



Blind Brook Parent-Teacher Association

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, 13 February 2025 | 7 PM | Blind Brook Middle School/High School Commons

1. Welcome

Blind Brook PTA Co-President Lisa Benoit called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

2. Special Guest: Marla Beth Enowitz, 2025 RSS winter recess art program and other community events

Marla Beth Enowitz came to speak about the winter indoor recess art program which she offers to elementary school students.

Her art classes have been very popular, and she is now coming to the school three days per week to meet the demand; she sees about fifty to sixty students each day that she comes in.

She plans one project for each week, and matches the level of difficulty in its execution for each grade level.

Her company Marla Beth Designs also operates a studio in Rye and runs fundraising events for non-profit organizations.

3. Superintendent's report, Dr. Colin Byrne

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Colin Byrne reported that the proposed field work has now received all necessary approvals.

Work is scheduled to begin on the baseball field the following week; weather has already caused the work to be postponed from beginning this week. It is unlikely that the baseball field will be ready for the first week of practice, but it should be ready for the team's first home game.

Work is also scheduled on the rest of the track and inside the school building for the summer.

Next year's budget is not yet complete, but it will come in under the tax cap, and no current programs will be disrupted.

Internet safety specialist Katie Greer presented to parents this past Monday, 10 February; she also met during the school day with high school, middle school, and fifth-grade students. The district hopes to bring her in for additional coaching opportunities with elementary school computers and technology teacher Tracy Asencio.

The School-SPIRIT program (School-Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together) has been postponed from 28 February to 21 March. This program is facilitated by the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service, and is intended to give students a space to discuss and work to solve issues they face in the school. Dr. Byrne clarified that the program would only be run in the high school this year. Last year it was run for both the middle and high school, and a SPIRIT Council was formed to keep the work of the initial program moving forward, but it didn't last; the hope this year is to focus on the high school program alone to gain traction.

Finally, next year's calendar will be approved at the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday.

4. Acceptance of the minutes of the 16 January 2025 meeting

PTA Co-President Loren Becher made a motion to approve the minutes.

Membership Committee Co-Chair Lindsay Noymer seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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

Lisa thanked the Fundraising Committee for their work. She also recognized the Programming Committee for their recent success with bingo nights and Valentine's Day events.

The Pick a Reading Partner program (PARP) will run for the first two weeks in March. The theme this year will be Dig Into Reading. Authors will be visiting the school and presenting to particular grade levels. There will be other tie-ins to the program, such as art projects, a book swap, and VIP guest readers visiting on 7 March.

Lisa clarified in response to a question that PARP would not be run at the middle school this year; it could be done in the future, but volunteers are needed to take on the work to organize the program.

6. Treasurer's report, Taylor Gutierrez

Loren reported on behalf of PTA Treasurer Taylor Gutierrez that the organization's 2023 tax return has been filed.

Accounts receivable are not currently up to date.

Taylor asked that the Fundraising Committee be recognized for their successful read-a-thon; the PTA has been able to deliver more opportunities to the community due to this effort and robust fundraising throughout the year.

7. Fundraising Committee report, Dea Fisher and Jessica Trosterman

Lisa also commented on the success of this year's new read-a-thon fundraiser, organized by the Fundraising Committee, and went on to present on the co-chairs' behalf.

They have high hopes for the upcoming booster-a-thon.

The committee is planning a live band karaoke event for adults this spring.

The Harlem Wizards event is also scheduled for May.

8. Programming Committee report, Mary Barbagli and Pamela Huang

Programming Committee Co-Chair Mary Barbagli spoke about programming held since the January PTA meeting.

The magic shows in January drew more than 200 kindergarten through eighth grade students over three different sessions. The committee was particularly interested in the reception of the show by middle schoolers: this show was structured as a workshop, with the opportunity to learn tricks from the magician. Some of the more than thirty students who attended expressed interest in finding a way to continue learning about magic performance, perhaps in an after school activity.

A Valentine's Day craft event organized by the Fun Night Subcommittee was held on Tuesday, 11 February. Thirty-four second- and third-grade students attended, and each brought a parent or other guest. The idea was to provide a time and space for students to talk, craft, and connect with their guests.

The committee also partnered with the Rye Brook Senior Center for Valentine's Day, organizing with students to create handmade cards, about 600 of which were delivered to the center along with holiday treats.

Committee Co-Chair Pamela Huang said that the committee hopes to find more opportunities like this to connect with the wider local community, outside of the school. Seniors and staff at the senior center seem to be interested in finding other ways to partner with the PTA, such as sharing their facilities with students to organize intergenerational game nights, or even pickleball or ping pong matches.

An event for adults on women's health is slated for March to celebrate Women's History Month.

