

High School Council Meeting
Minutes from Tuesday, October 11, 2016

The minutes from the June, 2016 High School Council Meeting were approved.

Ann Meyer – Principal’s Report

Ann began the meeting with a review of some of the new and continuing initiatives taking place in the high school.

A new teacher absentee policy is being piloted in most Junior, Senior and AP classes. Under this policy, these classes will be dismissed if a teacher is absent. Work will be posted and monitored electronically. If a teacher is absent more than two days, a substitute will be provided. The intent of the piloted policy is to assess how well students assume ownership and responsibility for their own learning in the absence of immediate supervision. Such skills are an important component of college-readiness.

Two new learning spaces have been funded through the Bronxville School Foundation. The new classrooms (in math and science) incorporate flex seating, wall talkers and interactive projectors. Seating configuration (teachers relative to students) received particular emphasis. In the science classroom, the teacher’s station (traditionally located at the front of the room) was removed in order to improve student/teacher collaboration.

The PISA test will be administered this fall to 85 fifteen-year old Bronxville School students. This international test, intended to assess “higher order thinking skills”, was first administered in Bronxville in 2012. The 2012 assessment will be used to benchmark this year’s results.

The Bronx River Research Project, initiated 2 years ago in collaboration with SFL, has been expanded to offer a full K-12 research experience. The school has purchased equipment in order to conduct its own in-house research and has brought in numerous outside professionals/organizations to broaden and deepen the scope of the project. Bronxville high school students are acting as the project’s principal investigators. At the end of the year, students will present their findings on Bronx River water quality and identify the main contributors to its current state.

Homecoming 2016 was a great success. SFL worked closely with the Athletic Council to ensure a fun and safe celebration. As a result, the administration is open to holding a SFL- sponsored dance later this year. The planning process for the dance will look closely at ways of preventing some of the problems of the past, in particular that of screening students for unacceptable behavior (e.g. pre-partying) prior to being admitted to the dance. In addition, SFL and the administration will draft a letter to students and families outlining school policies/procedures for keeping our students safe and requesting the broader community’s support.

Other exciting projects are also gaining momentum. Students are in the midst of performing an Energy Audit of the school building, including assessments of the HVAC and electrical systems. The objective is to identify ways to reduce overall energy usage within the school. In order to more fully understand sources of energy, students began the project by performing personal energy audits and then working with teachers and school engineers to incorporate curriculum (from AP Environmental and Advanced Physics classes) into real-world problem-solving processes.

Similarly, students are being encouraged to think strategically about the future of our learning spaces. Input from the school's architects in conjunction with the District's 5-year facilities plan will provide the basis for student participation and contribution. Representatives from both the architectural firm who designed the high school's enhanced classrooms as well as the school's Facilities Committee have been invited to attend the November High School Council meeting to discuss the objectives and challenges of the planning process.

Finally, Ann addressed concerns regarding how the school can best assess the effectiveness of collaborative learning and the Bronxville Promise. Student performance on regents' exams is an imperfect indicator since test content does not adequately measure the skill set the promoted by the Promise. Ann also acknowledged the significant challenge facing the school in managing future class sizes. The middle school population "bulge" will soon be entering high school and with it will come increasing strains on facilities and resources. Managing this reality is a top priority of the administration and the Board of Education.

Learning Commons Project

Jeff Rohr – Board of Education President

Jeff outlined both the general mandate of the District's seven-member Board as well as the specific challenges it currently faces.

The overarching role of the Board is to protect the interests of the Bronxville School community. As such, its primary responsibilities are to help, oversee, guide and establish accountability for school operations, systems processes and strategy.

The School Superintendent is the only person who reports directly to the Board. All other school personnel report to the Superintendent.

The Board's top priority this year is to hire a new District Superintendent to replace David Quattrone, who will be retiring at the end of the 2016/17 academic year. On 10/14, the Board will meet to review the search process, agree on specifications of the position and determine how best to advertise the position and interview selected candidates. The selection of a new Superintendent is the one decision the Board makes as a stand-alone entity. It is an extremely confidential process.

The other major challenge facing the Board this year will be the establishment of next year's school budget. This task is expected to be particularly challenging as revenues are flat and costs are increasing.

In brief, the Bronxville School operates a \$47 million business, \$41 million of which is funded through taxes with the remaining \$6 million funded through other sources such as tuition (from students outside the Village) and state subsidies for special needs programs.

Bronxville Village tax authorities are constrained by a mandated annual tax cap of either 2% or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. The average tax increase over the past six years has been 1%. Last year's increase was .24%, (i.e. the rate of inflation), an extremely low increase even by recent standards.

School costs, on the other hand are rising and there are few lasting options for containment. Teacher salaries/benefits, representing 78% of costs, are governed by a union schedule and are therefore difficult to affect. The remaining 22% have very little fat to cut. While early retirement programs may provide a temporary budget stop-gap, they are only temporary. This year, 16 teachers are up for tenure. The Board needs parent feedback.

