



## Blind Brook Parent-Teacher Association

### Meeting Minutes

Monday, 9 December 2024 | 7 PM | Blind Brook Middle School/High School Commons

#### 1. Welcome

Blind Brook PTA Co-President Lisa Benoit called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

#### 2. Special Guests

##### a. Katherine Ayala, Pick a Reading Partner (PARP) and 10 December School Board meeting agenda

Board of Education member Katherine Ayala thanked the community for their support of the bond. Its passage will give the district the opportunity to invest in their facilities and stay ahead of repairs.

The board hopes to begin work on the baseball field first. Work will begin over the summer.

Katherine acknowledged the intention of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Colin Byrne to retire at the end of the school year. The school board has hired a search firm which will coordinate input from all stakeholders, likely in the new year.

Katherine encouraged the community to attend board meetings, whether in person or on Zoom, and summarized the agenda for the meeting to be held the following day.

Katherine next spoke about the Pick a Reading Partner program (PARP). This is a New York State PTA program promoting literacy. It can be implemented as a K–12 program, but Blind Brook started last year only in the elementary school.

PARP was run as a one-week event last year, including three author visits. This year it will expand to a two-week period, 3–14 March. Programming is still in the works, but the organizers hope to welcome authors to the elementary school again, as well as guest readers, community members who will read to particular grades. The board appreciates any help from the community in using their networks to identify authors and readers for these opportunities, as well as potentially helping to hang student artwork prior to the start of the program.

##### b. Teresa Letizia, Elementary School Lice Protocol

Bruno M. Ponterio Ridge Street School Assistant Principal Teresa Letizia attended to discuss the elementary school's lice protocol.

She began by reviewing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance, which recommends treatment with either prescription or over-the-counter medications. The CDC does not mandate students with lice be sent home upon detection, and allows for their return to school as soon as treatment begins.

Blind Brook has developed its own procedure. When lice are detected, the school nurse notifies the student's parents, and sends the student home with information about lice and treatment of an infestation. The student's classmates are given bags in which to store their backpack and coat, which are in turn kept out of the classroom, in the hallway; this procedure is followed for one week. Students are also discouraged from getting too close to one another, since lice spread only by direct contact. The nurse's office also distributes a notice to all class families to notify them that the students have been exposed to lice. When students return to school after treatment for lice, the nurse will check them again.

Ms. Letizia acknowledged that in some ways this procedure doesn't go as far as it used to. In the past, all classmates of any student found to have an infestation, as well as anyone riding the same bus to school, would also be screened by the nurse. This additional screening is time-consuming for the nurse, who may need to more urgently attend to other students' needs, and also takes up instructional time. The school has at times hired a third-party provider to come to the school and perform screenings, but this became expensive and was often ineffective. However, the school does go further than required by the CDC, and has adapted over time to include additional precautions, such as the lice bags for coats and backpacks.

Ms. Letizia also stressed that lice is not currently a large cause for concern in the elementary school.

### **3. Superintendent's report, Dr. Colin Byrne**

PTA Co-President Loren Becher delivered the superintendent's report on behalf of Superintendent Dr. Colin Byrne.

A Board of Education meeting is scheduled for the following day, 10 December, and will include recognition of the high school state champion volleyball team. A reception at 7:15 will be followed by a ceremony at 7:30. Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Dr. Michael Curtin will also make a presentation on assessment and grading.

Holiday break this year will begin on Monday, 23 December, and end on Wednesday, 1 January. School buildings will be closed for this period, and students should be reminded to bring home everything that they'll need from school during the break.

At a special meeting held on Tuesday, 26 November, the board approved the appointment of District Wise to handle the search for a new Blind Brook superintendent. Dr. Byrne is not directly involved in the search, but the community will hear more in the coming weeks from the board.

**4. Acceptance of the minutes of the 14 November 2024 meeting**

Loren made a motion to approve the minutes.

High School Liaison ToniAnne Rigano seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**5. Co-Presidents' report, Loren Becher and Lisa Benoit**

Lisa thanked the Fundraising Committee and congratulated them on the success of the recent pie sale fundraiser.

She also recognized the Programming Committee for their bingo night series. The events have had strong registration, with one successful night having taken place already.

Finally, Lisa congratulated Board of Education member Correy Stephenson on the success of this year's book fair.

Loren reported that the PTA has once again joined Heard in Rye, and a representative from the group plans to attend the January PTA meeting.

**6. Treasurer's report, Taylor Gutierrez**

Treasurer Taylor Gutierrez reported that the PTA's portion of the proceeds raised by Fall Fest in October were higher than budgeted.

This year's pie sale raised about twice as much profit as last year's.

The elementary school has already started spending the money allocated to them by the PTA on cultural assemblies for students. The middle and high school is starting to tap into this funding as well; their first expenditure was for a field trip for students in Spanish classes.

**7. Fundraising Committee report, Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman**

Fundraising Committee Co-Chair Dea Fisher announced the spring booster-a-thon event for elementary school students, which will take place 18–27 March, and culminate with a glow run.

The Flex after school program schedule came out earlier in the day.

There is no date yet, but the Fundraising Committee is also planning a read-a-thon.

Co-Chair Jessica Trosterman added that the Harlem Wizards will be coming again this school year, likely on a Friday in the spring; volunteers will be needed to help run the event.

