WL PTA Meeting

Monday, September 12, 2016

Meeting Minutes

WELCOME

UPDATE FROM SCA

SCA Co-President Alice Naland gave an update on priorities for the Student Council. Each PTA meeting will start with one of the SCA Co-Presidents coming to give an update.

* The SCA is off to a great start. The immediate priority is to conduct the elections for Freshmen.
* After Freshmen elections, Homecoming Week will be the focus
* Rounding out fall priorities for the SCA: The Thanksgiving assembly that’s coordinated by the Student Council.

BUDGET

PTA Treasurer Lee Dioso presented the budget. Questions on the budget were discussed. The 2016-17 PTA Budget was voted on and approved.

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

* School is off to a great start. Freshman had special programming to try to help them ease into the transition.
* Drop-Off/Pick-up: Peak times are 8:05-8:20 and 3:01-3:14. Drivers (and students) will experience fewer delays by avoiding Stafford Street during peak times.
* In the afternoon, Stafford Street is closed for 10 minutes to accommodate buses which pick up students from this location as the bus lane is not big enough to accommodate all the buses the school needs.
* The front driveway (by Door 1) is also closed during the afternoon release peak period to create a safer environment for students as they exit.
* Reminder: bike helmets are strongly encouraged. Please bring a lock to lock up the bikes. (U-lock)
* Walkers: please pay attention to crosswalks; lights at Stafford and Quincy.
* To get info about what’s happening at school:
  + The calendar lists all events
  + Each Friday there is an email about activities happening the upcoming week
  + Daily at 7:30 am there is an email which outlines activities for that day
  + For Athletics, see <http://www.wlathletics.org/>; you can sign up for email alerts.
* Back to School night is Wed. Sept. 21
* Columbus Day holiday on Monday, Nov. 10 will be first school holiday of the year.
* As of the first day of school, enrollment: 2,348, which is about 50 more students than last year. This is slightly under projected. New students continue to trickle in.

COUNSELING UPDATE:

* Counselors support students with scheduling, college planning, career development, challenges with academics.
* Also available for personal/social issues and crisis planning.
* Activities are being planned as part of a year-long Mindfulness initiative to help students manage stress, achieve balance. Sampling:
  + Take a break Tuesdays - providing a quiet space to re-center
  + Stress Less, Laugh More” - programs to help students “lighten up” about school
  + Kindness Week to encourage having kids from different groups come together
* College App process is already under way with Seniors with College Planning Night. Admissions Reps will be present. It’s a great opportunity for parents and students to learn about the college process.
* Counselors go into classrooms in late September to help students understand Naviance and different resources available to them in the college app process.
* Oct 18 6-8 is the College Fair. 100+ colleges/universities will be represented. The reps who come are usually the ones who review the applications from W-L.
* October 19 is PSAT. Arlington registers all 10th and 11th graders take it. Students will take the test and then they go home. 9th graders will have conferences that day. Seniors will be having a meeting or online activity.
* There will be College Applications help sessions on Saturdays on a regular basis between now and January; info to come about times and locations.
* In January and February, Counselors move on to scheduling for next year.

CAPACITY

* The W-L PTA conducted a survey last March to understand (and have data) about how our community feels the best options are to address overcrowding at the school. There were 839 responses. Outcome: the parents preferred redistricting to adding relocatable (Trailers).
* School Board met August 30 and signaled there will be redistricting. About 100 students will be moved out of the W-L Attendance Area and into Wakefield or Yorktown.
* No student now at W-L will be impacted, but upcoming classes may be moved.
* The School Board will vote on which planning units will be moved prior to High School Information Night. There is more info on the School Board website.
* John Naland has represented W-L on Capacity for many years now. Francis Allen is going to take over as Capacity/Utilization Chair.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

* Students will be more successful academically and enjoy school more if they’re connected with an activity.
* Getting students engaged is a top priority not just because they’ll do better at school and enjoy it more, but also because of the life lessons sports and activities impart: learning how to be a leader, have confidence, self esteem, etc.
* We want to have every freshman involved in some kind of activity after school. We’ve been at about the 80% mark and are looking to bump that up.
* Dr. Robertson and Mrs. Gregory and Ms. Caloway meet with every Freshman in small groups of 10 to help brainstorm what they’d like to do. (These small group meetings also happen with new students to the school in all grades).
* We use the Connect Mentor program to get the upperclassmen to help in the integration.
  + Connect Mentors: Juniors and Seniors are mentors.
  + All the mentors have been through the program as Freshmen.
  + It’s an opportunity for upperclassmen to lead, get involved; and a peer-to-peer system for helping underclassmen transition and integrate.
  + There were 99 mentors; Three mentors are matched up with one freshmen Generals period to establish an ongoing connection.
  + One of the anxiety for freshmen is to combat the impression that they are welcome; Connect Mentors helped welcome them to school the first day and will be with them throughout the year for peer to peer connections.
  + There was training for the mentors. We want the mentors to learn themselves, then lend that learning out to others and then to be leaders.
  + The Connect Mentors work over the summer to train.
  + They go into Freshmen General’s Periods twice in September, twice in October and monthly throughout the rest of the year. They will work with Freshmen on goal setting, time management, course selection, etc.
* Activities Fair happens during lunch mid-year during all three lunches, and the students can go through to explore interests during the winter break.
* We survey freshmen students mid-way through the year and then work with them individually to try to get those still not involved interested and engaged in doing an activity.
* We survey them again at the end of the year. We also are doing that for the sophomores. The Sophomores are at about 90% engagement. By Senior year, we are almost at 100%
* What can they do: If they’re in a performing arts class they will be doing other things after school.
* All of the school is invited to try out for plays
* Clubs are all student driven; the website is being updated. New clubs form continuously — three new groups were approved the first week of school. It’s an ever-changing club list.
* Go to the sponsor that is listed to get updated info; Clubs are open to everyone all year.
* Kids who want to form a new club find a teacher to sponsor.
* Intramural sports are held during lunchtime. The gym and the stadium are available and are heavily used. There is after school weightlifting and open gym.
* And now Ultimate Frisbee is a new club; starting next week.
* The athletics: there are 56 sports teams in 24 sports. Fall season is under way.
* All athletes require a physical from a doctor and it has to be after May 1 of 2016. One clearance and they’re good for the year. they don’t need it for intramural sports.
* Help your child:
  + Let them stay after school; let them be involved.
  + Have a communication plan with them after school. There’s spontaneity and flexibility in the clubs and activities. There are lots of people in the building after school.
  + If you are having a hard time getting them involved in something they would be interested in, let the Activities office know and we can try to help make that connection happen.
  + There are two late buses: it’s a 4:45 bus and a 6:45 bus.
  + The library and the cafeteria are open after school; the library closes at 4:30.

SECOND CHANCE

* Second Chance is an early intervention program drug and alcohol program. There are four ways to be referred to the program:
  1. By the school in lieu of suspension
  2. By the court in lieu of probation
  3. By a parent
  4. By the student themselves.
* APS students drink a lot more than we thought; more than the national average. In an effort to try to help students set things straight and avoid the court system, suspensions - this diversion program was created.
* Marijuana and Alcohol is what they’re seeing most, but also seeing prescription drugs.
* 88% of students who go through Second Chance don’t have another substance issue on their school record.
* Program has three sections:
  + First section is intensive education provided to students to help them make better choices.
  + Parent session: share the information that they’ve taught the child and briefly discuss some communication styles to use with the team.
  + Final session: parents and child comes back; check in with both parent and child.

NEXT MEETING: October 17, 2016