Mary and Pamela plan to meet with High School Principal Mark Greenwald after Winter Recess to discuss possible collaborations.

9. Liaison reports

a. Elementary School, Afton Rosenfeld and Ann Sedrish

Lisa reported that there were no updates regarding the class parents.

PTA Elementary School Liaison to the Principal Ann Sedrish announced that the elementary school hopes to find about eleven volunteers to assemble bags of materials at the elementary school for the Creating Connections program. This is a licensed program which helps students to understand differences in capabilities among different people. Each grade is assigned a particular difference, with the hope that students will learn about each one as they progress from kindergarten to fifth grade. This year volunteers will not be needed for the classroom portion of the program.

Pick a Reading Partner (PARP) will run the first two weeks of March. Principal Tracy Taylor plans to make wish lists of books for each grade.

There will be an early dismissal at 1:30 on Wednesday, 5 March.

The February Bluebird Chat was rescheduled; instead of being held the previous evening, 12 February, it will take place Wednesday, 26 February.

The special grade-level end-of-year events are all on the district calendar. Kindergarten and first- and second-grade events will be held in the morning; third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade events will be held in the evening.

The fifth grade moving up day ceremony will be held on Tuesday, 24 June, at Purchase College, SUNY. The middle school and high school graduation ceremonies will be held there as well, later in the day.

Ann reminded the group that the district had used one snow day so far.

b. Middle School, Leah Mittelman

PTA Middle School Liaison Leah Mittelman reminded the group that there will be an early dismissal on Wednesday, 5 March, for the middle school, at 12:50.

The book fair will be held at the middle school on Thursday and Friday, 27 and 28 March. Meetings will be held for incoming families in the coming weeks, on Thursday, 27 February, for families entering eighth grade, Thursday, 20 March for those entering sixth grade, and Thursday, 3 April, for those entering seventh.

c. High School, ToniAnne Rigano

Lisa reported on behalf of PTA High School Liaison ToniAnne Rigano that the PTA is working with the high school to find opportunities to collaborate and support the school.

The high school will also dismiss students at 12:50 on Wednesday, 5 March.

d. Pupil Services, Marni Ford and Sarah Shiboski

Pupil Services Liaison Marni Ford reminded the group that the first of two presentations on executive functioning would be held the following Monday, 17 February. The second installment will be held Tuesday, 11 March.

Supporting Every Individual Difference (SEID) will also be holding the first meeting of their book club on Wednesday, 9 April. The group will be discussing *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. Registration is \$30. The discussion will be led by a facilitator hired by SEID. An email with more information is forthcoming in the next few weeks.

A recent Westchester Living webinar had a good turnout with about 15 attending. The focus of the presentation was anxiety and school avoidance. Another scheduled for Wednesday, 12 March, will focus on difficult behaviors. The presenters are open to suggestions for upcoming topics.

The annual review season is beginning for students with individualized education programs (IEPs).

Pupil Services Liaison Sarah Shiboski reported that Karen Vitti and Jennifer Castelli, Director and Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel Services, are working on all elementary school IEP reports; the middle school process is upcoming.

An upcoming professional development opportunity will address apathy in students.

Mike McLeod will be presenting on Monday, 3 March on executive functioning and ADHD.

The Homework Helpers program is expanding, with 45 elementary school students and 46 high schools currently participating. The group is considering expanding into Port Chester. A PTA member asked for clarification, whether the program is now open to elementary school students of all ages, which it now is.

10. Membership Committee report, Rachel Boyman and Lindsay Noymer

Membership Committee Co-Chair Lindsay Noymer reported that the committee is working on a presentation for the next meeting of the executive board, and working towards changes for the next school year.

11. New business

The next meeting will be held at the elementary school on Thursday, 20 March, at 9 AM.

Board of Education member Correy Stephenson announced to the group that the board is working on next year's budget. The first presentation on this work will be made at their next meeting. A longer meeting will be held in March with a full breakdown of the budget.

Blind Brook Middle and High School Student Assistance Counselor Ashley Schlemmer shared with the group that it is Children of Addiction Awareness week, and that the middle school student advocacy council held a trivia event on Tuesday. As part of Random Acts of Kindness week, students had been invited to write positive messages to adult members of the school community, which were posted on the wall of the school.

12. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Attending

Felicia Albano
Jessica Andruk
Sarah Bailey
Mary Barbagli
Loren Becher
Lisa Benoit
Rachel Boyman
Colin Bryne
Annie Chandrapong
Marla Enowitz
Marni Ford
Pamela Huang
Kerri James
Ranjana Krishnaswamy
Jenna Laskin
Leah Mittelman
Lindsay Noymer
Ashley Schlemmer
Ann Sedrish
Melissa Sheinheit
Correy Stephenson
Shari Turner