



Blind Brook Parent-Teacher Association

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, 24 September 2024 | 7 PM | Blind Brook Middle School/High School Library

1. Welcome

Blind Brook PTA Advisor Cameron Sager called the meeting to order at 7:03 PM.

Cameron announced that Nethra Bhatt and Katie Wolff had resigned from their positions as PTA co-presidents the previous day, Monday, 23 September.

He explained that he would be helping to manage the leadership transition.

2. Superintendent's report, Dr. Colin Byrne

Superintendent of Schools Colin Byrne reported that school openings went well this year.

A proposed bond will be put to a vote on Tuesday, 22 October, at the Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School in the old gym. The bond will support addressing a number of issues, including many caused by aging infrastructure at the middle school/high school building.

Homecoming events will be held this coming weekend. A calendar of events is available on the high school website.

On Tuesday, 1 October, Dr. Richard Cash will deliver a presentation at the elementary school in the cafetorium on differentiating learning for individual students.

Schools will be closed on Thursday and Friday, 3 and 4 October, in observance of Rosh Hashanah.

In closing, Dr. Byrne announced that Blind Brook High School has been named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2024 by the U.S. Education Department.

3. Speaker: Ashley Schlemmer, Student Assistant Counselor, BBMS/HS

Blind Brook Middle and High School Student Assistance Counselor Ashley Schlemmer was invited to introduce PTA members to the Student Assistance program, which is a substance use prevention and early intervention program at the middle and high school.

Ashley is available for individual and group counseling services, but also runs schoolwide prevention-focused activities, including themed awareness days or weeks. For example, for National Recovery Month in September, Ashley utilized morning announcements, bulletin board

displays, in-classroom activities, and optional lunchtime activities, in this case, writing supportive letters to people in recovery, to raise awareness.

Ashley advises the high school's chapter of Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), as well as the middle school's Youth Advocacy Council. Both aim to help students become positive influences in the school community and promote leadership skills.

That day, Ashley had begun an eight-session Prevention Education series for ninth graders, rolled out through their English classes. Students will learn about changes experienced in adolescence, the effects of various substances, relationships, and coping skills.

Ashley also introduced Elizabeth deBlasi, who will visit health classes later this year to discuss the risks of impaired driving.

4. Co-Presidents' report

Cameron delivered the co-presidents' report, thanking those that volunteered to help with the Kindergarten Social held in August, as well as Marissa Borzykowski from Spectrum Designs for donating their services to print custom shirts for the high school band to wear during their performance at Yankee Stadium.

5. Treasurer's report, Taylor Gutierrez

Blind Brook PTA Treasurer Taylor Gutierrez reported that the PTA's efforts in July and August had been focused on building the organization's financial position to fund programming throughout the year, including holding a flash spiritwear and custom water bottle sale in July.

PTA membership enrollment began in August, and Taylor thanked everyone who had enrolled so far for their meaningful support.

6. Fundraising report, Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman

Fundraising co-chair Jessica Trosterman told the group that Fall Fest details are still being worked out, and that the PTA will communicate more as soon as they're able.

Jess announced a glow run and plant sale planned for the spring.

The high school band will be playing at the Yankees' home game Wednesday, 25 September.

She encouraged the community to share their ideas, and said that the Fundraising Committee will reach out to invite people to get involved with events as they come together.

7. Programming report, Mary Barbagli and Pamela Huang

Programming co-chair Mary Barbagli shared their goal for the year, to strengthen the bond between the school and the community with programming for kids, as well as for parents and teachers.

The Programming Committee is introducing a new “Fun Night” series, which will feature a variety of activities, targeted for all K–12 groups, centered around national days of celebration or cultural/heritage holidays.

The first Fun Night will celebrate World Octopus Day on Tuesday, 8 October, with a sold-out program for kindergartners and first graders.

The Programming Committee is looking for ideas for future Fun Night events, and hopes to form a year-long subcommittee focused on this series: this group would help to come up with theme ideas and assist with event logistics. An invitation to volunteer for this subcommittee is forthcoming.

Programming also plans to provide more volunteer opportunities, particularly for high school students to help them to accrue community service hours.

Programming co-chair Pamela Huang reported that the Kindergarten Social had been very successful, welcoming over sixty incoming students and their families. She thanked the members of the planning committee and student volunteers by name for their contributions to the event’s success.

Pamela announced plans to hold the third annual pumpkin carving party at the middle school on Thursday, 24 October; an official announcement will follow in early October.

8. Liaison reports

a. Elementary School, Afton Rosenfeld and Ann Sedrish

Elementary School Liaison to the Principal Ann Sedrish reported that the “marquee” events which have been planned for each grade the past few years are all on the books again this year, fully funded by the district.

Elementary School Principal Tracy Taylor and Assistant Principal Teresa Letizia held a Bluebird Chat the previous week, mostly targeted for families new to the school.

Dr. Richard Cash will be making a presentation in the elementary school cafetorium on Tuesday, 1 October.

Just as the upper school, the elementary school will dismiss early on Wednesday, 2 October.

The elementary school is planning to hold a Halloween parade; details to be announced.

School pictures will be taken on Tuesday and Wednesday, 15 and 16 October: teachers will email their classes to let them know which day their class’s pictures will be taken.

A Jewish cultural assembly and an assembly on Diwali are planned.