There was some discussion of the results of this year's book fair, which have not yet been reported, but seem to be coming in over budget, and also about future book fairs. There will indeed be a book fair held for middle school students in March, and Lisa noted that the PTA hopes to be involved in more middle school events, and also events for parents. There was also discussion of the possibility of adding more fundraising opportunities concurrent with the book fair, such as a craft fair held in an adjacent space.

#### **8. Programming Committee report, Mary Barbagli and Pamela Huang**

Programming Committee co-chair Pamela Huang reported that bingo nights are being held over three weeks, and began the week prior. They are planned and hosted by members of the Fun Night Subcommittee.

Forty-six students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades attended bingo night last week, as well as high school and parent volunteers.

The second bingo night event is planned for the following night, for students in kindergarten, first, and second grade; seventy-five students are registered, as well as a group of high school and parent volunteers to facilitate the event.

The final bingo night will be held for middle school students the following week, and will be a music-themed bingo event, featuring a volunteer high school DJ.

Co-chair Mary Barbagli reported that there are still two cookie-decorating events to come later in the week for elementary school students, one session at 4:30 for second- and third-grade students, and another for second-, third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students at 6 PM.

In the new year the elementary and middle schools will welcome Magic Dave for three shows held over two nights. Elementary school students will enjoy a magic show, while middle schoolers will learn how to perform magic tricks. Details about the shows will be sent out Monday, 16 December, and registration will open Wednesday, 18 December.

Discussion followed about finding ways to make registration equitable and convenient for all families. Pamela and Mary explained the logic behind the decisions they had made for events this fall, and described some of the backend work they do to make it happen. They will continue to consider suggestions for how this structure might work better for more families.

#### **9. Liaison reports**

##### **a. Elementary School, Afton Rosenfeld and Ann Sedrish**

PTA Elementary School Liaison to Class Parents Afton Rosenfeld delivered a report on behalf of Elementary School Liaison to the Principal Ann Sedrish. The elementary school will hold the fifth grade winter band concert on Wednesday, 18 December. All of the following week will also be spirit week at the elementary school.

The elementary school teachers' indoor recess wish lists will be distributed soon.

Looking forward to the new year, the next Bluebird Chat will be held on 15 January, and will focus on state testing.

Afton added that she will be holding a breakfast for elementary school class parents at the end of the week to thank them for their work.

**b. Middle School, Leah Mittelman**

Middle School Liaison Leah Mittelman began by sharing that the PTA Reflections contest received fifty submissions of student art this year, a record number. Leah thanked the students who participated, and congratulated those who had been selected to move on to the next round.

Middle school students will make a presentation at the Board of Education meeting to be held the following evening.

Progress reports will also be issued the following day.

There will be a Principal's Conversation held on Tuesday, 7 January.

**c. High School, ToniAnne Rigano**

High School Liaison ToniAnne Rigano reported that High School Principal Mark Greenwald has gathered a small group of students to plan events in conjunction with Port Chester High School students.

The high school chorus concert has been postponed.

The December issue of the parents newsletter was distributed the week prior.

High school staff are at work on next year's budget.

The high school also recently used money given to them by the PTA to fund a field trip for AP Spanish students.

**d. Pupil Services, Marni Ford**

Pupil Services Liaison Marni Ford announced that Supporting Every Individual Difference, SEID, has added a co-chair to support their work, which has greatly expanded since the group's formation. Sarah Bailey will fill the position.

Progress reports were sent last month for all students with individualized education programs (IEPs).

Pupil Services plans to hold two webinars in the new year, one workshop on the annual review process, and another on the CPSE to CSE transition.

Westchester Living will be running webinars on school avoidance and anxiety in February (postponed from January), and another in March, Understanding Difficult Behaviors in Young Children.

SEID is planning events for the new year as well, including a social for SEID parents on Thursday, 23 January.

They are also holding a workshop on executive functioning with two sessions in February and March led by local parent Eric Zimmerman. The information shared here will be applicable to both young and older children.

SEID is also starting a virtual book club. Their first book will be *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. The book club will be facilitated by Dr. Nikki Rabin from It's Lit, a group which leads and facilitates book club discussions.

Finally, the high school Homework Helpers group is expanding, with thirty-six high school volunteer tutors now on board. They plan to offer their services next to third-grade families.

**10. Membership Committee report, Rachel Boyman and Lindsay Noymer**

Membership Committee Co-Chair Rachel Boyman noted the success of the PTA's use of the Givebacks platform for the recent pie sale fundraiser. The committee will continue testing out alternative fundraising platforms to evaluate the PTA's options. The next test will be an email sent to Blind Brook families who are not yet PTA members, encouraging them to join.

**11. New business**

There was no new business.

**12. Next meeting and future meeting dates**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 16 January.

**13. Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 PM.

**Attending**

Jessica Andruk  
KH Ayala  
Mary Barbagli  
Allison Baumrind

Loren Becher  
Lisa Benoit  
Rachel Boyman  
Allison Conte  
Dea Fischer  
Marni Ford  
Taylor Gutierrez  
Pamela Huang  
Kerri James  
Jenna Laskin  
Teresa Letizia  
Lindsay Noymer  
ToniAnne Rigano  
Afton Rosenfeld  
Ashley Schlemmer  
Melissa Sheinheit  
Correy Stephenson  
Jessica Trosterman  
Shari Turner  
Erica Wiener  
Laura Wolther  
Katie Zarkin