

Briarcliff PAC Meeting (1)
October 17, 2018

Present:

- Principal: Erik Carlson.
- Director of Gifted and Talented Programs/K-12 Supervisor of Mathematics: Michelle Mollusca, Algebra 1A/Algebra 1A/B Teacher: Bethany DeWalt.
- Algebra 1B/Geometry Teacher: Madison Mitchell.
- 6th Grade representatives: Emily Kahn, Mara Marino.
- 7th grade representatives: Maria Hunter, Megan Shuhet.
- 8th grade representatives: Diane Bright, Tish Scarola.
- H&SA representatives: Cortney Hann, Amy Schadt, Erinn Tucker

Introductions of New 7th and 8th Grade Math Teacher:

- Mrs. DeWalt and Ms. Mitchell both presented an overview of their classes:
 - Mrs. DeWalt is emphasizing independence in 7th grade, encouraging students to ask questions and take ownership of their learning. She is frequently available during Reinforcement as well as before and after school several days a week. She is also more than happy to set up an individual meeting with a student if he/she is not comfortable asking questions in front of other students.
 - Ms. Mitchell mentioned that she is currently working on making connections from Algebra 1A to Algebra 1B. They are working on the foundations of Algebra. She is also using peers to help explain; sometimes students gain a better understanding when a peer explains it. They are also doing a lot of error analysis, trying to learn from common mistakes. She is working to make the material as engaging as possible in the Geometry class. They are currently working on their logic section.

School Security:

- All Safety Drills are going well, they have streamlined the drills and they are proving to be more efficient. Students no longer report back to their homeroom before exiting the building, they exit with their current class.
- Briarcliff will be piloting a new phone APP to help with Drills.
- The new vestibule, providing double doors, is locked after 8:00am. Shelves have been added to the vestibule so you can now leave any items you are dropping off for a student in these cubbies without having to pass through the second secure doors.
- School Security is looking to be further addressed with the Referendum – relocation of the main office to the front of the building; the district is still making determinations and developing priorities to fit within the budget.
- Briarcliff and HS staff are still focused on the back door locker room security. Coaches and players are aware that they doors are NOT to be propped open.

Social Media:

- Mr. Carlson, Mrs. Ludwig, and Sergeant Gil are working on presentations for the students regarding social media. Mr. Carlson has extensive experience in this area and hopes to promote social awareness, Internet safety and digital citizenships.

School Culture:

- The school year is off to a good start. The school climate is positive. Really no serious problems. The most susceptible times are gym, lunch and recess. Mr. Carlson is a frequent presence during these times. This helps to act as a deterrent. The administration is trying to be proactive instead of reactive. The staff is focused on building relationships between the students and the faculty and appreciates the value of these relationships.

Open Forum:

- 7th and 8th Grade Math – some parents have concerns about the structure and functionality of the math program. Both Algebra 1A and Algebra 1A/B are proving to be challenging for the students. There is a cohort of students that have either taken Algebra at the summer academy as a preview or regularly attend Mathnasium/Kumon for extra math. Some of the students that are just attending regular class are intimidated to ask questions. Mrs. DeWalt and Ms. Mitchell addressed this earlier by offering individual meetings. There is a growing group of parents who have sought outside of school tutoring for their students.
- The Mountain Lakes Administration is reviewing the structure and working with teachers to address academic concerns that have been raised. Mr. Carlson and Ms. Melucci have stated that there is consistent and clear communication between the Administration and Math teachers. As required by the State of NJ, all first year teachers are assigned mentors and Mrs. Lombardi and Mrs. Pelliconi are serving in these rolls.
- All teachers can earn professional development hours for observing a peer or being observed by a peer and Mr. Carlson is strongly encouraging this with staff. There is ongoing communication between the Briarcliff and High School Math teachers. Briarcliff Math is one of the most advanced in the state and expectations for students are very high. The question was raised – have we pushed too far ahead? Ms. Melucci and Mr. Carlson would like to know how the community feels about this. They stated it is good practice to review current procedures and structures to determine areas where we can do better and areas of strength. Overall goal is to meet the needs of every student because every student learns at their own speed and pace.
- Revitalizing Gifted and Talented Programs – Ms. Melucci is revitalizing the programs within the district and reevaluating the identification process.
- Band – several parents/students had concerns with the new band program regarding testing, makeup lessons and lesson instructions. The testing helps differentiate within the band so each student can receive the proper level of instruction. Makeup lesson times and requirements are being addressed. The new strings teacher is certified to teach instrumental lessons. She does cover instrumental lessons from time to time, but parents should know that she is certified to teach the lessons.