

**WEST END SECONDARY SCHOOL PARENT ASSOCIATION
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

December 5, 2023

Agenda

- Principal's Message
- Presidents' Update
- Treasurers' Report
- Upcoming Events

I. Call to Order

Co-President Yvette Russell called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Board members shared recent experiences they have had with their children.

In attendance: Yvette Russell, Rebecca Weel, Trisha Bechard, Jason Benowitz, Samantha Alvarez Benowitz, Jill Gabin, Karyn Gooden, Jessica Jenkins, Laurie Marshall, Matt Merdinger, Rachel Polimeni, Jennifer Richey, Liz Sorem, Barry Waldman and Sheri Wilson.

II. President's Update

November EB meeting minutes were approved.

College March is this Friday, celebrating seniors. Seniors write letters to someone in the school. This is an Outward Bound tradition. Event celebrates the seniors as they near the end of their college application process. Other grades support them and line the road. They march to Waterline Square. A homemade mailbox is created. Parents are invited this year. There will be a brunch afterwards and then students are dismissed early. Rebecca Weel and 11th grade parents will be helping. Students will be giving Molly flowers and a generous gift.

Book Club is on Tuesday, December 12 at 9:30 am. Ami Kantawala is leading it. The featured book is Grit, starting with the Intro and Chapters 1-3.

Teacher's holiday luncheon will be Thursday, December 21. Jill proposed baking cookies for the staff, including support staff, cafeteria and security.

The next PA event is Monday, December 18, at 9 am in person. We are thinking of making it a holiday mixer with snacks so parents can mingle and meet each other.

The winter social at Bryant Park was very successful last year. Jennifer Richey and Rebecca Weel have proposed going Wednesday, January 10, 2024 for grades 6-12 parents at Bryant Park winter village.

March 2 will be the food festival and April 5 will be the spring benefit.

There is a school tradition of having SLT, PA and others sending holiday thank you notes to all staff and teachers. The goal is for everyone to receive two notes. Rebecca will send home. Those that can attend will be meeting on Monday. Those that cannot attend can request Rebecca to send a packet of notes to be sent home with their child. Sheri may be able to have people gather at one of her restaurants.

III. Principal's Report

Jessica discussed the coaching that is taking place for the middle school Spanish teacher. Another teacher is spending time in the classroom with the Spanish teacher. Assignments will be clarified. Marina is helping coach the Spanish teacher and working on classroom management. Jessica had conversations with 7th grade students about maintaining behavior in all classes. If parents have concerns, they can write Jessica, but should copy Karyn too.

Joe is interviewing candidates for high school foreign language and a parent is helping support Spanish learning in high school.

The US News and World Report assemble a list of best schools every year. High school will not be part of that for a few years since we only have two graduated classes so far - likely will be included after another class graduates. Middle school list has 2868 schools in New York State and WESS is number 20 in the state and 14 in New York City (more than 700 middle schools in NYC). Rating algorithm now includes diversity, students with free and reduced lunch, etc. In the past it was more focused on test scores. The schools above are gifted and talented schools primarily. Booker T is ranked 12th. Jessica and Karyn were congratulated and parent appreciation shared. All agreed this could be celebrated and properly framed.

Lines for middle school and high school tours are booked and lined up down the block.

Educator arm of the NYPD, the school safety youth officers are coming in on Thursday with a presentation to high school students about hate crime. They will be discussing the consequences and ramifications of hate crimes. Hate has no place at WESS. Working with larger, non-religious organizations to potentially come into WESS to work with the students.

Dialogue is taking place with Jewish Student Union and Black Student union and other affinity groups as there are very strong opinions, especially in the high school. There have been hate incidents noted in middle school as well and the administration is looking into similar options from youth officers to speak to the middle school students as well.

IV. Treasurer Report

\$12,500 received in Family Giving to date, representing 17 families. Last year it was 32 families at this time and \$22,000.

Rebecca spoke to another school about family giving who noticed contributions have been less than expected to date. Other letters and notifications will be sent out about Family Giving before the end of the year. Rebecca encouraged PA families to reach out to their groups to encourage family giving. DOE budgets will be reduced. PA underwrites field work, supports sports teams, helps with professional development. There has been discussion about smaller fundraisers, possibly in February at Harlem Tavern.

Rachel introduced the idea of highlighting school employees and programs that benefit from Family Giving in the form of videos, podcasts, newsletters, etc.. Jennifer suggested making Family Giving a contest and adding incentives for classes that have the highest participation.

V. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Waldman, Recording Secretary