

MINUTES

MS 54 GENERAL PTA MEETING: 5/9/17

The meeting was called to order and presided over by co-presidents Katie Miller and Jerome Kramer.

Quorum was achieved.

Co-Presidents Report:

- Vote on motion to approve minutes from the April PTA meeting.
Approved.

- PTA positions available for next year:
 - Parents were encouraged to apply for a position on the PTA. There are a number of positions that will need to be filled for next year: Auction chairs, co-recording secretaries, co-treasurer(s), assistant treasurer, co-fundraising officer, corresponding secretary, 7th and 8th grade reps. Interested parents were asked to email the nominating chair whose contact information is on the school website.

- 108 Construction Project Update:
 - West Side Federation for Senior and Supportive Housing (WSFSH) has proposed a development project across the street from the school. There have been no new recent developments with this project. PTA co-presidents will continue to stay abreast of any developments in order to ensure the safety of the school.

- Yoga Residency Update:
 - The Wellness Committee organized a yoga residency through Bent on Learning with the hope of alleviating gym space overcrowding in the Eighth Grade gym classes. Instructors began a three day per week program. They are currently working with teachers one day per week as well.

- Teacher Appreciation Lunch Update:
 - The PTA is sponsoring lunches for teachers next week through Dive Bar restaurant.

Treasury:

- Budget as of 4/20/17:
 - Bank balance is \$359,243.37
 - Total income is \$481,057.77
 - Expenses are \$432,282.40
 - Positive net income is \$48,775.37
 - Money Market account balance is \$250,172.62

- 2017-2018 Budget:
 - Reviewed the budget for the 2017-2018 school year.
 - Changes made to budget lines for the upcoming year:
 - Misc. Fundraising Income- increased to \$45,000
 - Hospitality- lowered to \$10,000
 - Misc. Fundraising Expenses- increased to \$24,000
 - School Planners- increased to \$6,500
 - Security ID Labels- moved to School Supplies line
 - Technology- increased to \$50,000
 - Wellness Committee- increased to \$1,000
 - Copies of the budget were made available at the meeting.

Fundraising:

- Annual Fund Update:
 - The Annual Appeal has reached its target, but parents were asked to please continue to give to help the school.

- Auction Update:
 - The Auction will take place this Saturday, May 13th. Parents were encouraged to purchase tickets to the Auction as well as raffle tickets.

- Baseball Game:
 - There will be a Yankees game school fundraiser on June 9th. Parents were encouraged to buy tickets.
- Fairway Cards;
 - Parents were encouraged to use their cards when shopping in stores or online. Cards are available in the school office.
- Amazon Cards:
 - Parents were encouraged to use the Amazon link on the school's website prior to shopping.

Principal's Report:

- School Update:
 - Progress reports will open by the end of this week.
 - The PTA and Wellness Committee were thanked for organizing the yoga program as the students and teachers have been enjoying it.
 - Mr. Fagan expressed his appreciation to the PTA for helping purchase a new saxophone for the band.
 - May and June are busy months at school. Parents were asked to please check the calendar on the school website as well as all emails.

Maurice Frumkin, NYC Admissions Solutions' founder and president discussing the the NYC high school admissions process:

- Parents should begin the high school process in the spring of 7th Grade and be consistent with their approach/plan. This will allow families to feel more in control in 8th Grade. 7th Grade parents should spend an hour or two per week beginning the process now, so that while the fall of 8th Grade will be busy, it will not be as overwhelming and stressful.
- Parents should first determine the types of schools they may be interested in: public, private etc.
- There are 3 separate categories of schools: Specialized, Non-Specialized and Audition schools

- **Non-Specialized High Schools**

- There are no zoned high schools in Manhattan and the non-specialized schools are a city-wide choice process.
- In October, 8th Grade families will receive the high school application which contains 12 empty spots.
- High schools do not see how students rank them (which differs from the middle school process), therefore students should put down their true order of preference.
- In 2017, the percentage of students who were placed in Round 1:
1st choice- 46%
1st-3rd choice- 72%
1st-12th-94%
- Families should determine if the student is a viable candidate for each choice and should not fill the list with many longshots.