Should these financial pressures persist, it is possible the Village could end up breaching the 2% cap.

Current Facilities Projects include:

- Flood Mitigation
- Field Work
- Learning Commons

All facilities projects are managed at the administrative (superintendent) level.

David Quattrone – Superintendent's Report

The tenets of the Bronxville Promise are clearly defined. The next steps are to “turn the Promise into practical plans that will endure” and to establish concrete steps (e.g. PISA, Challenge Success Survey) for assessing ongoing progress.

Anne Abbatacola – Guidance Department Report

The Guidance Department has a new permanent member, Aaron Kind. Aaron replaces Jim Agnello who moved to the Middle School this year. In addition, Laney Meyer, a student at the Teachers College at Columbia, joined the guidance team as an intern. She has been working with both ninth graders as they acclimate to high school, and seniors as they prepare college essays. As well, she has been involved in welcoming/introducing college representatives to the Bronxville School.

Grade 9

Incoming freshmen are off to a good start. Freshman Orientation took place during the first two days of school and was followed by the freshman picnic and activities fair. In addition, senior leaders of the Freshman Transition Program, which is intended to help ease entry into the high school, met with their assigned freshman groups. Senior leaders provide ongoing advice, helpful tips and encouragement throughout the school year. On September 26, leaders and freshmen made the traditional trip to Sharpe Reservation.

Progress reports will be available for review within the week.

Grade 10

The tenth grade coffee was held the evening of September 27th. Two student representatives addressed parents and students about the transition from 9th grade and discussed what to expect in terms of academic and athletic demands.

Grade 11

The Post High School Planning Meeting is scheduled for the evening of November 16th. All 11th graders are expected to attend and should be accompanied by at least one parent. The meeting provides an introduction to the college search and application process.

The PSAT will be held this Saturday, October 15th for all Juniors and interested Sophomores. Students are encouraged to sit for the test regardless of whether they intend to take the SAT or the ACT as PSAT scores are the gateway to the National Merit Scholar selection process.

Grade 12

Seniors are making final college visits and completing applications. As well, students are encouraged to attend “visiting college” presentations being held at the school throughout the fall. We are hosting 80 college visitors this year. The presentations are an excellent way to gain school-specific insight as well as touch base with college representatives, many of whom will do the “first read” of college applications. Since these presentations are scheduled during the school day, interested students must touch base with their teachers if they wish to step out of class to attend. If a student is interested, but unable to attend, please let the guidance team know and we will make sure schools know of their interest.

Karen Peterson – Athletic Department

Karen reiterated the success of Homecoming Week. All activities were paid for through the PTA and Athletic Council.

The Athletic Council continues to work in conjunction with SFL to address the issue of alcohol use/abuse among students.

Upcoming Events:

Fall Sports Playoffs begin the week of 10/17. See Athletics website.
Annual "Play for Pink" Field Hockey Fundraiser - Friday, October 14th
Winter Sports Meetings will be announced shortly.

Lisa Barr – VP of Public Relations, The Bronxville School Foundation

Lisa began by describing the history and mission of the Bronxville School Foundation. The Foundation was established 25 years ago by the Bronxville parent and school communities for the sole purpose of supporting the educational excellence of our school. The Foundation awards grants for projects that strengthen curriculum, support additional training for our teachers, enhance educational resources and provide financial assistance for special school facilities and equipment. As such, the Foundation is fundamental to the delivery of the Bronxville Promise.

Fundraising efforts for the Foundation begin in late October/early November. Grant applications are submitted January through March and grants are awarded in May.

Last year, \$775,000 in grants was awarded, one third of which targeted professional development programs. Community participation in the Foundation was 45%.

Grade Reports

Grade 9

Picnic and Activities Fair was a big success.

Preparations for the annual Thanksgiving Desert Sale are underway.

Grade 10

The annual Holiday Fruit Sale will begin soon. Both grapefruit and oranges will be available in 10 and 20 lb bags. Order and delivery information is being finalized.

Car Wash is scheduled for Sunday, 10/23.

Grade 11

Mock ACT/SAT-2400 Testing Fundraiser (sponsored by Bespoke Education) took place on Saturday, _____. Sixty seven students participated.

Car Wash was postponed due to rain. Rescheduling details to follow.

Preparations are being made for the Holiday Poinsettia Sale.

Grade 12

Seniors raised over \$1200 from their 9/18/16 car wash.

Senior Halloween Day will take place Monday 10/31. Senior mother, Kelly Coyne is leading the charge with lunch for the senior class followed by an All-HS event (parade or competition) in the gym.

DON'T FORGET TO JOIN THE PTA. IT IS A CRUCIAL SOURCE OF FUNDING AND ORGANIZATION. SIGN UP ON-LINE!