

**PTA Meeting Minutes**  
**January 20, 2010**  
Elementary School Library

Present:

Bill Stark  
Deborah Weisel  
Larry Engle  
Adele Saunders  
Felicia DePaola  
Sheri Zarkower  
Kim Palumbo

Jeff Diamond  
Wendy Adler  
Mary Mediate  
Gina Healy  
Glen Schuster  
Karen Bronson  
Kerri Bernard

Robin Gould  
Jennifer Schlactus  
Debbie Handler  
Jeff Landau  
Robyn Weintraub

Motion to accept December minutes: Adele Saunders; seconded: Robyn Weintraub.

**Gina Healy, High School Principal**

- NYS Dept. of Education has adopted new standards for next September. We are currently getting up to speed on the changes to the curriculum.
- We're finishing up the semester and preparing for Mid Year exams.
- 11<sup>th</sup> graders took English exam on January 11<sup>th</sup>. PTA sponsored a breakfast which helped with the timing of the day.
- We're planning for next year: upcoming info meeting for parents of incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Special events: Pep rally, homecoming dance.
- *Race to Nowhere* date has been set: March 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Mary Mediate: we will have a screening for faculty at an earlier date. There will be a panel discussion at the screening for parents.
- Speaker will come in to address seniors on Feb 2nd: 100 days to graduation. Will discuss issues like spring break and the final weeks of high school.
- Shakespeare company coming to HS to perform Hamlet and hold workshops with 10-12<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Karen Bronson, Middle School Principal**

- Attended half day conference at Student Assistance Services in Tarrytown. Discussed new trends in substance abuse issues.
  - Much study done on risk taking behavior. Learned that at age 13 there is a developmental 'need' to take risks. We were advised that schools should build in positive risk taking opportunities (performing in front of peers, etc...). We may do an 8<sup>th</sup> grade talent show.

- Thank you to the PTA for help with the Geography Bee. Hope to do it again in the future.
- Spirit Day and Night. Last year we started a March Madness event—basketball in front of MS peers.
- Had a great 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade instrumental concert.
- DARE will have a 7<sup>th</sup> grade program: “Keeping it Real”.
- Mid year assessments next week. Sixth graders have fewer assessments. Great Social Studies activity planned.
- Had great video conference with Rodman Philbrick, author of *Freak the Mighty*. Thank you to Colin Byrne for technical assistance.
- Theaterworks Living Voices—*The Right to Dream*. Excellent program on the Civil Rights movement.

### **Deborah Weisel, Elementary School Principal**

- Monthly electronic newsletter emailed to parents: gives insight into kids’ world at RSS.
- CD Project (PTA supported) building-wide initiative. Music video CD includes all people in the school. Kids will even do cover artwork. We Are Ridge Street—gives message that every voice is important. Mr. DiMicelli and Mr. Mariconda have been very helpful.
- Report cards go out next Friday. Parents should look at it as a snapshot of child’s performance.
- Yesterday the Book Fairy hand-delivered books to all classrooms: *The Contest Between the Sun and the Wind*. How people work together and compromise. We connect the themes during Town Hall meetings. Kids were very enthusiastic.
- Lice: Hildie Kalish out until sometime in February. We’re almost through checking school. Phyllis is doing a great job. Only one isolated case found.
- Recess: We don’t let the kids out if it’s under 30 degrees (incl. wind chill). With all the recent snow, we’ve been inside a lot.
- Snacks: some kids have been buying multiple snacks, or buying snacks for friends. We’ll check with Patti if parents can limit number of snacks purchased by going online.
- Accepting ads for the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Yearbook.
- Kerri Bernard: 4<sup>th</sup> grade colonial unit coming up
- Food drive—boxes are in lobby. Charts show progress of each class.
- Seth Horowitz, K-4 Science Coordinator, instrumental in science projects. Kids will do a research paper—part of the new core standards.

Parent Q: Colonial Day often leads to costume panic. Could parents of older kids donate purchased costumes for current 4<sup>th</sup> graders?

