

WMS PTO/WHS PTSO METCO Boston Meeting

November 29, 2023 6:30pm

Shelburne Community Center, Roxbury, MA

Meeting Attendees

Administrative, Faculty, and Community Attendees: David Lussier, Jamie Chisum, Mark Ito, Stephanie Holland, Sharon Grey, Drew Kelton, Collin Shattuck, Sarah Matloff, Kevin Hoffman, Thom Henes, Tim Eagan, Elizabeth Gentes, Kafi Meadows, Joanne Moreira

WMS PTO & WHS PTSO Executive Board Attendees: Katie Sullivan, Meridith Edmonds, Melissa Mack, Joelle Reidy, Megan Dyer, Kristen Toffer, Niki Ofenloch, Amanda Turner

Parent and Guardian Attendees: there were 10+ parents and guardians in attendance

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Stephanie Holland kicked off the meeting with a warm welcome and talked about her experience getting to know students. She thanked Dr. Lussier for being the only superintendent in attendance at a recent METCO showcase.
- Dr. Lussier welcomed and made some brief remarks. He commented that the key to being successful as an educator is making personal connections with students and that there are a few things he knows for certain: WPS staff are deeply committed to students, parents love their kids, and METCO only works when we work together.
- There were brief introductions by Dr. Jamie Chisum (WHS Principal), Mark Ito (WMS Principal), and Sharon Gray (Coordinator for Community Engagement).
- Kafi Meadows and Joanne Moreira, co-presidents of the Wellesley METCO Parent Council, thanked Dr. Lussier for including them in the planning session for the school calendar.
- Meridith Edmonds and Melissa Mack, co-presidents of the WHS PTSO, reminded everyone that all PTSO general meetings are recorded and available on the PTSO website. Upcoming meetings in January and February are among the most important since course options will be reviewed. They also gave a reminder to read the weekly PTSO newsletter and offered the PTSO as a resource should anyone need support.
- There was a short get-to-know-you team building activity at each table.

Wellesley Middle School Overview: Dr. Mark Ito

- Dr. Ito gave an overview of the middle school timeline (Dec-March) related to course selection and the transition to high school:
 - December: parents will receive a communication with the timeline and additional information from school counselors.
 - January: Teachers will provide a form that includes course level recommendations (course levels are CP, ACP, and Honors/AP). If there is a discrepancy between a teacher's recommendation and a student's preference, there is an opportunity for conversation. Additionally, parents can talk with teachers about recommended levels. In January, there will be a high school orientation night (students are welcome but it's typically parents in attendance).

- February: the focus is on preparing the kids for the transition. High school counselors/teachers will visit 8th graders to talk about courses and there will be a field trip to the high school mid-February.
- Feb 29 - March 15: all high school courses are selected (note: there will be an opportunity to override recommendations should students/parents wish to do so).

Wellesley High School Overview: Dr. Jamie Chisum

- Once students come across the bridge to the high school, we are here to support you and your kids.
- A few key things to know:
 - We offer leveled classes across all major disciplines: College Prep (CP), Advanced College Prep (ACP), and Honors/Advanced Placement (AP).
 - We have a weighted GPA system, with Honors/AP classes receiving a higher weight due to increased difficulty.
 - To make the school feel smaller, we are organized into three houses, which are divided alphabetically based on last name. Each house has a vice principal, an assistant, and guidance counselors.
- As kids select classes, here are a few key reminders:
 - Make sure rising 9th graders look through the [Program of Study](#) and get familiar with classes offered—particularly for electives since student's chose those.
 - We want kids to stretch and challenge themselves – we are here to support them. Drew Shelton talked about having a long-term strategy; think about starting with 1-2 honors classes and then adding 1-2 more next year.
 - In early June, check PowerSchool to ensure your kids got the levels they wanted.
- Questions from meeting attendees:
 - **Q.** What kinds of trades do you have? **A.** While we have things like Child Lab and woodshop, we don't offer any specific trades. If that's the direction a student wants to go, we can partner with local trade schools.
 - **Q.** What support do you have in place for students that get overwhelmed if classes are too much? **A.** There is a long list of supports available (see Support Overview section below). The most important thing is that parents, students, and the school are working together to get ahead of concerns, so students never get to the point where they are completely overwhelmed.

Support Overview: Sharon Gray

- A document with an overview of WHS/WMS [Family Resource Guide](#) was distributed.
- Academic supports include:
 - Teacher-run "labs" for English, History, Math, and Science where students can drop-in for support/free tutoring.
 - Teachers also offer office hours for additional support.
 - Peer tutoring is available by National Honor Society (NHS) students.
 - We have a contract with a tutoring center and if needed, we can provide support for 6 90-minute 1:1 tutoring sessions.

- There is also an Academic Resource Center (ARC) for grades 9-12 which focuses on executive function skills (requires a recommendation).
- Social emotional supports include:
 - Every student has an advisor that leads an advisory group of 8-10 students. The advisor and advisory group meet every day and will remain together for all four years of high school, allowing the advisor to really get to know the students.
 - There is also a guidance seminar program where students meet with their guidance counselor quarterly.
 - There is an onsite social worker who is always available to meet with students.
- If you ever need support and don't know where to go, call the house office and they will help. If you notice your child is struggling academically or emotionally, parents are encouraged to reach out to teachers or the student's guidance counselor. We want this to be a partnership.
- We are looking forward to welcoming your children to Wellesley High School!

Meeting adjourned 8:00pm

Respectfully submitted,
Amanda Turner, WHS PTSO Secretary