

High School Council Meeting March 1, 2016

The minutes from the February, 2016 High School Council meeting were approved.

The meeting opened with junior, Mia Bettino's recitation of the poem, "Two Guitars" by Victor Hernandez Cruz. Mia will be competing later this month in the NY State finals of the nationwide Poetry Out Loud Recitation Contest. The contest, first launched in 2006, "encourages the nation's youth to learn about great poetry through memorization and recitation. Through the program, students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about their literary heritage." The contest begins in individual classrooms after which winners advance to school-wide competitions. Regional, state and national competitions follow. Mia placed second in the regional finals earlier this winter, a truly notable achievement as last year over 17,000 students in NY State competed in the program. We wish her luck in Syracuse!

Adele Murray – Board of Education

Adele began by confirming the pending retirement of Dr. David Quattrone from his long-held position as Superintendent of the Bronxville School District. His contributions have been numerous, varied and instrumental in ensuring the ongoing quality of the school. Adele thanked him for his unwavering commitment to our children and acknowledged the very great challenge the district faces in finding his replacement. The search process is already underway. The Board has been in contact with both of the firms that specialize in school superintendent searches. Once a firm is engaged, the process of soliciting resumes will begin. Throughout the search, the Board will seek the input and guidance of the school's multiple constituencies. A final decision is expected to be made by the end of 2016.

In other news:

FEMA approved the school's revised flood mitigation plan. The accompanying revised schedule is in process.

The 2nd School Budget Workshop is scheduled for Saturday, March 5. As noted before, it continues to be challenging working within the confines of the state-mandated tax cap.

Tenure candidates are listed on the school website. The Board is seeking input from the school community in making tenure decisions. Please take this opportunity to share your thoughts.

Dr David Quattrone – Superintendent's Report

David continued the budget discussion by emphasizing that the Board must maintain a multi-year perspective in making current-year decisions. Factors influencing the budget

vary from year to year, as does the Board's discretion in addressing them. For example, this year the Board will likely be able to balance the budget through a combination of lower pension contribution requirements, retirement incentives and discretion in filling vacated positions. Next year, however, the Board may not have the same flexibility; savings from retirement incentives will not be recurring and pension contribution requirements could increase (especially in the event of a financial market decline.) These factors could necessitate cuts in discretionary programs and have the potential to affect class size and the number of offered electives. From a longer-term (5-year) perspective, the finance committee is focusing on debt service in the context of the school's capital requirements regarding physical infrastructure as well as projects to "advance learning" (e.g. this year's innovative spaces.)

Ann Meyer – Principal's Report

Students are operating under a special schedule today (3/1/16) so that they may have the opportunity to preview the upcoming high school performances of Les Miserables as well as Mia Bettino's poetry recitation for the Poetry Out Loud Competition. Ann reiterated that the new assembly space makes such events both possible and enriching for the entire school community.

Ticket sales for the four performances of Les Miserables (Thursday–Saturday of this week) are going well. There are still seats available. Tickets can be purchased online through the school website.

Discussions regarding the future structure of on-campus student activities (SFL dances, athletic events etc.) are ongoing. Marcellus Lessane, Karen Peterson and Ann met with members of SFL to consider establishing new processes by which students enter dances so that pre-dance drinking is more effectively discouraged. As well, Ann met with the Athletic Council to work towards determining the safest, most enjoyable structure for Homecoming events. Student input is important and will be sought throughout the reconfiguring process.

Finally, Ann described the Senior Shadowing program that takes place each spring during the last two weeks of classes. The Shadowing Program is an internship program through which students trade hours for classes. The structure of individual shadowing opportunities is flexible. Creative ideas are always welcome and the duration of individual opportunities varies widely. The efforts of parents (through their individual backgrounds and connections to the working world) are key to the identification and development of quality shadowing experiences. A copy of Ann's email (dated 3/2/16) describing the program and how parents can help develop opportunities for seniors is attached to these minutes.

Mary Gay and Larry Bettino are the parent representatives for the program.

Finally, please see the link below for Ann's presentation to the Board of Education titled "Responding to the Voice of our Students." This presentation summarizes the methodology and findings of a recent survey distributed to Bronxville School graduates (classes 2000-2013) to ascertain their assessment of their preparedness for college.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1IHmERDpoSZW0JCCOgZqmgdHBMOIFoaXkhHPtZOATxZc/edit>

Anne Abbatacola – Guidance Report

Grade 8 – Guidance is preparing orientation for 8th graders entering the high school next fall and is looking for juniors interested in helping them make the transition.

