

**Parents' Association of The Bronx High School of Science**  
**General Meeting Minutes - DRAFT**  
**January 21, 2016**

**Call to Order:** Co-President Elizabeth Newberry began tonight's meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**Approve December 2015 PA Meeting Minutes:** It was moved by Amy Davidson to approve the minutes and seconded by Pam Godwin. The minutes were approved and adopted.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Heidi Moustakos reported on the current balances, fundraising progress to date, budgeted income and expenses. Major expense items include Naviance, athletic teams and miscellaneous expenses.

**SLT Report:** Co-President Elizabeth Newberry provided a report on the last SLT meeting. The meeting included a midyear review of the school's CEP (Comprehensive Education Plan). Goals have been met and are in line with expectations. Highlights include the new Freshmen Guidance initiatives; parent engagement as measured by >60% of freshman parents using PupilPath; Communications goal to improve language dissemination has been met with increased translations of PA materials. Elizabeth Newberry asked parents to provide her with feedback and comments. The SLT will now begin to look to next year's CEP. It was reported that the C-30 process for the Assistant Principal, Biology has been concluded with Dr. Wheeler appointed to the position.

**Principal's Report:** Midterms are starting which means we are almost halfway through the year.

We are already starting to look ahead to next year: course selection will begin the first week of February and the online course guide is being updated. The course selection process was discussed at the Principal's Breakfast earlier this week. The PowerPoint presentation reviewing the course selection process will be sent out to parents by Cindy Golan. The course selection process will also be the topic for next month's PA meeting.

Parent question: will Conversational Chinese be offered next year? Answer: the course guide is being updated now and Dr. Donahue did not know for sure which language classes were being offered, however she cautioned that sometimes even if a course is offered in the guide it may not take place if not enough students sign up.

Dr. Donahue announced some curriculum changes that are planned for next year to further reinforce the STEM aspect of Bronx Science (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math): incoming freshmen will all take "Research Literacy" for one semester (as today), and "Elements of Engineering" for the other semester. Rising sophomores (current freshmen) will take a new writing course "Rhetoric and Composition" for one semester and "Coding for All" for the other semester. Sophomores who choose to pursue the 3-year Intel track will not take these mandatory courses but will have aspects incorporated into their research curriculum. The new "Rhetoric and Composition"

course replaces the Freshmen Writing Seminar and is designed to better prepare students to take AP English classes and to improve students' analytical writing skills.

Parent question: What courses can the rising juniors, who will miss the new Computer Science requirements, take to gain computer science experience?

Answer: students can go through the course selection process and choose from the computer science classes that are offered.

Parent question: when will the Guidance Counselors finish meeting with the Sophomores? Answer: these meetings should be ongoing.

Given the increasing usage of computers in the classrooms, Dr. Donahue asked that the PA consider appropriating some funding from the budget to purchase new hardware / computers. The Executive Board of the PA has agreed in principle to spend up to \$200K of a PA surplus on computers and technology.

Parent question: how much of the surplus does this represent? Answer: this represents a large portion of the surplus. The surplus was formed over the past few years due to lower than anticipated expenses, and this is a great way to use some of the surplus to benefit ALL students.

Parent question: has the school considering approaching Tech Companies for computer donations? Answer: The Bronx Science Alumni Endowment Fund does reach out to corporations, and has established a relationship with Microsoft, but their involvement has been to sponsor a Hackathon and other events, rather than donating product. It is difficult to secure hardware donations. However, Mr. Ranells plans to purchase computers in the most cost-effective way, if the PA approves the spending.

Dr. Donahue discussed the recent article in the NY Times about students at Bronx Science using cell phones and being kicked off of the school's wifi. She confirmed that the school does have an issue with insufficient bandwidth to serve the needs of the teachers and classroom instruction, however this issue was not caused by students using cell phones. The school is concerned that student usage will exacerbate the bandwidth shortage and have taken steps to remove students from the school's wifi network. Students can still use cell phones with their own data plan, however. She noted that this issue is not specific to Bronx Science and referenced a letter to the editor by the PA Co-Presidents, Ellen Dubin and Elizabeth Newberry, calling attention to this systemwide issue of insufficient bandwidth. Dr. Donahue noted that the hallways are quieter now between classes since some students are using their phones instead of talking.

Parent question: Isn't sitting in the hallway using a device isolating to students? Parents are trying to keep their kids off their electronic devices. Answer: The students are still very engaged socially; Bronx Science features over 70 clubs and activities that students are involved in.

Parent question: Why are there no regular upgrades from the DOE for the school's computers? Lower and Middle Schools get them every 1-2 years. Answer: Dr. Donahue has met with the superintendent and the DOE on the topic of bandwidth and there will be movement but this will take 18-24 months.

**Vote on By-Laws Amendments:** Revisions to the PA by-laws were distributed and discussed at last month's PA meeting. A motion was made by Ellen Dubin to vote on the by-laws amendment, and the motion was seconded by Barbara Reiser. A vote was taken and all were in favor with no opposed.

**Nominating Committee Announcement:** A committee to nominate new members to the PA Executive Board will need to be formed in February to replace retiring / graduating officers. There are two Executive Board members whose students are graduating this year so there will be at least two vacancies. We will take names of volunteers for this important job at the February PA Meeting.

**Auction Kick-Off:** Liz Bruder-Frydman, chair of the auction committee, could not be present. In her stead, Elizabeth Newberry announced that the annual gala and auction will be held on Friday, May 20 at the Landmark on the Park in Manhattan. The gala is a great event that features music, food, drink and bidding on a variety of auction items. It is also a major source of fundraising for the school. Volunteers are needed to solicit auction donations as well as help with the planning and the setup of the event. Parents interested in helping out are invited to attend a meeting on Tuesday, February 9 from 9-10 a.m. at the Landmark on the Park, 160 Central Park West (at 76<sup>th</sup> Street). More information will be in the upcoming weekly PA e-mail blasts.

**Upcoming Events Reminder:** Please note the following upcoming school events

Feb 1 – No School

Feb 8 – Lunar New Year, No School

Feb 11 – Winter College Night – College office event

Feb 15 – 19 Midwinter Recess

**Special Guest Speaker:** Alan Sheptin of Sheptin Tutoring gave a presentation entitled "The New SAT vs. the ACT: How they Differ and What you Should Know". He also fielded numerous questions from parents about the SAT and ACT tests in general. Materials from this very informative presentation will be posted on the Bronx Science PA website.

The meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.