

On April 8, 2024, the PTA Communications Conference Committee met in the Syosset High School Guidance Resource Center to discuss various topics with district administrators.

Below is a summary of the question and answer session in the following order:

1. Project Beyond (p.1-2)
2. Middle School Math (p.2)
3. High School Guidance and College Admissions (p.2-3)
4. High School Physical Education (p.3-4)
5. Food Allergies (p.4)
6. School Lunch (p.4-5)
7. Transportation (p.5-6)

Project Beyond

What is the criteria for admission to Project Beyond and is it the same in each school?

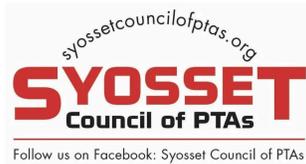
The criteria for admission into Project Beyond has been scoring at the 97th percentile on at least two of the three subtests of the CoGAT - either for the Age Percentile Rank or Grade Level Percentile Rank. During the pandemic the criteria was adjusted to accommodate for the unusual circumstances of the pandemic. This criteria is uniform across all of our elementary schools.

For students who are very close to qualifying, are there other factors that can be taken into consideration? Are students allowed to retake the test?

The CogAT is the only factor taken into consideration for admission into Project Beyond at this time. Though we value the input of our teachers as it relates to student academic achievement, research has found that teacher rating scales are notoriously unreliable. The only situation in which a retake is allowable is a misadministration of a test, or a technical difficulty online. This is exceedingly rare.

Why is the CogAT of the criteria to determine a child's eligibility for Project Beyond if parents are able to, and many do, tutor their children for the test?

The CoGAT is one of the most widely used assessments for measuring cognitive ability. The test measures how students process quantitative and spatial information. Since the program's inception, exams that measure cognitive ability have been the only measure used to identify students. Our team of enrichment specialists are continuing to explore additional, objective, research-based measures that have both validity and reliability as potential criteria for selection.



Is there a max number of students who can enter Project Beyond each year?

Any student who qualified to participate in Project Beyond will be able to participate.

Middle School Math

In 5th grade, students have the option to take a test to be put on an advanced math track. When did this practice begin?

It has been a standing practice to administer this math placement assessment at all elementary schools after state testing.

What is the criteria for which students are chosen to take the math placement assessment?

The student's report card data as well as their NWEA scores are reviewed based on a series of criteria from a rubric to make the determination if it would be appropriate for the student to take the math placement assessment. Project Beyond students are not automatically given this test.

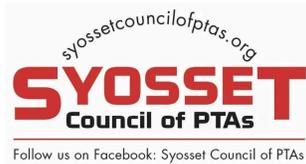
What is the 8th grade math option for students on the advanced track who struggle to succeed in Geometry Honors in 8th grade?

The rationale for having our grade 8 Geometry Honor students take this class in the High School building is that, if they are struggling, they would have the ability to switch to a Regents Geometry class.

High School Guidance and College Admissions

The college admissions process has changed drastically over the past three years. How is the guidance office changing its approach as a result?

Our guidance department prides itself on being up to date on the latest approach to college applications. Staff actively attends various college workshops, and college visits throughout the year to review procedures and changes at each particular school. We also discuss these topics on a weekly basis as a department to update the changes in admissions. Each of our in-school and evening programs, beginning with 9th grade, have been structured by our developmental school counseling model to build towards the application process. We also continue to refine each of our programs. This year for College Night we sent out *Strive Scan* to our students so they could easily share their information with each college representative at the event. In addition, we created a College Night Preparation Workshop for our students where our counselors gave our juniors mock college fair questions and reviewed what to expect/ask at our annual College Night.



Do Syosset counselors have relationships with college admissions officers?

Yes! Our team maintains existing relationships and seeks out new ones in an effort to best advise and assist students along their college application journey. We are in constant communication with college representatives throughout the year. Our College Night has more than 120 schools in attendance. Additionally, we have over 100 schools visit the high school at the start of each school year to provide guidance to students beginning their admissions process. Next fall, counselors will be in these meetings to extend the lines of communication. Members of our department also attend many college visits and professional workshops throughout the year. We are beginning a new initiative that will give students the opportunity to visit colleges through our admissions representatives, which will provide a better understanding of college life. We will provide more on that in the coming school years.

Can the guidance office put out a document to answer school specific questions related to the Common Application?

General information to school specific questions on Naviance is listed on our email to families in August. We also will post it to our homepage on Naviance for seniors. This information is also reviewed at their individual parent/student junior planning meetings, college boot camp, and senior meetings.

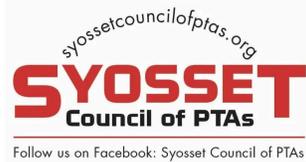
Would the guidance department be able to update parents about the admissions process to parents of Juniors to assist them in the coming year?

The guidance department offers various evening programs to assist parents throughout the year to offer insights into the process. Our individual junior planning meetings occur in the spring, and we are able to have important discussions about the process with families one-on-one. This important information is also reviewed in the junior college application readiness boot camp and again during the college application workshop for incoming seniors.

