

**Wellesley Middle School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)**  
Minutes from the October 17, 2016 Meeting

President's Welcome — Katy Brunner:

Katy Brunner welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked all of the PTO volunteers for their time. She expressed the Board's excitement about the upcoming school year and the great program and speakers we will have — great things for the kids, teachers and administrators.

[Board Members and others in attendance introduced themselves]

Principal's Welcome — Mark Ito:

Good morning. I hope you all enjoyed back to school night. It is a good night to show you the school and to meet the teachers. We tried a new format this year with parents going right to the classrooms.

We have a halloween dance coming up on October 28th — it is a well attended dance. We are looking forward to it. The dance is from 7 to 9pm. We also have the turkey event coming up — hesitating on the name of the events because it is weather dependent. The key to the event, however, is the donation piece and giving to others especially around the thanksgiving time period.

Speaker — **Cathi Gordon, Assistant, Principal — WMS Club**

[See attached handout titled, "Wellesley Middle School After School Activities 2016-17" for more detailed information]

- There are many types of after school clubs at WMS.
- The clubs are organized to provide kids with a place where they are comfortable or with a place to activate a different part of their brain. Clubs are organized into four general areas of interest — culture, technology, the arts, community service and health/fitness.
- We try to have a balance of clubs amongst these four categories. The clubs also allows the kids to make connections with other kids who are not in their classes and with kids in other grades.
- Clubs are run by teachers mostly (or teacher assistants) — teachers are passionate about these clubs and it is great for kids to see teachers in a different environment.
- The Clubs typically meet once a week run until 3:25pm. There is a late bus so that kids can stay at school and participate in these clubs or stay in school for help (i.e., meeting with a teacher, stay in the library).
- The kids need an activities card to participate in the after school clubs. It costs \$150 and it can be purchased on line.

## Questions

Is jazz band a club? No. It is not a club. Dr. Quanta will address this later on in her presentation.

What happens on the half day? There are no clubs on half-days because we have either department meetings or faculty meetings. No club meetings on half- days.

Is there a signing club? I know we have it. It may be listed under community services.

Ms. Gordon encouraged parents to reach out to her if they had any questions with respect to clubs and after school activities.

## Speaker — **Dr. Sabrina Quintana, K-12 Director of Performing Arts**

[Please see attached powerpoint presentation for comprehensive review of performing arts option in the Wellesley Public School.]

### Highlights:

- The study of music and drama are par of the curriculum and have enrolled classes that take place during the day. We also have a club aspect that takes place afterschool, i.e., plays.
- Two performance this year at WMS — (1) Much Ado About Nothing/As You Like It; and (2) the Lion King Jr
- In grades 6 and 7, kids are required to take general music.
- We offer band, choir and orchestra by grade level also.
- IVEP - Instrumental and Vocal Extension Program — this program allows students to take private lessons; teachers are professional musicians; this program is closes for the fall semester but will be available for the spring semester.
- 8th grade Music Lab Class — allow students to explore beginning music production; sounding editing, mixing, recording, etc.
- Band — students are enrolled in classes that meeting during the school day — band classes are offered in 6th,7th and 8th grade. All bands perform 2 concerts per year.
- Tuesday Jazz band is a club and meets after school. Monday morning jazz band is a class that the kids are enrolled in and it requires an audition; it meets three times per week; it is a graded course for students.
- Choir - organized by grade; it is a very popular program. Kids perform in a variety of place, i.e., 8th grade choir will perform at the Providence Bruins and at the State House.
- WPS has a new Orchestra teacher — he conducts both WMS and WHS orchestra. (Dr. Sergey Khanukaev)
- There is great value to an Arts education — provides a unique outlet for creative expression, increases feelings of self-worth; allows for bonding and collaboration with others, huge cognitive component of an arts education which is transferable to other academic studies. Arts develops both affective (creativity) and cognitive sides of the brain.

Dr. Quintana encouraged parents to stop by (her office at WMS) or contact her if they had any questions. Her contact information is available on the last page of the powerpoint presentation.

Speaker — **John Brown, Director of Athletics of Wellesley Public Schools** (office is located at WHS)

- Our goal at WMS is to introduce kids to sports that they have not been part of before, i.e., track and field, cross country, wrestling; we want the kids to have fun and be introduced to something new.
- Registration is online and you can find the link from the WMS, WHS or district website. All of the information you need about registration can be found online.
- Physicals are required for kids to be allowed to play; a physical is good for 13 months. Physical information is provided to the nurse's office and the nurse's office provides a list to coaches of eligible players.
- At WMS, athletics is student oriented, not parent oriented. We expect kids to come meet the coach to start the process. We do not send out reminder emails about practices, games, and oranges to parents. Here it is about the student/coach/school relationship — this is a different environment and it is a change for kids and families.
- Practices are generally held after school on Monday thru Thursday — sometimes on Fridays as well — this fall we had to eliminate WMS girls soccer because we did not have enough girls to field a team despite opening it up to all grades at WMS; we could not field a team because of outside commitments.
- Participation in sports at WHS is high. Wellesley has the most kids participating in sports of any town in the state. This is because of the strength of our youth program and parent involvement.

Questions:

- What sports are 6th graders eligible to participating in? cross country, wrestling and out door track (this year we allowed soccer for girls because we were trying to field a team).
- Is there a girls ice hockey team? Yes, but hard because of ice time but we do have a team.
- Is there any thought or movement of opening a 6th or 7th grade level for interested students in those popular sports (i.e., basketball and baseball) - where there is a gap between youth sports and High school? The issue with doing so it that we do not have competition. There are not many school that have teams for the kids to compete with — hard to do unless we have other towns that we are willing to put teams together but we can look into it. The other issue with respect to opening more sports to 6th and 7th graders is field and gym space. We can talk about it and see what the interest level looks.