Another Bluebird Chat will be held in October.

Elementary School Liaison to Class Parents Afton Rosenfeld shared that she has been sending many messages to the elementary school class parents this year, and plans to continue to do so throughout the year to foster a sense of connection. To that end as well, the group will be meeting remotely on Monday, 30 September.

b. Middle School, Leah Mittleman

Middle School Liaison Leah Mittleman shared that she will be meeting once a month with Blind Brook Middle School Principal Seth Horowitz throughout the year. She highlighted Principal Horowitz's weekly emails to middle school families, and explained that all of the information in her report tonight, and more, has been distributed there as well.

There will be a two-part parenting workshop aimed at sixth grade families held on Thursday, 26 September, and Thursday, 24 October, focusing on the adolescent brain and executive function.

On Tuesday, 8 October, there will be a Principal Conversation event at 6:30 PM, followed by a Board of Education meeting which includes a middle school student presentation on the agenda.

Picture day is Friday, 18 October, at the middle school this year.

Middle school clubs will begin meeting on Monday, 7 October; the late bus will also begin running that day. This year, there will be a new focus on student leadership among the clubs, and each will have elected officers: eighth graders will be eligible to serve as club presidents, and seventh graders will run for vice president. In the future, students may also be eligible to serve their clubs as treasurers. This is modeled after high school club structures.

Also new this year is one particular middle school club, the Student Advocacy Council, which is similar to the High School Congress. This club will help foster leadership skills and encourage students to utilize their voice.

c. High School, ToniAnne Rigano

High School Liaison ToniAnne Rigano reported that Homecoming events will take place this weekend, and referred those interested to the schedule available on the high school calendar on the school website.

A club fair for students will be held on Tuesday, 1 October.

The high school will have an early dismissal on Wednesday, 2 October; classes will be held according to a special schedule for the day, available online.

Progress reports for the first quarter will be posted to the Parent Portal on Thursday, 10 October.

The PSAT and SAT will be given to tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students on Thursday, 24 October; ninth graders will have an orientation trip day.

The Shared Decision Making committee members will be announced on Friday, 27 September.

ToniAnne reminded the group that the high school calendar is always available on the website.

She also commended the school for being named a National Blue Ribbon School for 2024.

d. Pupil Services, Loren Becher

Pupil Services Liaison Loren Becher introduced the Supporting Every Individual Difference (SEID) Committee, comprising a group of parents whose children have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), receive Section 504 services, or need other types of extra support. Loren encouraged anyone interested to email her to join the SEID mailing list.

Mike McLeod will be conducting training for Blind Brook teachers and Rye Brook Recreation staff members who participate in afterschool programming, focusing on working with kids with ADHD.

The Homework Helpers program is operating again this year. The program currently pairs twenty-five elementary school students with high school student tutors, allowing the high school students to accrue community service hours. The club has offered their services to small groups within the school community to start. Once more high school tutors are available, the club will offer their services more broadly.

A webinar was held the same night as this meeting, Tuesday, 24 September, on positive behavior strategies. More webinars on other topics will follow.

SEID plans to hold a meet-and-greet with Pupil Services staff in conjunction with an upcoming PTA meeting; there will potentially be a more social gathering scheduled in December as well.

9. Membership report, Rachel Boyman and Lindsay Noymer

Membership co-chair Lindsay Noymer reported that the PTA currently has about 500 members, including 128 school faculty and staff members.

Lindsay encouraged class parents to remind other parents in their classes to join.

SchoolBee, the online school community directory, went live on Tuesday, 17 September; printed versions of the directory, Dial-A-Friend, can be ordered through Tuesday, 1 October. Lindsay asked that everyone check their own information on SchoolBee by Monday, 30 September to be sure it is correct, prior to the information being sent to the printer.

In response to a question from a meeting attendee, Lindsay said that PTA membership this year is comparable to last year's; Taylor confirmed that we are financially on target with respect to membership dues.

Membership co-chair Rachel Boyman asked meeting attendees to encourage others to join the PTA, reminding everyone that membership is open for the whole school year, and that their dues are a great way to support the community.

10. New business

There was no new business.

11. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41.

Attending

Jessica Andruk
Meghan Avanzino
Sarah Bailey
Mary Barbagli
Allison Baumrind
Loren Becher
Stephanie Biderman
Rachel Boyman
Colin Bryne
Jen Buchwald
Annie Chandrapong
Elizabeth deBlasi
Marni Ford
Lynda Frischer
Maria Genovese
Amanda Gettinger
Lauren Goodman
Taylor Gutierrez
Janine Hannon

Sabrina Haskell
Pamela Huang
Kerri James
Joe Laronga
Jenna Laskin
Sara Levin
Leah Mittelman
Amy Nathan
Eneida Nikci
Lindsay Noymer
Lauren Posner
Angela Rein
ToniAnne Rigano
Afton Rosenfeld
Cameron Sager
Ashley Schlemmer
Ann Sedrish
Meghan Shaw
Melissa Sheinheit
Pooja R. Singh
Brittany Sommer Katzin
Shanen Starr
Correy Stephenson
Michelle Tepper
Jessica Trosterman
Shari Turner
Lauren Watt
Emily Weinstein Mahoney
Laura Wolther
Jing Xie
Katie Zarkin