High School Physical Education

Can participation in Varsity sports eliminate a student's gym requirement?

Participation in a varsity sport does not eliminate the physical education graduation requirement. Students are required to earn two credits in physical education from 9th grade through 12th grade. There is an exemption if a student transfers in from another state that may have different requirements. For example, if a student transfers into our school in 10th grade without a physical education credit, that student would need to earn 1.5 credits over the next three years. As per the regulations, all secondary students are required to take physical education taught by a certified physical education teacher 2-3 times per week throughout the school year. If a varsity athlete in grades 11 and 12 were to be exempted from physical education, they would still need to be assigned a roster spot as they must return to their class



upon completion of their season. Additionally, they would need to be in good academic standing, demonstrate that they have an acceptable level of physical fitness by passing a physical fitness test, and demonstrate knowledge of the physical education activities. Lastly, all students must be present for the NYS mandate hands only CPR training.

Food Allergies

How often is the approved snack list updated?

The approved snack list is reviewed throughout the year by all school nurses. There is no guarantee or assumption of “safe” snacks for all students, therefore the nurse is involved in approving the entry of food items into each class from this vetted list of items. As suggestions for new or alternative items are made to the nurses, the nurses discuss the health implications for each suggestion. The list offers parents an array of choices. The District has also implemented the “awareness slip” for foods that are brought in for events (i.e, pizza, ices, etc.) that are not on the approved snack list. This informs parents that food is being brought into the class that was not on the list.

Can the approved snack list be building-specific based on student allergies?

Inconsistencies can lead to mistakes, and when it comes to student safety, we cannot take any chances. For this reason, we believe it is safest to have one list to be used across all buildings.

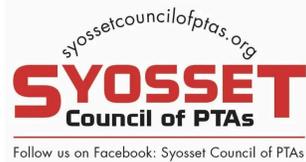
School Lunch

There is now a working pizza oven at Baylis Elementary. Will the other elementary schools be getting them as well?

Pizza ovens have now been installed in all schools. There is staff training for each school and all pizza ovens should be fully operational by May 2024. The pizza ovens may also be used for other items like grilled cheese and chicken tenders, which will improve the food quality and also enable elementary students to have two hot options each day.

Why was the district’s lunch survey not shared with elementary students?

As the elementary lunch program is a satellite program, with hot food cooked off premises, food options that can be offered are more limited. For this reason, we focused the food service bid survey specifically on secondary schools. However, with the addition of pizza ovens in the schools, and options expanding, we will consider surveying younger students.



Is it possible for students to have the option maybe once a week or month where pizza or another food is brought into each school from a local vendor?

The school district participates in the National School Lunch Program. The NYS Education Department and the federal government create the rules for the National School Lunch program that all school districts must operate under. Those rules, which are embedded in our contract with the food service management company, prohibit the district from the distribution or sale of competitive foods.

Can students in the High School be given access to microwaves in the cafeteria?

Unfortunately, due to food allergy and cross contamination concerns, as well as safety concerns related to scalding or the introduction of metal, this is not advisable.

Transportation

The district website states that only Kindergarten and special needs students need an adult present for students to be let off of the bus at their stops, but some parents say the drivers will not let any students off of the bus without an adult present. Is this decision at the bus driver's discretion?

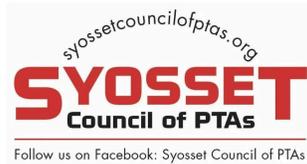
It has been the District's longstanding practice that Kindergarten students require an adult to meet the student at the bus stop. The District provides Kindergarten students with a bright orange tag so they will be more easily identifiable to drivers or substitutes. We have been made aware that on occasion some drivers, once they become familiar with the patterns of student drop off, may be reluctant to drop off, if the adult is not present.

Can all bus drivers be instructed to stop at each stop for approximately five seconds to see if anyone is coming before pulling away?

Students have been instructed to arrive at their bus stops five minutes before its arrival time. Buses that arrive early to stops have been instructed to wait until the scheduled pick up time before proceeding.

Is there an update on the availability of a bus tracking app since the last meeting?

We met with Beacon, the new company that has acquired Huntington Coach, to discuss upgrades to technology that we have been requesting. For the next school year, the company is scheduled to launch Beacon-Connect. This is a secure portal that will provide the district more timely communication, in addition to driver safety monitoring. This is expected to enable us to communicate with parents in a more timely manner.



Is there an update on the Town of Oyster Bay STOP arm cameras? What can we do as a community to speed the process along?

We confirmed with the Town of Oyster Bay that school districts are now able to proceed in signing an agreement to opt-in to the Town of Oyster Bay School Bus Stop Arm Enforcement Program. A resolution to participate in the Program was approved by the Board of Education at the May 13th meeting. We will work with the Town of Oyster Bay and Bus Patrol to execute the agreements. The cameras have already been installed on the district's Huntington Coach buses. The district plans to send communications out to the community to make them aware of the program.