

Blind Brook PTA
General Meeting
Thursday, May 20, 2021
Blind Brook MS/HS IMC (In Person) and Via Zoom
MINUTES

I. Superintendent's Update: Dr. Patrick Brimstein

- A. Dr. Brimstein met with students and teachers in the 1955 wing to discuss the plan to relocate grades K, 1, 3, 4, and 5 classes at RSS. We had a two hour town hall presentation/Q&A last night. What other questions do parents have?
- B. Q - What is the likelihood of Relocation continuing into the next school year?**
A - I am very confident that RSS classrooms will be completed next fall. I met again with the construction managers to make sure they'll have enough construction resources to do the job. We're trying to fit two summers'-worth of work into one summer. We do have some contingency plans, especially regarding the custom windows on order.
- C. Q - What was the parent input into or involvement with the RSS class relocation decision process prior to yesterday?** A - Parent input *was* yesterday (the Town Hall). There was no active effort to recruit parents. We had to make information available for parents to comment on. The feedback leading up to the town hall and since hasn't changed any of the design plans, but we now recognize some more issues we need to pay attention to. I didn't have any families ask me for the remote option. We are not going with the "do nothing" option; we want to get the classroom construction done this year and start the next school year fresh. To this point, we have had no feedback to suggest otherwise.
- D. Q - When you say you got no feedback to suggest otherwise and there wasn't a resounding No to the option, I don't know that parents were given a survey to tell you a resounding No. I know I personally sent an email saying that I was not in favor of [relocating classes], and I got no response. I know another parent who sent another email, and she got no response. I'm sure you didn't get 1500 emails, but there was no community survey to solicit that feedback. Unfortunately, I think a lot of people are exhausted at this point in the year and don't feel like they have any say in this, so they just aren't saying anything. They're annoyed, they're frustrated. I don't think this is in the children's best interest. We were told last night that there would be no loss in instructional time, which is really not true because there is a half day next Thursday to allow teachers time to move. Ridge Street has not emailed parents to let them know about this additional half day. It just doesn't feel right.** A - There are still 3 options. The easiest option is to do nothing and plan on completed classrooms in March of 2022. Like everything during Covid, the

construction project has been a changing situation. I can't have the entire community involved or send out a survey for every decision. There is a responsibility to make good judgments in the best interest of our students. It sounds like there is disagreement about what is in the best interest of the students - that is the question. Is it to subject students to another year of construction going on in the building, in different spaces like they have been doing for the past two years? Or is it in the students' best interest to recognize that this school year has been extremely difficult, and at this point, construction can be managed relatively quickly in order to get a whole additional six months minimum of less stress. This project has been quite time consuming, it takes away energy, thought and time that could be spent thinking about the kids. We need relief. We don't want to subject the kids to another 6 months of disruption. We have 90% certainty that we can return the building to the kids and faculty, who deserve that. We all want what is in the best interest of the students. I am taking the longer view, rather than the shorter view. This is why I am suggesting this [relocating classes] is what we should do.

- E. **Q - What was the teachers' response to the Relocation idea?** The teachers are a collection of individual people, and they also have a representative body. I meet with the representatives on a regular basis proactively, constructively, and positively. I also meet with individual teachers. I make myself available to listen and talk with people. There is a range of comfort and a range of reactions to what's going on. Some teachers have an attitude that this has been a heck of a year, we're going to get through it, we have one more challenge now, we got this. I thank them; their mindset is contagious. Some teachers feel more anxious and nervous about relocating. This has been a horrible year for uncertainty. We've all had different levels of anxiety about things. I told teachers no one expecting you to be perfect for the last eighteen days; parents will be understanding. The only way we'll get through this is together. Do we have agreement to say we can make it work? I think so.
- F. **Q - I'm not 100% in favor of uprooting the kids, but I understand the rationale. Is anyone holding the construction people responsible for how they are uprooting our kids in the worst year possible? What are the other options for kids who will be going to sleep away camp? Are the kids who are relocating to the high school going to be seated 6 feet apart so that if somebody near my child needs to quarantine, my child won't need to quarantine? Can the parents help out so that classes don't have to uproot again? I'm not sending my kids on the shuttle bus because that is another quarantine risk.**

1. A - On the space issue: With the exception of two social studies classrooms, the fourth and fifth graders will be going to the biggest,

newest rooms. Depending on the space, they may be 6 feet apart. The conditions in those rooms will be no less than they currently are.

2. Regarding the shuttle bus: We will add more buses so that kids won't be seated near one another.
3. Regarding holding the construction people accountable, I am focused completely on getting the project done so that the teachers can use the space and students can enjoy it. We initiated the Relocation idea when we asked the contractors how we can get everything delivered faster. The construction managers say they can do this [deliver RSS classrooms by fall]. I wish I could say 100% it will happen, but I can't. We are doing everything we can to minimize the stress and disruption next year. Am I asking for your faith and confidence? Yes. Have I done everything we can? Yes. If there is a wholehearted objection, I need to hear that loud and clear, and then I'll take things in a different direction.