A: Great idea. We’ll mention it to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Mary Mediate, Director of Guidance

- Character Education
  - In Elementary school, Kathy Gerber is starting conflict mediation program in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - MS: Counselors meeting with kids informally at lunch to listen to concerns.
  - HS: Students inviting ‘leaders’ into classroom to explore topic of leadership. Kids will design their own school and have guests come to talk about various roles.
- College acceptances are amazing; 28% of seniors accepted in Early Decision/Early Action. 7% are in Ivy League/Top Ten.
- Academic Integrity Committee in full swing. Good discussion based on results of last survey.
- Community Coalition. Over 40 people from the community (legal, medical, clergy, govt., school, students, etc...) met to discuss substance abuse. Will do the survey again in the fall. **“What you permit, you promote.”**

## William Stark, Superintendent

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Blind Brook Exchange coming out (student edited again). We moved direction; this time many articles will be written by students.
- Tenure list coming out soon; we welcome input from the community.
- Monday, January 24, Collective Bargaining Forum. We want input from the community. Teacher contract ends June 30<sup>th</sup>.
  - We sent out postcards to entire community about the forum. Invited media to attend. So far approx. 70 people have RSVP’ed, not including the Citizens Budget Advisory Committee (an additional dozen people). Moved meeting to gym to accommodate large crowd.
  - Chief counsel Jay Girvin will make a presentation about the rules.
- Political action campaign—we’ve been trying to make use of the Sound Shore Consortium. Meeting next week with shareholders regarding budget issues.
- Larry Engle and I met with Suzi Oppenheimer. She’s no longer Chair of the education committee, but still a ranking member. Met with her for 1.5 hours.
- Race to the Top is an unfunded mandate. Rye City has budgeted \$200K to implement it.
- Cuomo discussed putting aside \$250 million of budget for low performing schools. That means less of the pie for us.
- Important decisions have been made without our input and without telling us (we find out in the newspaper). For example, there is a new evaluation system written by NYSED.
- Taylor Law, Triboro amendment—teacher contracts stay in effect until new contracts negotiated. Cuomo wants it set aside.

- There is no additional funding for successful schools. I implore people to speak up. Over 90% of what we spend is required (contractual— salary, health, retirement, etc...).
- We sat down to figure out how much unfunded mandates cost. Jonathan Ross came up with 5 page list (3 years ago) of unfunded mandates. Sent it to Latimer, Oppenheimer, Lowey.
- I will be delivering the proposed budget at the February 14 meeting. It's my budget, not the BOE's; my perception of the appropriate spending. I present it to the BOE. The BOE gets input, discusses, they decide what to put to the people. When there is lack of feedback/involvement from the community, it's hard to know what the wants (not needs) are. Once budget is presented, let your opinions be known!
- Climate in country is stressful. We live in a 24/7 news environment. Kids hear what's going on, concerned for the future. We have a responsibility to address it, put things in perspective. Ties in to *Race to Nowhere* themes.

**Larry Engle, Glen Schuster, BOE**

- District needs to explore concerns, to ease stresses.
- There's more to process than ever before.
- Collective Bargaining Forum—there will be lots of pressure on district to manage cuts.

Glen: Will there be copies of the teacher's contract there? How productive can meeting be without sufficient understanding of the details?

A: the purpose is not to negotiate the contract. Waste of paper to have 100 copies at the meeting. Meeting is intended to address broad philosophical questions on which way BOE should lean on basic issues.

Parent Q: Will there be a follow-up meeting? If people have preconceived ideas on situation, they may need time to process information/get past their emotions.

A: Bedford had follow-up meetings. We may do that. At Feb 7 BOE there will be public discussion.

Parent Comment: We are members of CAC. We invite healthy discussion. We want to engage the community.

**Treasury Report: Adele Saunders**

- Great book fair.
- Raised almost \$1000 from Box Tops this school year.

**Ways and Means**

- Any vendor that comes in for a service must provide certificate of insurance showing BB as additional insured. Also need signed standard independent contractor agreement. Parent volunteers are covered under school insurance.

**Programming**

- Reflections contest had a number of BB finalists.

Motion to adjourn: Jen Schlactus; seconded: Debbie Handler.