Grade 9 – The final freshmen transition celebration has been held and meetings with 9th grade parents regarding course selection for the coming year will begin shortly.

Grade 10 – "My Road" workshops are getting underway. These projects are designed to help sophomores take stock of their personal qualities, explore where their interests lie and tie those insights to plans for future summer and academic activities. As mentioned previously, students must have a College Board Account in order to participate.

On 3/30/16, college admissions officers from various undergraduate institutions will hold a panel discussion at the school to introduce Bronxville 10th and 11th grade students (and parents) to their admissions and application processes. More information to follow.

Grade 11 – Guidance meetings for rising seniors are complete. Students have compiled initial college lists and many visits are taking place. As well, many students have sat for official standardized testing (SAT and/or ACT) and teacher recommendation selection forms have been returned. If students have not yet decided on which standardized test to take, NOW is the time to do so. **Parents stay on it!**

High scorers on the PSAT are waiting to hear about advancement. The cutoff for national merit scholars has yet to be announced in NY State.

Students are beginning to think about their personal statements. An outside speaker will address the group following the AP period. As well, counselors stand ready to provide important feedback. Finally, both AP and Honors English classes will offer students the opportunity to get started. **It is very important that essay work gets underway. Timely completion of the essay is the single most important factor in meeting application deadlines.**

Grade 12 – Anne reiterated that it is very important that students withdraw outstanding applications to schools once a firm choice has been made. Parents

need to encourage seniors to keep working. College admissions officers are watching.

Progress reports for all grades will be posted Friday, March 11.

Karen Peterson – Athletic Report

Numerous Bronxville School athletes have recently been recognized for their accomplishments:

The Squash team won the Fairwest Cup Tournament.

Timmy Cushman, Aiden Flannery and Andrew Babyak advanced to States in swimming.

Kaitlin Ryan advanced to States in track.

Dates to remember:

3/7 - Spring sports begin – be sure to complete green and white cards

3/9 - Winter sports awards

3/13 - Harlem Wizards

3/15 - Speaker to address student athletes on concussion management, symptoms and protections.

New phone App can help users determine if there is a problem. Details to follow.

Ashley Hanrahan – Bronxville School Foundation

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Foundation. Since its inception, the Foundation has raised over \$7.5 million dollars to fund varied and much needed school initiatives that would like fall outside the purview of the district budget. While the funds the Foundation raises are not intended as a stop-gap for district budget shortfalls, the resources it is able to provide are especially important when the school budget is tight. So far this year, the fund has seen a 36% participation rate from school families. The Foundation's goal is to reach a 50% participation rate. Donations of any size are greatly appreciated.

On April 8, the Foundation will be hosting a cocktail party in celebration of its 25th anniversary featuring the Walter Blanding Quintet of Jazz at Lincoln Center. The party will begin on Garden Ave. and move to the new auditorium for the performance. Tickets are available by calling (914) 395-0515 or at www.bronxvilleschoolfoundation.org.

**Special Speaker: Lilian Neuman – Community Education and Outreach
Coordinator of the Maxwell Institute**

Lilian opened the discussion by stating that many young adults begin binge drinking in the 8th grade. What many of us consider to be “experimentation” often goes much further than a single incident. Evidence abounds that nearly every person who ultimately becomes an addict begins with alcohol and pot (often referred to as “gateway drugs”).

What are the signs that a teenager or young adult has a substance abuse problem? It can be difficult to detect the early stages of substance abuse since the symptoms are similar to those of general adolescence. Kids going through adolescence typically become cranky, uncommunicative and isolated. Once substance abuse takes hold, however, symptoms increase in severity and duration. Young adults in trouble often lose interest in favorite activities such as sports. As well, their “friend group” may change and they may begin violating curfew or other parental parameters. As important, the duration of these symptoms is more pronounced than those associated with adolescence. The extended duration leads to changes in mental health (e.g. anxiety or depression) which are often (and some experts believe) a necessary precursor to addiction.

What can we do as parents? Lilian asserted that:

We need to change our thinking about alcohol. A “little” is NOT okay. Drinking is not a rite of passage. Leniency sends a message that underage drinking is acceptable. It is against the law.

Hard drug (heroin, cocaine etc.) addictions begin with alcohol and marijuana. Parents must set and enforce boundaries early on. They will then have a better chance of interrupting the cycle of substance abuse before it takes hold.

