

Horseman PTA Meeting March 15, 2019

Doretta Miralia - SEPTA
Andrea Harrison - SEPTA
Jen Povman
Mitch Sylves-Berry
Angel Rafter
Karen Kuhn
Dancy Balestrieri
Amber Dasilva
Aliie Sherich
Lauren McBride
Kevin Miller

SEPTA

SEPTA joined the PTA for the first time this morning. Working to get the word out to parents in each building that SEPTA exists and to get more participation to support the kids. SEPTA is added to the Horseman web site and will build pages with information about the organization and what they do. Working to get SEPTA and hopefully PTA on the district web site in a more noticeable location.

Would like to add SEPTA to the PTA membership form so that we can build a SEPTA mailing list. Angel will send this to Brianna to add to the web site.

New PTA Guide Books

Lauren found an amazing handbook for a Texas PTA online and brought the idea to Angel. Angel would like us to put the same thing together for our PTA. Each VP is getting a binder and Angel has asked everyone to put all event and other information into the binder. That binder can then be stored at the administration building for reference and training for future VPs. Angel will have a binder for the President as well. Sharing a Google Doc is another option we are exploring to keep information current and available.

Rivertowns Update

Jen Povman has pulled together the Introvert program for April 11, 2019 at 7:00 PM at the SHHS Auditorium. We need to start advertising once the flyer is approved by the Rivertown Parents board and has a Spanish translation. Volunteers will also be needed. Michael Alcee, a clinical psychologist, and Elisabeth Hickey, our Enrichment teacher+++, are participating. The discussion is on recognizing introverted children vs social anxiety and when and how to push them and support them.

Tinker Night is coming up (like our Science Night) with limited registration spots. Curious-on-Hudson is co-hosting via their Curiositas arm. Date is Friday May 3, 2019. People should sign up on Rivertown Parents to get information on it.

Sexual Misconduct: A Closer Look is coming up and will be a panel discussion co-hosted by Mercy College. Anna Gonzalez, a Title IX lawyer, is participating. This is a timely conversation given the sexting issues going on in the high school. Tuesday, May 14 at 7:00 PM at Mercy College. Geared towards high school and maybe younger kids. Information will be on the flyer when it is published. Jen Povman suggested that this flyer gets placed in teacher mailboxes and communicated via email at the middle and high schools.

BOE Budget Meeting

Angel attended the Saturday morning session where the principals all presented their budget needs.

- Guidance counselors now required at all schools or a portion of (state requirement)
- Bus monitors at Morse in the afternoon are approved
- Tech support needed throughout (on-site people assigned to support Jean)
- JP getting library support, 30 Chromebooks
- Everyone is requesting a math push-in to support kids in need of support (AIS). Everyone was denied. Discussion continued at the board meeting about why this was requested and not in the budget.
- Morse teachers trained in yoga tricks to help calm down the kids. Getting a library assistant, tech support and 3D printers. Replacing desktops. Where will they go? Can we reallocate to art and others in need?
- WI extending parking spaces at the upper lot. Getting 60 Chromebooks and document cameras. Concern raised about the issues with WI pickups - will park topic for later today.
- Middle School includes an advisory day once a cycle. New desktops, 10 doc cameras, 150 Chromebooks. Goal of one cart per classroom.
- High School adding more to 9th grade transition and AP bootcamp in the summer. Money seems to be mainly going to art station improvements. (See link on agenda.)

Monthly Superintendent Meeting

- Flexible seating requests from mini-grant bids were discussed and apparently there was a focus group at Morse testing and visiting schools with flexible seating. Teachers were not aware that this was going on.
- JP has a lot of new spots opening with all the retirements. They sent out another email to parents to get training for participating on interview committees.
- WI afterschool crossing guard was discussed to get more support during the busy dismissal time.

- Chris will go through the approved budget with us at the next meeting so we can communicate out to the district.
- There have been comments about children accepted in the Challenge Program not being diverse enough. A lot of families do not have the parent assistance that others do to succeed in the program. Going to meet with the teachers to get some ideas on how to expand the program.

Foundation Update

Foundation/PTA Day will be at Patriot's Park on June 15. March 20 at 6:30 PM there will be a meeting between the PTA and Foundation to brainstorm how we can coordinate our efforts and get our name out there as well.

School Supplies

One company gives 50% profit and will send everything to the school. Everyone else gives us a price and then we mark up accordingly with what we want to make from the fundraiser. They all send the supplies to the home.

Whitham wanted it to go to the school so we will use that company.

Book Fair in May

Karen contacted Christ Church about using the parish hall. They are doing renovations at some point and will let her know.

Events

Earth Day cleanup is April 27. We will be doing a signup for membership and bake sale. This is part of the Disney Points of Light contest to clean up and win tickets that we can raffle off in the future. Go Go Squeeze is donating product that we can give out to participants.

Heads Up

Amber went to the Rivertowns-wide meeting. Website has a signup - headsprivertowns.com. Created a Facebook page and blog. Working on publicity. On March 1 two Irvington reps will be on Paul Feiner's radio show. There will be a small piece in NY Magazine and the Enterprise about it.

We are not promoting "Gray for a Day" as a monthly initiative in TT/SH because we want to focus on other things. Irvington is doing it, as well as a "Wait Until 8th" program to wait until 8th grade for a smartphone. TT/SH may do a "Wait Until 8th or Later" program.

Irvington may do a Screen Free Saturday or Sunday and will work with Irvington Parks and Recreation on that. They are also putting up a banner to promote it. Working on a fundraiser to get speakers from the program to come back to speak to local parents.