G. Q - Why was there no construction done last summer when kids were out of school? Why is there no ownership taken for these delays? A - I can't speak to things that predated me. We are doing the best we can with the situation now. Last summer, there were construction workers. Were there 50-60 people like there were today? No.

H. Q - There was an article in Westmore News on May 14th titled "What Does Normal Look Like?" It featured the Ridge Street School, in particular photos of two kindergartners cleaning their desks with a Clorox wipe. What chemicals are children cleaning with with their hands? For what reason would children be cleaning their desks because no one else should be at their desks? In particular, we have learned that Covid isn't transferred that way. A - All sanitizers for doors and the cleaning wipes for classrooms have been fully vetted. They have been given to us by the county specifically for use in schools. I don't have a definitive answer as to why the students are cleaning their desks; I can look into it. I do know that students do stay at their own desks. The visual barriers on the desks are cleaned on a daily basis. We have learned that it's airborne particulates that spread Covid; I am thankful that the medical advisory board has advised us on these issues. I will investigate this issue further.

I. Q - When will the cafeteria be completed? Or are we looking at our kids eating outside in the winter months? The construction company gave us a completion date of Feb/March 2022 at the earliest. The estimated completion date has been extended twice since I've arrived. **Will the children have the option of eating in their classrooms, then? I don't want my children eating outside in the winter.** There is no plan to have children eating outside in the winter, and there is no plan to have 4th and 5th graders start next school year at

the King St campus. Right now, we are using the 2 gymnasiums for lunch; we will probably continue that next year.

- J. **Q - Will my twins be assigned to separate classes in RSS next year?** A - This year was an extenuating circumstance. RSS does not typically put twins together. Next year, the plan is not to place twins together again.

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

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

- A. Every three years, we need to renew our by-laws. We emailed out the amended PTA by-laws last month. There are no substantive changes; the amendments bring the PTA into line with the national and state PTA. The majority voted in favor: all in person plus the majority of online participants. We therefore enact our new by-laws.
- B. Welcome to our newest executive committee member, Shana Koransky. Shana will be replacing Stacy Sakellariou as Programming Co-Chair. (Stacy will be moving out of the Blind Brook district at the end of the school year.)
- C. Our last meeting will be on June 10th, in person in the MS/HS Library.

IV. Treasurer's Report: Lynn Glantz, as read by Cameron Sager

- A. April 2021 - net loss of \$21,052 mainly due to spring break camp, water refill stations, teachers appreciations, RSS Assembly, and Glazed and Confused truck for Donut Drive Distracted.
- B. Major Revenues:

1. Gross Profit/Loss: **\$(6,181)**

Pictures (2020)	\$4,000
Spring Break Camp	\$(10,055)

C. Expense Total: **\$(14,871)**

Community Coalition	\$(2,000)
Water Refills	\$(5,159)
Retirement Gifts	\$(1,489)
Teacher Appreciation	\$(3,040)
Assemblies	\$(2,520)

D. Total Net Revenue (Loss) - **\$(21,052)**

V. Ways and Means: Alicia Scala and Kate Marino

- A. Boosterthon has to be pushed off again because it was scheduled for the week RSS classes are supposed to be moving.
- B. The Mother's Day plant sale was successful.
- C. School supplies fundraiser is coming soon. Two new volunteers offered to help run it.
- D. Teacher Appreciation Week was well-received, we think.
- E. We are looking into planning an after school program on 5/27. Look for an email.

VI. Programming: Amanda Gitkind and Stacy Sakellariou

- A. Bingo night was adorable. It was a success.
- B. We are trying to get one more event in before the end of the year.

VII. Ridge Street School Liaison: Rachel Lerner

- A. Class placement forms are due by Thursday, May 27. The input you give is the most efficient way for Tracy and Lori to have parent input when working with the teachers on your child's class placement. You cannot request a specific teacher however you can give helpful feedback. Make sure you have your form submitted on time! Once school is out for the summer the staff is no longer at school. Classes will most likely go back to regular years in terms of make-up of students and this includes twins no longer in class together most likely.
- B. 5th grade moving up ceremony is Friday, June 18, at 10:00am. It will be held outdoors at the MS/HS field. An email with more details, including attire, will be sent as the date gets closer.
- C. There will be 5 sections in all grades next year except 4th which will have 4 sections.
- D. Overall the teachers are quite pleased with where the classes have ended the year academically. While we were in cohorts for much of the year, being in smaller groups enabled the teachers to really get to know each student.