Substance abuse is an issue in ALL communities and has reached epidemic proportions nationwide. In 2014, for the first time ever in the state of New York, the number of drug related fatalities surpassed the number of fatalities associated with car accidents. In Rye alone, the community has lost 5 young adults (ages 20-23) during the past 3 years. We need to come together as parents and communities to protect our kids.

Above all, keep eyes, ears and lines of communication open. Keep checking in with your children. Do not back off. Our children need to understand and respect that trust is earned.

Lilian was accompanied to the council meeting by a young woman, Stephanie, who had experienced, first hand, the descent into substance abuse and the struggle to reemerge. Stephanie recounted a powerful story. Her first introduction to drugs was in 4th grade when her parents put her on ADHD medication (Adderall/ Concerta), followed by medication for depression. By middle school, she was self-medicating through alcohol and marijuana, By age 13 or 14, Stephanie was trading pills with friends. Stephanie

believes that self esteem issues were at the heart of her addiction. She didn't have an open dialogue with her parents, she felt badly about herself and very alone. It was hard to be friends with the "good" kids; she was more comfortable on the fringe. She raided her parents' liquor cabinet. It felt good to have a secret, to be powerful. Drinking escalated to marijuana. While Stephanie admits her addiction began with these "gateway drugs" she is firmly convinced that she would have become a heroine addict no matter what the path. It was her mental state that precipitated her addiction and that mental state was perpetuated by her inability to "fill the glass from within." Like so many addicts, Stephanie turned to "quick fix" outside remedies to make up for the vacuum inside; ultimately, she couldn't bond with anything but drugs.

Stephanie's relationship with her parents was not initially helpful. They didn't talk to her about her feelings and behaviors. Instead, they punished her, often by taking away the activities that kept her in the mainstream, such as athletics and the arts. She had nothing to be passionate about; her parent's discipline, instead of motivating her to stick to the straight and narrow, stifled her creative flow and increased her dependency on drugs. She entered the Excel Program for adolescents and young adults aged 13-18 years. There she learned how to cheat on drug tests. She became slyer, a better liar and drifted further from her family. She completed the program but relapsed repeatedly. Finally, her parents threw in the towel and put her in the judicial system, i.e. a PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) program. Her infractions, while in the system, became part of her permanent record. Between the ages of 15-16 years, Stephanie lived primarily out of the family home, in assisted living facilities, homeless shelters and with friends. She "rejected everything that would have bettered her."

Stephanie hit bottom when she was arrested twice in two different counties in Westchester over a short period of time. Her boyfriend was dealing guns and she was facing jail time. As a result, she entered a Drug Court program where she slowly began to make progress. The program gave her what she needed to get better: time. She was finally able to build a life away from drugs that made her happy. Her parents benefitted as well, physically and emotionally. Her mother, who was morbidly obese, lost weight and her father stopped drinking. The whole family is now in a far better place, but the work is ongoing.

Lilian closed the discussion by encouraging parents to reach out to her and her associates for information and resources. She is also glad to meet independently with small groups or individuals who wish to speak further.

Other Announcements

March is Faculty Appreciation Month.

The PTA and Chamber of Commerce are partnering to offer faculty discounts with participating village merchants.

A faculty lunch will be sponsored by the High School Council on March 13.

The next High School Council Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4 at 8:30 am in the Board Room.

Dear Parents,

Each spring, during two of the final weeks for our seniors, we give them the opportunity to leave the building and intern/shadow with professionals. Our goal for this project is to give the members of the Class of 2016 the opportunity to explore something of interest to them outside of the normal high school schedule. This year Shadowing (interning) will be taking place during the weeks of May 23rd and May 30th (excluding Memorial Day).

We are reaching out to see if you or any of your companies would be willing to offer a shadowing experience to our seniors. The experience can be designed for any number of hours and/or days to fit your schedule, as well as the schedule of our students, within these two weeks. Past experiences have included the following: shadowing the Town Supervisor in Eastchester, shadowing at Granite Construction Northeast as they work on Tappan Zee Bridge construction, shadowing at MSNBC, shadowing a Pediatric Otolaryngologist, and shadowing at Capitol One. Some of these were for two weeks while others were for one day. Some involved one senior while others included a group of 8-10 seniors. We are open to a variety of configurations that fit into your schedule. Please fill out the form located [here](#) to indicate a possible opportunity for our Seniors. Please contact Larry Bettino (larry@cowbellcapital.com) or Mary Gay (mgay@arrowmgt.com) with questions.

Thank you in advance for your help in providing our students with an engaging experience as they complete their time at Bronxville High School.

Sincerely,

Ann Meyer