

Wilmette Junior High School PTO
General Board Minutes
February 11, 2015
DRAFT

The meeting was called to order at 9:20am

November 12, 2014

HMS/WJHS Joint General Board Meeting minutes APPROVED

Highcrest Middle School PTO co-president Robin Hungler and Wilmette Junior High School PTO president-elect Ami Campbell presiding.

Highcrest Middle School PTO President's Report

- Variety Show - tickets go on sale next week in the cafeteria; the show will be held at the WJHS auditorium.
- PTO Nominating Committee - Marci Blunk agreed to be the committee chair; the PTO job descriptions reside with this chair.
- Meeting for transition from 6th to 7th Grade - a panel of parents will be organized to speak at this meeting; parents of junior high students will be sought out as panelists.
- Communications Survey - a survey will be sent out to middle school parents to try to refine and consolidate the messages that originate with the PTO; look for a link to the survey soon.
- Annual Budget Meeting April 7 - at this meeting committee chairs can request increases to their budgets, or ask budget questions. The co-presidents, treasurer and assistant treasurer will be available.

Wilmette Junior High School PTO President's Report

- Yearbook - orders are due in a few weeks; the price is now \$29. Yearbooks are ordered directly through the yearbook publisher; the link is on the PTO website.
- Social Dance - parents are invited to observe at the next class, this coming Tuesday. The students will be practicing foxtrot.
- PTO Nominating Committee - one 6th grade parent is needed to serve on the nominating committee; there are currently lots of open positions on the executive board and general board; see Ami Campbell for information.
- Parent Party - the parent wine party organized by Erin Lyons is next week and many people have already signed up; the cost is \$20.
- Family Action Network - Bruce Perry will talk on February 12 about empathy, Ron Lieber will talk on February 23 about raising kids who are grounded, not spoiled, Carrie James will talk on March 16 about youth, new media and the ethics gap, and Bryan Stevenson will talk on March 23 about American injustice, mercy, humanity and making a difference.

Principal's Report

- Athletics - 96 7th and 8th grade students are signed up for basketball; 23 students are on the wrestling team and they are participating in tournaments; the dance team performed at the Northwestern/Ohio State game and at the Russell Bowl in Orlando; boys' volleyball is starting for 7th and 8th graders; non-cut track and field is starting, with 75 HMS students and 150 WJHS students participating;
- Academic Competitions - the Math Counts team placed 2nd and the Science Olympiad varsity team placed 10 out of 21 and the junior varsity team placed 6 out of 21; in the Latin Quiz Bowl WJHS placed 3rd in the region.
- 5Essentials Survey - this state-mandated survey measures learning conditions in the school; it has been administered to students and the decision has been made to also ask parents to respond; a 20% response rate from parents is needed to make the results valid so please respond when you see the survey link in your email.
- iPad 1:1 Learning Program - the main lesson learned from the first year of this program is not to distribute the iPads in class during the first week; next year a summer distribution date is planned for August 18; families should plan on spending about one hour to have the iPads configured for email and other apps; they will walk out with an iPad that is ready for the first day of school; this will be for current 5th graders only; 6th and 7th grade students already have iPads.
- Eighth Grade Graduation - information and instructions are beginning to be distributed now; look for communications from Amy Freese, 8th grade level administrator.
- Modeling our Leadership Team - North Shore School District 112, Highland Park, is moving toward the leadership model used at HMS/WJHS; a large team visited and gave positive comments.
- Teacher Update - Becky Cross -
 - Currently many teachers and administrators are wearing aprons to participate in the Highcrest Heart school-wide mystery. Students work in homeroom teams and use daily clues to find the identity of the Highcrest Heart. Teachers dress in different costumes each day to help provide clues. The activity supports the "working towards common goals" characteristic of successful learners.
 - 5th grade science - students are studying the human body; this week they are dissecting chicken wings.
 - An art show is currently displaying student work in the cafeteria; in support of the STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) to STEAM (adding art to the mix), a guest artist from Northwestern University will meet with some students.
 - PE - students are currently in a skating unit; this includes jumps, limbo, a tunnel and tricycles.
 - Monday school broadcasts - different homerooms create features for short broadcasts each week.
- PARCC Testing - Dr. Palzet will offer a presentation on "PARCC and Your Child." The goal of the presentation will be to inform parents about what the test will look like for their child. It will include a discussion of the testing schedule and sample questions will be available for parents to try. This is the first year of administering this test so it is difficult to make a judgement about it or offer an opinion of its value until several years of data and scores have accumulated and been reported. It has to be tried before we can know

the value. Teaching will continue to be individualized toward students, not toward items known to be on the test.