VIII. Middle School Liaison: Alex Boruch

- A. Pat Lambert will be retiring, and congratulations to Seth Horowitz who will become principal starting 7/1/21.
- B. 4th & 5th graders will be moving over to the MS and HS for the rest of the school year. They will be self contained within the building.
 - 1. 5 rooms on the 1st floor of the MS will be used for 5th graders.

2. Mrs. Treacy's English Classroom and Mr. Tamucci's Math classroom will be moved to the HS.
 3. Mr. Lombardi's SS classroom will move to the Library
 4. Language classes will be reassigned to the 2nd fl in MS wing
 5. 4th graders will be moved to the new Fab Lab as well as 2 new HS classrooms.
 6. 4th and 5th graders will follow their normal schedule...arrival and dismissal will not impact MS/HS.
- C. Regents exams not required for HS credit or graduation requirements.
1. Algebra Regents 6/23 and Earth Science 6/24
- D. Moving up ceremony on Tuesday 6/22 at 1pm.
1. The event will follow DOH Guidance.
 2. Limited to 2 guests per family .
 3. Will continue to monitor guidance and restrictions will be in place.
- E. Schedule with dates of Finals/presentations/Dismissal Times will be posted.
- F. Teachers will not zoom on the last week of school.

IX. High School Liaison: Jen Savner

- A. Relocation affects Junior Parking Spots because more faculty parking will be needed.
- B. The end-of-year testing schedule has been confusing. An email will go out to explain that soon. There will be final projects and other assessments to take the place of regents that have been canceled.
- C. Student Congress conducted a survey on AP class content. It was stressed that the survey seeks information on class content, what is being learned or done in the class, not about the teachers or how much homework is associated with the class.
- D. There is a Blind Brook Foundation for Innovation to raise money for innovative and technology-based Board of Ed projects. One of their first fundraisers is a lawn sign that can be bought for 5/8/12th graders if you want that on your lawn.
- E. Dr. Chirles would like to thank senior students Zach Berger and Melanie Klein as well as parents Donna Acurso and Lauren Haines who served for four years on the Shared Decision Making Committee.
- F. There is a Senior Parent meeting next Wednesday to review upcoming events like prom, awards ceremonies, graduation. A few dates include:
 1. June 3rd: award ceremony.
 2. June 11th: PROM (and lifted restrictions as of today means that members of the Senior Class can bring dates from other classes or towns.)
 3. June 21st: Senior Breakfast and yearbook distribution
 4. June 22nd : Trip to Six Flags
 5. June 23rd: Mandatory Graduation Rehearsal

- 6. June 24th: Graduation at 5pm on the Upper Field.
- G. Dr. Chirles would like to thank the PTA for recognizing the staff during teacher appreciation week- they enjoyed that immensely.

X. Pupil Services Liaison: Kiki DeBari

- A. The ICT roll-out in the elementary school is underway. (ICT stands for Integrated Co-Teaching.) General Ed and Special Ed teachers collaborate to provide instruction to a class of students with and without disabilities.
- B. This will be for grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. We are super excited because it moves us toward a much more inclusive school community. SEID, with Pupil Services, will provide a presentation on this by June 9th. It will be given by the people who are actually training the staff.

XI. Membership: Bree Candee and Stacy Kapner

- A. We have two new PTA members.

XII. Community Coalition: Debra Cohen and Monique Tricario

- A. It's mental health awareness week. We've had nice stress-relieving outdoor activities at lunch, such as bubbles and chalk. The Youth Leadership Club helped spearhead planning. We did a walk on the track for NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) and surpassed the goal of 50 miles as a school. Today was Wear Tie-Dye day, to show the range of emotions, as tie dye has lots of color. We entered everyone who walked for NAMI into a contest. Someone is going to win the chance to pie a teacher. Tomorrow is Fabulous Friday - wear GREEN to show the people around you that you care.
- B. We also had an event on Cinco de Mayo- Let's Taco Bout it. Kids wrote about who they would talk to if they needed to talk with a trusted adult. We are making sure kids are aware of who Monique Tricario is and that she is a resource for them.

Attendance***In Person:***

Alexandra Boruch
Patrick Brimstein
Debra Cohen
Katherine Hallissy Ayala
Shana Koransky
Rachel Lerner
Karen Lin
ToniAnne Rigano
Cameron Sager
Jen Savner
Alicia Scala
Correy Stephenson

On Zoom:

Kiki DeBari
Bree CAndee
Seth Horowitz
Hedy Cardozo
Perri Ross
Catherine Li
Johanna Gonzalez
Sari Sakofsky
Anne Weisz
Luci Zimmerman
Anna
Kerri James
Richard Donohue
Monique Tricario
Katie Wolff
Arpita Buesing
Laura
Dan Sottile
Robyn Cohn
Tina Steinberg
Meredith Winston
Yvette Montvelinsky