Anatomy of a sound school search:

- Self-assessment—Fit defined—School Program Choices: check vs. eligibility/priorities, Selection Criteria, Demand
- Families should begin the process with small interim goals. Should write down what they consider to be the most important characteristics/traits that they find meaningful in a school. Then start compiling a list of schools that have those characteristics.

Rank in order of importance:

Academics
Distance
Safety
Size of school
Extracurriculars
Culture
Selectivity
Specialized/themes vs. general
Talent (curricular)

Process begins with:

1. Word of mouth/HS Directory/Online: Inside Schools.org; Schoolfinder.nyc (electronic version of h.s. directory); Findthebest; Noodle, etc.
2. Summer DOE info sessions, Fall fairs

3. Informal visit (don't wait!)- see a talent show etc.

4. Open House/Tours

- Target should be 12 schools, then can eliminate if necessary; it is better to categorize than to eliminate.
- Not at a disadvantage if put more schools down than the ones most interested in as 97% who list 12 get matched to something in Round 1.
- Recommends that parents have list of 15 schools by next month.
- In Round 2, there are fewer choices to choose from.

Using the High School Directory:

- Look at bottom half of school's page to find: How many programs at the school that you can apply to and list on the application; If I apply here, can I be a viable candidate?; Admissions priority section tells percentage of how many offers went to that first priority group (i.e. District 2 priority); Admissions method- grades etc.
- School website will tell you what kind of essay or portfolio is needed. Beacon High Schools website for example, says what question to answer in the essay.

- **Specialized Schools**

SHSAT:

- Decide by June if want to take the SHSAT as the test requires preparation.
- Recent changes to the exam include: 3 hours instead of 2 ½; there are no more logical reasoning questions or scrambled paragraphs.
- The exam includes 114 questions; all except 5 are multiple choice and there are 4 answer options for each multiple choice question.
- Students need to learn time management skills for the exam because they can work on whatever part they want, whenever they want, and there is no penalty for wrong answers

Offer for Specialized High Schools:

1. Test Scores

The list of schools that parents want to include on the application, is on the ticket for the SHSAT. The child then copies that list in order onto the answer sheet at the exam. Be certain student is prepared to do this correctly, as it cannot be changed. Families should list as many schools as possible, but the order is critical.

- **How to divide the process**

June:

Determine what fit means for your family
Evaluate types of schools per fit (non-public)
Draft written public list of 15+ choices
Research selection criteria and admissions priorities
Consider prep plan for auditions, testing
Establish calendar (H.S. Directory online)
Gather work
Spring open houses (limited)

Summer:

State testing results
DOE events
Prioritize school list
Fall planning including start of fall events
Audition/test prep
Begin work on selection criteria

In July- The DOE hosts a Specialized High School event with representatives from all 8 schools in attendance. Arrive one hour early to avoid being turned away.

By September:

Preliminary list of 12-15 schools
Decision about SHSAT/Audition Schools
Basic understanding of selection criteria and admissions priorities
A calendar already filled with available key dates/milestones

(Mr. Frumkin works privately with families and conducts initial 15 minute phone consultations.)

At MS54: High School Directory does not go out until September but it is available online beforehand and all 8th graders are registered for SHSAT.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: How tough is it to compete in Specialized High Schools?

A: Families should not feel pressure to apply to a school that doesn't fit. Fit is subjective.

Q: Can you recommend schools other than the most popular?

A: The DOE has a High Schools at a Glance section online which is a great tool to help families narrow down what high schools fit with what they are looking for. Don't look only at screened schools.

Q: What schools have spring tours?

A: Bard and the NYC ischool, but they may have filled. NYC ischool has a waitlist. Look at Brooklyn Latin, Bronx Science.

Q: How do you get to see so many schools?

A: Can strategize: see some this spring, see some at the fair, talk to friends, use Schoolfinder or Inside schools.

Q: Can you apply to High School in 10th Grade?

A: It is always an option, as is taking the SHSAT again, but there are fewer seats available (yet fewer applicants.) You can get into a school and then decide to stay where you are.

Q: Are you automatically an applicant if you put the school on the application?

A: Yes. Students could have ranked the school anywhere from 1st to 12th choice and be considered an applicant.

Next PTA General Meeting:

6/13, 7:00 pm- We will be voting on the 2017-18 PTA budget, and elections will be held for the 2017-18 PTA Executive Board.