Dobbs Ferry is working to get phones out of the middle school. Meeting with Chris Borsari next week.

Chris Borsari Visit and Update

Chris Borsari came to the meeting to start a bit more interfacing with the PTA.

Working on the budget at the moment and will come to the next meeting to review the approved budget with the PTA. First budget work session was last Saturday with the building principals and this Saturday will be discussing facilities and transportation. Things are going well. Working under the 2% tax cap, which is variable, so this year it maxes at 2.4%. Due to the economy this year and inflation being higher, it's 2.0, so it is a challenge. Waiting to find out what the state will give as aid and are hoping for some good news.

Hired a new architectural and construction firm this fall/winter. Working on the concept of safe, warm and dry - blacktop, windows, boilers, LED lighting, doors, security. We have buildings that are old and beautiful, but need upgrades.

- Tappan Hill now has new boilers.
- Testing out new seating for Morse's auditorium and will upgrade sound system.
- Working on plans for upgrades for all the buildings. Some projects will start in the summer but the majority will be done in fall 2019-2020. Taking time helps get better bids since it's cheaper to do the work outside of the busy 8-week summer season.
- Security vestibules are now set up in all the buildings.
- WI gas line has been upgraded. Put in a larger gas line since we are going to upgrade the boilers in the future. Now we can have dual-fuel. We should be ok even with the ConEd moratorium on new projects, but it could delay any work on other projects.
- The Transportation and Maintenance department has moved to the new building up by the high school athletic fields. The Lost and Found is also up there now - no one seems to know about it. Things are donated by the summer if not picked up.

Concept of the BASICS for early literacy (0-3 years old) to help promote development of literacy skills through play before coming into schools. This is a consortium of districts in the region working on this.

- TTSHbasics.org has videos and toolkits in English and Spanish.
- Did some trainings in Sleepy Hollow in December to test it out.
- Going to go to the TASH on June 1 doing some demonstrations and stations where families can try it out.
- Putting signs in the buildings about the program.
- There's a BASICS convention in July that Regina from the Foundation will be attending.

- Andrea Harrison suggested that 0-3 was when she did the most work with her special needs child and that it would be extremely helpful to integrate some learning in terms of recognizing potential milestones where parents would know when and how to intervene if there are special needs appearing.
- Some retired teachers are staying involved. We also have the ENL Ambassadors club participating.

SHHS was recognized by NY State for its graduation rate for men of color improving annually.

Federal government passed an education act - Every Student Succeeds Act - to replace No Child Left Behind.

- States hold the power on their education program per the Constitution but the federal government pushes for things via funding. The regulations on this are forming at the moment as the federal laws → state plan → state regulations.
- NCLB was solely based on state testing. Now they are allowing other measures for accountability - graduation, attendance, AP exams, SAT/ACT.
- ESSA requiring 95% participation rate in state exams for grades 3-8.
 - The Middle School is in danger of not making this based on our participation rate. If we fall behind we will have to create a participation improvement plan. Unsure of the final outcome on this.
 - A letter will come out encouraging people to participate and explaining these changes. Also will request earlier letters if opting out so that they can plan for supervision for those kids. Feedback given that it will be helpful to share how this will impact the teachers so that parents may be less politically motivated to opt out and that the district uses the data, the curriculum supports the tests fully, etc. so it's not just an extra thing the kids are forced to do.
 - Participation is reported by subgroups - ENL, Special Ed, etc.
 - Feedback given that we need consistency in what kids are allowed to do when they finish the test as this has not been consistent in the past and has caused anxiety/complaints from children.
 - Standards are useful to the districts in Borsari's opinion, but we will see where this goes in terms of assessing school/teacher success. It's good for kids to learn how to take tests but every parent has a right to decide what is right for their children.
 - Activities surrounding the tests, like double recesses, can be helpful to get the kids comfortable with the tests.
 - Principal office hours or opportunities to meet and discuss concerns might be useful to participation.
 - The district gets the data really late - just before the parents do - so there's not a lot of time to make placement or support decisions for the kids. Regents exams are locally scored so we can make adjustments immediately.
- Also need 95% overall attendance in schools with these new regulations.

John Paulding

- \$2300 profit on the book fair. Last year was about \$1900 and we budgeted for \$2000. Book Fair Celebration night was very successful and we sold about \$4000 in two hours. Pencil pull made money that went to books. Kids could win posters, etc. if they picked a pencil with a prize. Andrea Williamson wrote up a Google Doc with how she ran it and provided some ideas for next year.
- Discussed ways that we could work with school programs so there isn't too much and we can drop some of the intensive fundraising things like candles.

WI

- Doing a book exchange in the school where kids bring in and swap books. Readathon happening for school funding.
- The fact that the indoor games were collected and nothing has been utilized and issues with parking will be discussed in Angel's meeting with Mr. Holland later today. There is an issue where the donated games are too long to play for the time that they have. Discussing a future drive for appropriate games for the school's needs.
- Parents need more direction on where they are parking but there's some concern about who should be doing this. The crossing guard hours will also be discussed.
- We are still working on the issue of the climbing wall needing repair or replacement.
- Wants to shorten the library hours after school. PTA discussed putting after school options on the school web site so that upcoming Morse parents can plan their needs earlier. Dismissal at 2 PM is very difficult for working parents and the library is a safe space where kids can go.

Middle School

- Issues with consistency in the teams in what/how they are teaching, communications via portal/Remind/Google classroom. Whitham suggested that the kids take a photo of the homework on the whiteboard as a way to get the homework. We need teachers to be consistent with what they use. Parents are still involved in helping their children follow through with assignments. Need to find something that works for teachers and get them to use it consistently.