- We do have cut sports at the middle school but we try not to do so — it is hard to do this — we want as many kids to participate and play as well and we do not want the kids to self-select whether they can participate and make a cut team
- Spring sports: tennis, baseball, track and field; volleyball for 8th grade as well.
- Wrestling is a winter sport; not just for boys; if a girl wanted to participate she could do so as well; WMS wrestlers practice at WHS and practice with WHS kids.
- Hockey season starts in early December and goes through just before February vacation week. There are approximately 10 games for each team (boys and girls).
- WPS has two trainers to work with student athletes. We also do concussion testing for our athletes. We want to make sure our athletes are healthy and stay healthy. The trainers are located at WHS but they also service WMS. Please make sure you communicate any injuries.

Mr. Brown encouraged parents to contact him if they had any questions.

**Speaker — Ken Johnson, Intramurals Wellesley Middle School**

- Intramural program has already started at WMS and runs Monday through Thursday. You need an activity card to attend. The calendar for intramurals is available online at the WMS website — see quick links.
- Basketball (3x3) will be offered in November for boys and girls.
- Any intramural activities that take place outside are canceled if weather is an issue.
- We have open gym and 90% of time the kids play basketball; fitness center is also available to kids Monday through Thursday once they have been trained on using the equipment. By the end of October/early November, all of the kids in the 6th grade should be trained in the fitness center.
- All intramurals are drop-in basis other than (1) Junior Moving Program, — which requires a commitment; and (2) Fencing program — February through April (for beginning) and April through June (for advanced).
- Every few months, we switch activities and add some others, i.e., badminton, indoor soccer, etc. We also have a girls fitness program that started this fall — a circuit training program.
- Mr. Johnson asked parents to call him or email him if they had any questions and also to let him know if their children have any particular interests.

Questions:

Is intramurals part of the activities card? Yes, you need the card to participate.

Is intramurals part of the straight out of school program? No.

Speaker — **Linda Corridan, Dept. Head of Nursing, Wellesley Public Schools**

- Speaking on the new state law — SBIRT — Governor Baker has been committed to dealing with the crisis — he signed into law some mandates that have to be abided by public schools— (1) must have policy on substance use (WPS is currently updating its policy); (2) any student who participates in sports must be provided with information on head injuries and substance use and harm it can cause; (3) if we offered drivers education, which we do not, the law would have required us to provide information on substance use and its harm; and (4) SBIRT — proactive program to make sure kids have help if they need it — this screening has been implemented in five schools across the state and we have learned a lot.
- For the 2017/18 academic year, the new law will require two grades — in either WMS or WHS — to have SBIRT screening. This screening can be done by nurses, psychologists, fitness teachers (others who have been trained to do the screening).
- This year, WPS will be piloting the screening in the 9th grade. The kick off was last Thursday with a program by Dr. Ruth Portee. She spoke to parents about teen brain development and its susceptibility to addiction and abuse.
- What is SBIRT screening? students in freshman advisory will come out — it is not drug screening — it is an individual conversation — totally confidential — parents can opt out if they do not want their children to participate — kids can also opt out. It is really a conversation between a kid and an adult at the WHS. The kids are asked several questions: have you had alcohol or any other in last month; marijuana or other drugs in last month; have you ride in car without seat belt in last month.
- Depending upon answer, kids get positive re-enforcements — recognize good decision making, offer thoughts on options — kids also get pictures of what brain looks like — MRI affected by drugs/alcohol and MRI of a brain with no negative affects — on the back of the picture is a listing of resources for the kids should they ever need it.
- This is really just another screening which allows an adult to connect with the kids and let them know that there is someone there who can help them.
- If a student shares something harmful, an adult will say that to the kid. Only reporting required by school to state is number of kids who get screens. All other information is confidential.
- Why did we start with 9th grade? studies shown that if we reach kids before they get exposed to drugs and alcohol, they will make better and safer and healthier decisions.
- We are looking at possibility of doing this screening at WMS next year. We are in discussions with Mark Ito, counselors and nursing staff at WMS to see what it would look like at WMS — still in early stages right now. Parents need to know that there is lots out there to support kids and parents.

Questions:

If during the screening a problem is uncovered, happens? kids come to us all of the time now, so no difference. We would talk to guidance counselors and parents. We deal with difficult situations all of the time and this will be just another one.

Who gets information on head injuries? Only students signed up and involved in organized sports activities

(Kids also get information on substance abuse at both WMS and WHS — lot of information in the crucial already)

If the children do the interview, are there names or responses recorded anywhere? No.

Did they video tape Dr. Portee's presentation? She is going to send it to us and we are hoping to post it on the nursing website. There are also many other resources noted on the nursing website so please look there. Also, one of Dr. Portee's other talks can be found on youtube.

Is there any thought to having this type of presentation (one done by Dr. Portee and discussion group held afterwards) being held on a yearly basis? I do not know. I hope to have more programs. I don't know that Dr. Portee will be available. She is very busy. I am not sure we could get her back but I hope to continue these conversations and we are working closely with Newton Wellesley Hospital to put together more programs.

Ms. Corridan encouraged parents to email or call her with any questions and also to contact her if they (or someone they know) is a good resource on these types of issues.

Meeting Adjourned following Ms. Corridan's presentation.

Respectfully Submitted by  
Connie Burton