meeting, regarding the social emotional well being of all our children during this time. We requested and suggested more support for children and parents. Today I would like to open this up to the greater group to gather ideas as to how you feel you and your children might be better supported.
- C. Over the past few months we have learned about some new special education programs. Unfortunately, I do not have the details pertaining to these, but if you would like to learn more, I would encourage parents to attend the building budget meetings to be held this month.
- D. The next SEID event to be held on February 22nd at 7.30pm, on the topic of How to Know if Your Child is Succeeding? In this time of more remote learning, how easy is it to gauge whether your child has a learning disability? We are looking forward to trying to make this a little more understandable for everybody. We will be sharing a flyer for everyone to sign up.
- E. Tina and I will be meeting with Pupil services again on February 23rd, please share any questions or concerns prior to that date.

XII. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner

- A. We had a couple of new students come in mid-year. We added them and sent them invitations.

XIII. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen and Monique Tricario

- A. We are discussing how to target substance abuse in our community, especially based on the survey results presented before the January PTA meeting. One focus may be abuse of prescription drugs.
- B. We held Children of Addiction Awareness week. Students wrote a positive message to children of addicts who are suffering quietly.
- C. We are sponsoring a MS (7th and 8th grades) trivia night on Feb 25, 7pm. It will be free to attend. There will be prizes.

Attendance:

Anne	Seth Horowitz	Sari Sakofsky
Nethra Bhatt	Kerri James	Jennifer Savner
Shy Biswas	Julie	Alicia Scala
Arpita Buesing	Lisa Kanner	Dan Schloss
Alex Boruch	Stacy Kapner	Patricia Schofield
Bree Candee	Ilyssa Karasik	Ann Sedrish
Hedy Cardozo	Erin Kelley	Samantha Smith
Catherine	Karen Lin	Stacy
Jaime Coffey	Kate Marino	Tina Steinberg
Deb Cohen	Noki Masuku	Ali Stern
Wendy Corbin	Mindy	Steph
Kiki DeBari	Dylan Mittelman	Correy Stephenson
Robyn Deutsch	Yvette Montvelisky	Ashley Welde
Concetta D'Inverno	Nancy Parra	Jason Weintraub
Mikayla Dolgins	Della Penna	Sara Wolf
Eric	Itzel Piserchia	Katie Wolff
Lindsay Esterow	Rebecca Reiss	Cindy Zahl
Amanda Gitkind	Betsy Rohtbart	Jayna Zelman
Johanna Gonzalez	Perry Ross	Luci Zimmerman
Katherine Hallissy Ayala	Cameron Sager	