

Briarcliff PAC Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 11, 2019

Attendees:

- *Erik Carlson, Briarcliff Principal.*
- *8th Grade Representatives: Karen Brennfleck and Lisa Lees.*
- *7th Grade Representatives: Mary Adams and Lorraine Lalin.*
- *6th Grade Representatives: Margo Gillespie and Jeanne Squeglia.*
- *HSA Representatives: Catalina Maione and Amy Schadt.*

1. Briarcliff Science Fair Update:

Following up on questions from the *Parent Coffee Chat* last month, Mr. Carlson and all BC Science teachers will meet to plan a Science Fair for the spring, possibly in April. They will wait to include Mrs. Petersen in the planning when she returns from maternity leave. The idea of possibly making the Science Fair mandatory was discussed as well as more relaxed & fair guidelines to encourage creativity and broader student interest. Science Fair PEP was suggested to give students time and support to develop their ideas, if faculty schedules can accommodate this idea. Mr. Carlson will communicate more information soon via his *Friday Flash* e-mail.

2. Limiting PowerSchool Access:

Mr. Carlson has begun a trial period of limiting parent and student access to PowerSchool. Access is currently restricted from Monday morning through Thursday afternoon. This is largely in response to increased anxiety among the students and based on patterns of many students and parents checking the Portal multiple times daily, some logging in as much as hundreds of times in one week.

Feedback from students and parents on limiting access has been largely positive. It was pointed out that it is much easier to monitor missed and upcoming assignments on PowerSchool than on Canvass. A few students complained that without access to Power School, they did not know about missing assignments until a week later.

Some parents with struggling students use PowerSchool to help support their children and were concerned about less access to the Portal. Mr. Carlson understood this concern and pointed out that parents whose students are struggling should already be in direct contact with faculty and that he would work with faculty to ensure that this happens.

3. NJ Middle School Risk & Protective Factors Survey - December 19, 2019:

Deadline for permission slips is 12/12/19. The survey will take place during 8th or 9th period depending on schedules/instructional time. Mr. Carlson will share data with the community when it is available.

4. Briarcliff Sports Club:

Parents had questions about the club as the club's fundraising Poker Night is coming up in January. Mr. Carlson is working with Mr. Wallace and Mrs. Delsandro to develop a plan to sustain these new teams financially at Briarcliff (previously these teams were supported by the

BC Sports Club solely). The school currently charges \$75 per student (BC softball, baseball and soccer), which doesn't nearly cover expenses and is supported by the BC Sports Club as well.

5. Homeroom Door Decorating Contest:

Administrators have judged winning doors. HSA will sponsor an ice cream party for winning homerooms on 12/17 during 9th period. Overall winners will receive homework passes.

6. Topics From Parents:

- Parent-Teacher communication discussed and answered above under PowerSchool topic.
- Some general PEP questions arose from parents - could BC staff endeavor to broaden PEP options to include more interesting and/or practical/life skills? PEP ideas included: typing/keyboarding, sewing; cursive/calligraphy; study skills/note taking). The idea of drawing on parent and community members as PEP instructors was suggested.
- Teacher Professional Development Days: In the past, professional development was very limited. Mr. Carlson is offering development opportunities twice monthly: mandatory monthly staff meeting/training with Sage Thrive & another day of content specific training and district articulation. The budget has been increased for PD/training outside of school. Mr. Posner, Mr. Alves, Mr. Mendello, Mrs. DeWalt, and Mrs. Platt recently returned from very useful training sessions and more are scheduled. Mr. Carlson has made PD a higher priority, encouraging teachers to seek training, working to develop PLCs. He also recently attended a state conference for administrators.
- 8th Graders report limited access to games like Kahoot as punishment for behavior of a few students. Teachers have expressed frustration with some academic apathy from this cohort. Mr. Carlson has just begun academic monitoring for a group of student athletes. There are concerns about students opting out of activities/sports due to social dynamics and fear of missing out.

7. Follow-Up On Math Curriculum Questions From Last Meeting:

A Math Ad Hoc Committee has been formed to review curriculum district-wide. Committee members include Ms. Melucci, teachers and administrators. Mr. Carlson would like to have options for students who would benefit from traditional paths and not struggle through accelerated paths. He is advocating for the addition of an alternative to Algebra AB or A for students in 7th grade to meet the needs of students who are struggling and who could then transition into Algebra Concepts in 8th grade.

Questions re: PARCC/NJ-SLA. Parents mentioned that the NJSLA results are broken down in detail by grade and test on NJ.com. Mr. Carlson and administrators do not have access to meta-data from state re: specific weaknesses or specific test questions which would help improve curriculum.