

Highcrest Middle School– Wilmette Junior High School
PTO General Meeting
November 2, 2011

Welcome

Anne Williams and Margaret Tilson welcomed everyone and started the meeting at 9:19 am

Speaker: Dr. Ray Lechner

Dr. Lechner started by reporting that District 39 had an amazing start to the school year with **Connected** as well as with the newly established rubric for the Science Curriculum, which has been updated and implemented in the K-4 grades. Next year this rubric will be implemented at Highcrest Middle School and Wilmette Junior High School. The new curriculum is much more “hands on” and provides “live” opportunities for the students.

These changes are being implemented as a result of the CRC report from 2007, which determined that the district’s science facilities aren’t up to standard with safety at Wilmette Junior High School. A variety of meetings have been held since 2007 to focus on developing ideas to bring up standards at WJHS.

Connected Update-

This fall set up professional growth networks to facilitate **Connected learning**, which is essentially ongoing learning . This endeavor serves to increase community awareness of responsibilities and imbed these concepts into curriculum. As a result of these efforts, Science is now done and Social Studies will be next.

Structural Platform-

District 39 intends to revise the rating system for principals and teachers by December 2013. Work is underway to develop a student growth model for Principal evaluations by December 2013 and a model for teacher evaluations is targeted to be completed by 2016-2017.

Upon review of the 2007-2008 CRC report concerning science facilities at WJHS that impact instruction, learning and safety, we are working to provide options to Board of Ed for resolving these issues.

Dr. Dave Palzet stated that students can feel that they are part of the evaluation for science by engaging in a community service, such as “Pennies for Patients” versus Community Learning. This approach serves to make it more meaningful by teaching responsibility for student relationships as well as relationships within their community

Teaching Channel-

The first school the district has chosen to focus on is Wilmette Junior High School, due to the Blue Ribbon Awards that we have won. The emphasis will be on the National Honor versus Chicago magazine evaluations.

New Trier Freshman Survey-

Wilmette Junior High School students rated themselves at or above all other townships with regard to preparation for New Trier.

85% of the WJHS students rate themselves as “well prepared” or “prepared” as opposed to 74% of remainder of township.

80% of other feeder schools rate themselves as “prepared” for the rigors of New Trier High School.

These students feel that the biggest area of growth needs to be in English (writing specifically). This will be addressed by the school improvement plan.

Students across the township had concerns with the amount of homework. The student consensus was that more homework is not the answer.

Tech Update - IPADS

A pilot of 1 cart of 30 IPADS has been added at Central, Highcrest Middle School, and WJHS.

Future Ideas

The district is exploring the addition of Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language, with perhaps less Spanish.

Kindergarten Enrichment – Plans are in consideration for an after or before school addition for a longer day. This plan would be considered as enrichment, as opposed to a full day. A model is in the township for a pay program and we have identified space in one section at one of grade schools. Currently, we are exploring matching costs, which will be presented at the School Board meeting in January 2012.

In addition, we are currently exploring improvements in the Social Studies curriculum.

Class Lists

A district parent addressed concern regarding legality issues. It is illegal to post class lists per our district attorney. We, as a governmental unit, are not permitted to do that. This doesn't prohibit the PTO from posting lists. Essentially, we have been violating the law without knowing it. This is a privacy and safety issue. Class lists are now excluded as directory information. A student's name can only be published with parents consent.

Principal's Report – Dr. Dave Palzet

We are implementing cross campus connections initiatives for both Highcrest Middle School and Wilmette Junior High School. One initiative created this year is the High Five Choir, which is comprised of both disabled and nondisabled students from both schools. This idea was taken from the New Trier Choir. The goals include sharing a love of music, building leadership skills, and advancing cognitive, social, and emotional skills.

Peer Mentoring – Eighth graders will come together with 5th graders to mentor and assist with homework, etc.

Community Supported Garden between Highcrest and WJHS. The concept involves Highcrest Middle School students bearing the responsibility for growing the produce. Wilmette Junior High School students would set up a Farmer's Market. This would also entail building a website as the commerce point. Local restaurants would be able to purchase produce to serve in restaurants. The Commerce website would require that a bank account be set up. We are looking at starting this in the spring.

In addition, Dave mentioned the plans underway for scheduling HMS and WJHS writing and reading teachers to observe classes at New Trier High School at the different levels (2,3,4,9). Also, HMS and WJHS teachers will observe in each others' classes

Dave mentioned the plan to host Book Talks for both schools' teachers as well.

Tonight – Dr. Tim Dohrer, New Trier Principal, and Dr. Dave Palzet will lead a book discussion "Letting go with Love" which covers the seven C's of resilience by Dr. Ginsburg. This will take place at 7:00pm tonight at New Trier's Northfield campus and 9:00 am tomorrow at WJHS.

Dr. Ginsburg comes November 17th to discuss his book at 6:30pm at NTHS Northfield campus.

In his new role as principal at both schools, Dave reported that he emails all teachers and visits classrooms regularly in an effort to stay connected to the kids.

Melanie Biggs -Teacher Liaison – Dave reported on behalf of Melanie

Community Service Events:

Rosbinski/Rosberg – Pedal Power – Collecting used bikes November. 5th. Bring used bike to HMS in order to refurbish and donate on the website.

Grishaber/Mr. Taylor - Food drive for school district in Waukegan. They will purchase turkeys and students will deliver meals on November 19th.

Hilary Harvey& Pam Katz will talk on Bullying at HMS on November 4th.

Teacher Book Group –

WJHS Book – “How Full is Your Bucket” - The junior high staff read and discussed and we are now doing it at HMS. This book addresses personal responsibility and accountability and provides tips to weave life skills into the curriculum.

Anne Williams and Margaret Tilson, Co-Presidents at HMS, asked for approval of minutes from the September HMS general board meeting.

Freaky Friday– Both Anne and Margaret thanked the chairs.

Make a Difference Day - Amy Pomerantz reported that we are the largest donator in the area.

Book Fair – Held during Parent/Teacher conferences with times posted on the PTO website.

HMS Parent Connections – There will be multiple events during the year. The first is December 7th and December 8th at the Bottle Shop.

Raffle for **Kids are Key** – Lisa Hoffman - We made our goal! Lisa extended a thank you to all the donors. Approximately half of HMS Families have participated to date. Lisa announced winners of the raffle:

Anne Williams adjourned the meeting at 10:28 am.