

MINUTES

MS 54 GENERAL PTA MEETING: 3/21/17

The meeting was called to order and presided over by co-president Jerome Kramer.

Quorum was achieved.

Teacher Panel- Upcoming State Tests - 3/23/17

Ms. Misthal- 6th Grade Humanities and Mr. Wilson- 6th and 8th Grade Math

- There are three days of ELA (English Language Arts) state exams (3/28-3/30) and three days of Math state exams (5/2-5/4).
- 8th Graders in Regents classes do not take the Math state exams, they take Science and Math Regents at a different time. These students take practice Regents during the time when 6th and 7th Graders are taking the state tests.
- This year's state tests have unlimited time, as they did last year. Most students finish the exams within a certain amount of time and resume regular school day activities. Those who do not, are moved to another room to complete the exams. Students who are designated in advance as requiring additional test taking time, take the exams in a separate location.
- Certain components of the Math exams require a calculator, some do not.
- The breakdown of the ELA exams is: Day One- multiple choice; Day Two- multiple choice, short answer and extended response; Day Three- all writing- passages, author's purpose, central idea, comparing texts.
- Teachers do a lot of prep for both of the state exams and the Regents exams. Parents can look through their child's schoolwork and have their child practice areas where her/she may have had some difficulty.

Question and Answer Session:

Q: Do state tests count for school grades?

A: The Regents exams count for high school transcript grades, but the state tests do not count as report card grades.

Q: Should we tell our children to take all the time they want on the exams?

A: Most kids do not take the entire time because they finish the exam and do not want to have to sit around doing nothing. Parents should tell their kids that they will not be rushed and that should check their work, but that they do not need to stay if they

have finished exam. Parents should also tell their kids not to second guess their work. Students should plan what they are going to write before they begin their essays.

Q: Should students bring calculators?

A: If your child has a scientific calculator, he/she should bring it. If not, the school will provide one for the test.

Q: Will my child be at a disadvantage if he did not receive outside test prep?

A: Most parents prep for the SHSAT (specialized high school admissions test), but it is not necessary to do so for the state tests because preparation is done at school.

Q: Is there any area students should work on particularly to prepare for the state tests?

A: For ELA: Students should know that “extended response” means writing an essay. Students should write separate, organized paragraphs and use transition words. There should be an introduction and conclusion (one or two sentences each). Students should use specificity of language (no “stuff”, “things”, “etc.”)

For math: Students should be concise and accurate in their answers.

Q: Have teachers been sharing this information with the students?

A: Yes. All of the classes have been working on these skills throughout the year.

Q: Any suggestions of what to do if students read a passage that they do not understand?

A: There are times when passages are difficult to understand. Students should preview the questions to determine what is being asked. For the short answer responses, students should use two details to support their answer. Students can receive partial credit for short responses and essays.

On the math exams, students can lose points for computation errors or conceptual errors. Students should show all of their work to receive partial credit even if they should make a conceptual error.

Q: Can parents view their child’s tests before they leave the school to be graded?

A: No. The tests get sent out right away to be scanned and graded. Parents may see their child’s tests in the fall, but even then, they can only see some of the questions. The multiple choice questions are not included, only the answers.

Co-Presidents Report:

- **Vote on motion to approve minutes from the February PTA meeting.**
Approved.

- **Project Cicero book drive:**
 - The book drive was a great success. Approximately 1,000 books were donated.

- **PTA positions available for next year:**
 - Parents were encouraged to apply for a position on the PTA. There are number of Executive Board positions that will need support or replacements for next year.

- **Bylaws review and proposed amendments:**
 - The PTA bylaws were updated to comply with the new 660 regulations. Copies of the proposed bylaws, and a summary of changes, were made available at the PTA meeting. The updated bylaws will be voted on at the April 20th PTA meeting.

- **Justine Fonte Update:**
 - Justine Fonte, who presented to MS54 parents on the topic of “Parenting a #Millennial in the Age of Digital Sexuality,” at the December PTA meeting, will conduct presentations with 6th, 7th and 8th Grade students and teachers in May.
 - Ms. Fonte will hold separate tailored sessions for each grade and will conduct an additional teacher professional development session.

- **Wellness Committee Update:**
 - The Wellness Committee received a grant for \$2,500 that will enable the school to incorporate Yoga into the eighth grade gym classes, which should help ease overcrowding in the gym and increase physical activity. The yoga organization, Bent on Learning, will conduct a pilot program for nine weeks beginning after Spring break. They will instruct MS54 teachers separately as well. The grant will cover the majority of the program’s costs and the PTA Executive Board has agreed to pay up to \$800 to fund the additional cost.

Principal's Report:

- School Update:
 - Teachers are working with students on state testing strategies, timing, and how to manage emotions regarding the exams. Students will be well prepared for the exam. Parents were asked to get their children to sleep early and to have them eat a good breakfast before the exams. There will be no Early Academy during testing weeks.
 - Justine Fonte (see above) will prepare tailored assemblies for each grade when she speaks to students in May: 6th grade assembly will focus on what children post, getting consent when posting, and when it is appropriate to post; 7th Grade assembly will focus on digital footprint and types of postings; 8th grade assembly will focus on body and gender norms, and pornography on the internet. Information will be sent to parents prior to the assemblies, so they can discuss topics with their children. Parents can also watch Ms. Fonte's December presentation to the PTA on the school website.
 - Dr. Elster met with a group of 7th and 8th Grade students to discuss the school dress code as the weather turns warmer. The dress code is revised each year and this year's revisions will be sent to parents.
 - This year's high school acceptances were sent out. Overall, the school did very well. The numbers of how many students were accepted where, will be published in the PTA records. The school is working with the twenty families of students who did not place at a high school. Students who apply for 2nd round/appeals process will learn of their placements in July. Included in this year's acceptance figures are: 137 students accepted at Specialized High Schools; 37 accepted at LaGuardia; 33 accepted at Beacon; 42 accepted at Millenium; 33 accepted at Bard; 20 accepted at Nest.
 - A dry-run of state testing room locations is being held today. Students are completing school surveys in their "testing" rooms. Dr. Elster requested that parents whom have not already done so, complete the school surveys that were sent home.

Treasury:

- Budget as of 3/15/17:
- Bank balance is \$324,164.75
- A money market account was opened as a reserve account and the school has \$250,000 in savings in that account.

Fundraising:

- Auction Update:
- The auction will take place on May 13th.
- Auction donations are still greatly needed. Parents were encouraged to donate and to spread the word.
- A request was made for a parent to lead the donation drive.
- A parent suggested that Class Parents reach out to their classes to solicit donations.
- Fairway Cards:
- Parents were asked to please use the card when shopping. Cards are available in the school office.
- Amazon:
- Parents were asked to use the Amazon link on the school's website prior to shopping.

Next PTA General Meeting:

4/20, 8:00am