- It is a performance-based assessment that will focus on English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Pearson is the company that produced the test. There will be two ELA tests and three math tests. It is supposed to measure what the schools are teaching. The first week of testing will occur when 75% of the teaching for the year will have occurred. The second week will occur when 90% of teaching has occurred. There will be math one sub-test for 5th graders. There will be 3 ELA subtests.
- The ELA portion will test comprehension of information and literature and will tap into social studies and science; there has been a move to focus on information. Students will also be asked to compare, for example, a poem and a short story. Essay writing and informational writing will also be required; this tests the ability to synthesize information.
- The math test requires the use of critical thinking and will also test procedural and conceptual knowledge, for example, "what did you do," or "why do we flip fractions to multiply?"
- Ten million students will be taking the test at the same time, and since it is an online, computer-based assessment, some difficulties may occur with too much traffic at the servers; on the school end, extra technology staff will be on hand to problem-solve as quickly as possible. Tests will be taken on iPads, desktop computers and laptops; students are asked to bring their own headphones.
- Students will be given practice with the test questions and the online tools. For math there is an on screen protractor, a ruler and a calculator. For ELA there is a line reader tool, a zoom tool and a video player. Students will watch and listen to the video, read a passage and then be asked to compare the two. All students using iPads will use the same keyboards.
- The test will be administered in one week at Highcrest and will take 2-3 periods of normal instruction time. The 5th graders will have testing in the afternoon and the 6th graders will have testing in the morning. The 7th graders will have testing in the afternoon. The schedule will be balanced so that every core class will occur at least one time during the test week; this structure similar to the one used for ISAT testing.

PARCC Testing Question and Answer

How does the PARCC test tie in with No Child Left Behind? The NCLB act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills. The premise is that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The act has accomplished its goal of introducing measurable goals and is no longer a strong influence state decision-making. It started the "march to accountability."

Will we receive individual test results? No sure; Dr. Palzet will find out.

What do we tell our children about how to prepare? Do your best but don't worry about it.

Some of the blocks of time scheduled for testing are two hours; this seems like a long period of testing for 5th-8th graders. These blocks of time were scheduled to be sure there is enough time; kids may not need the full block of time. Breaks during testing will be allowed. When scheduling the tests different scenarios were considered. One was to spread out testing over a month and only do tests on Mondays but this made it difficult to schedule all the make-ups that might be needed. Also, computing resources are being shared between the middle school and junior high school; this scenario would make sharing difficult.

What is the philosophical position being taken by the district regarding the change in amount of time being devoted to testing -- 11 hours for PARCC versus 5 hours for ISAT? Education is subject to lots of pendulum swings and fashions. We were at a moderate place - 5 hours for testing - and now we are moving in a more extreme direction. This test is dictated by law. It is expected that the pendulum will move back to a place of moderation. The district is accountable to students and parents - assessment is one way of showing accountability.

How was the test developed? Through a consortium of teachers and professors across the country. District 39 will provide a PARCC Primer in the near future to answer questions like this more deeply.

Will scratch paper be allowed during testing? Yes. An iPad prop will be provided so that students taking tests on iPads will have a comfortable viewing angle during testing. Keyboards for iPads will also be provided during testing.

Please name the different kinds of tests students receive throughout the year. Performance Series -- these have been used in the district for years. They are typically given three times per year. They take longer for younger children - from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours for reading and math sections. They are computer-adaptive tests, meaning that if a question is missed, an easier one is given next, and if a question is answered correctly, a more difficult one is given next. The PARCC test is not computer-adaptive. Students' performance is stored and this data informs the test questions the next time the test is taken. This year, no spring Performance Series tests will be given to make up for the extra instruction time being used by the PARCC tests. Curriculum-based -- these are five minute tests that evaluate word-per-minute fluency and computation speed. These tests are given to everyone and are "re-normed" every three years. Midterm and final exams-- these are given in 7th and 8th grade. Classroom assessments-- these are the quizzes and tests that individual teachers give to their classes.

When students are given PARCC Play -- the chance to use the test software and tools in a practice situation -- what activities are they scheduled over? Guidelines were given to classroom teachers to fit in the practice wherever it fit best for their class -- the practice takes 30-40 minutes. Homeroom was a suggested time.

How does the PARCC test relate to the CPT4 (Comprehensive Testing Program) test that 8th graders take prior to entering New Trier high school? The CPT4 test helps determine placement in classes at New Trier. The PARCC may help restructure or adjust curriculum. It affects the way the school itself is assessed.

Will PARCC scores be part of a student's permanent grade record? It is currently thought to have no impact on a student's grade record. It doesn't go into the cumulative folder and colleges don't look at it.

What are the upsides of PARCC? It reflects the new common core goal of teaching students to be critical thinkers, not to just learn by rote. Compared with the ISAT questions they are more difficult; they mirror the teaching that is being done in district classrooms now.

If district PARCC scores decreased relative to other school districts, would there be pressure to change the differentiated curriculum or independent thinking that our district is known for. This test will not change the existing culture of the community. It will not initiate a "race to the top." It is recommended that we accept the results, whatever they are. They cannot be changed. There is no information on whether the results will affect government funding.

May students take the spring Performance Series test if the parents request it? Dr. Palzet will find out.

Will the difficulty of the questions affect the confidence of children who are already having difficulty with their grade-level work? IEPs are legal documents that allow for accommodations and modification to the environment or to the test itself. The same rules apply to the PARCC as to other standardized tests. Students may have the questions read to them, they may have extended time or help from a graphic organizer.

The next general board meeting will be on May 7, 2015, at 9:15 am at Terri Lorenz's house.
The meeting was adjourned at 11:10am.