



MINUTES

MS54 PTA General Meeting
October 8, 2019 @ 8:00 am Auditorium
BTW54PTA@ms54PTA.org

CALL TO ORDER & MINUTES: Reviewed and approved September minutes

PTA ELECTIONS

- Co-corresponding secretary: Larry Lee – G6
- Co-Recording secretary: Denise Broady – G6
- G6 Rep: Claudia Bachteler – G6

Nominating chair introduced the election and candidates; asked three times for nominations from the floor (none); held vote by show of hands for open PTA positions; results: slate of candidates was voted in unanimously.

TEACHER PANEL ON STUDYING

Middle school homework is different than the typical elementary school “packet.” With multiple teachers, students should be writing down HW assignments in their planners. HW is often to work on skills learned in the classroom, as practice to make progress on skills. Ideally HW should be scheduled into each day. Other tips:

- **Developing writing skills is an iterative process.** It’s important for kids to learn from the constructive criticism teachers give as feedback, so they get better and better.
- **Preparation for exams may require new strategies for mastering content.** Students are tempted to read over things many times, but the best way to prepare is to practice quizzing yourself – write quiz questions and trade with a friend, flashcards, etc. Don’t just absorb information, practice applying the information.
- **Long-term assignments**, with deadlines multiple days/weeks ahead, should be broken down to see progress as the deadline approaches. Teachers often help students do this.

If your child is struggling, they should come to Early Academy to get help – it’s good for the child to seek out teacher assistance and take responsibility for their own education.

Q&A:

When there are holidays, how does HW change? Teachers are cognizant of holidays, and are not supposed to assign HW on weekends or holidays. There is always the option to work on the long-term assignments, but it shouldn’t be expected.

Is there a time limit for HW that is a red flag? Time management is a skill that kids are working on.

Communication with teachers is key: in general, if taking more than 30 solid minutes, or is extremely difficult, should communicate that experience with the teachers.

Is there homework on long breaks? Just reading.

Is there more homework as the year goes on? No, the school doesn’t “build” HW load as time goes on, although there may be more long-term assignments. Generally, students become more efficient as the year progresses.

How should Early Academy be used? It’s first and foremost for struggling students and support; it’s not ideal for cramming for quizzes or exams. All students are encouraged to take advantage of Early Academy. Different teachers may use it differently, and will notify the kids. Some teachers have older kids in the room to also help.

If a child is having a difficult adjustment, can a parent reach out directly to the teacher? Yes: if a student is struggling emotionally or academically, the teacher will want to know.

PRESIDENTS’ REPORT:

- **SLT meeting recap** – N/A (next meeting is 10/11)
- **Equity Team recap** – questionnaire went out last week to the MS54 community – please give feedback if you haven’t yet; Equity Team will review and incorporate input
- **108th St construction update** – going as planned; still in concrete and steel work phase through March, with 108th street often closed between Amsterdam and Columbus due to the crane; meeting with them next week
- **High School Admissions update** –
SHS: Last year, the Mayor pushed for phasing out the SHSAT, but has recently backed off. NOW, Charles Barron (*the sponsor of the bill that the Mayor was pushing for*) is changing his strategy and calling for a repeal of the law mandating admissions by SHSAT, so that school admissions is not controlled by state assembly but rather the city

HS: there are no D3 dedicated/preference schools; many of the college prep schools you hear of are D2 priority (which becomes D2 exclusive, for schools like ElRo, Lab, Baruch...); the HS process is new this year in that there are no appeals anymore – instead, students are automatically waitlisted for schools ranked higher on their lists; *note: next PTA meeting, November 12th 7pm, will feature a parent panel on non-specialized high schools*

ALL SCHOOLS: DOE launched Imagine Schools NYC, a community-driven approach to creating new education options for 2021 and beyond, and is accepting design ideas for developing new schools or reimagining existing schools through November 6, 2019. Go to <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/initiatives/imagine-schools-nyc> for details/application.

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:

- **Encourage use of Early Academy.** About 500 kids come for it; they can go to multiple classrooms or can go to cafeteria and library especially for group project work; it's a good time at the school.
- **Try to let your children learn to manage their HW.** Its not a bad lesson if after a half hour, they need to put in another 10-15 minutes, it's still okay, especially if they're multitasking or on social media. Don't get too wrapped up in looking at assignment status on Jupiter, and encourage your child to self-advocate. Of course, do reach out if there are consistent struggles, whether academic or social.
- **Scheduled "Booker T Day" for November 15th** in the morning. It's a career/enrichment day for kids to experience something they otherwise might not. Parents and friends of MS54 host students to explore different business / art / government scenes in offices / museums / institutions throughout the city. If you can host students in your place of work, or have any ideas, please contact Principal Dr. Elster or Parent Coordinator Anne Pejovich.
- **PTA EB approved purchase of washer/dryer,** to help kids that could benefit from that.

TREASURERS' REPORT:

- **Treasury update:** since our last meeting, there's been an internal audit and modernization of processes, taking full advantage of QuickBooks. Nothing has fundamentally changed, but some re-bucketing of line items occurred and will be re-presented at a future PTA meeting for membership approval.
- **Funding Requests:** Request for an additional teacher for the 6th Grade Academy Homework Help program, which helps select students keep up with homework. This would be an additional \$11,500 for a total program cost of \$22,000 for the year.
Membership voted unanimously by show of hands to approve the funding request.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- **Fundraising:** Jet's game – link is online so get tickets; Party book, contact Dana if you can host or help; Online auction – it's never too early to get donations; Fairway cards – if you haven't gotten, get from office; Pie Sale (tasting today!) – can place orders online \$25/pie, pickup will be the week of Thanksgiving.
- **Events:** yesterday was kickoff meeting to plan March 21st event to benefit the school; lots of ways to get involved, please do! This is the second biggest fundraising event after annual appeal.
- **Communications:** Encourage everyone to join the closed MS54 Facebook group and post content and photos; still looking for support with photos, especially for sports teams, so if you're attending, can either post yourself or send photos/scores/update to webmaster@ms54pta.org
- **Wellness:** meeting this Friday at 11:30 (lunch time, hoping teachers can attend too); offer teachers bands that go around chair legs for fidgety kids; planning a spring Wellness Day, an annual day where kids attend two sessions around wellness/social-emotional/mindfulness/movement and like subjects – get involved if you can!

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Topics for upcoming PTA meetings
 - Nov: **Parent Panel on Non-Specialized High Schools**
 - Dec: TBD
 - Jan: Tutor Fair
 - Feb: TBD
 - Mar: Teacher Panel on state tests
 - Apr: TBD
 - May: Budget Presentation/Student panel on the high school process
 - Jun: PTA & SLT Elections/Budget Vote

NEXT GENERAL MEETING: November 12 @ 7:00 pm