

MINUTES OF NICHOLS SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION GENERAL MEETING ON MARCH 3rd, 2009

ATTENDEES

W. Amato; S. Angelakos; C. Augustine; M. Bacon; J. Beecher; A. Bellows; D. Bourne; D. Briatico; R. Bryan; S. Carney; P. Catipovic; K. Collins; D. Corbett; K. Cromwell; S. Cunningham; L. Cuthbert; J. Ennis; C. Fenn; D. Fulton; M. Grenda; J. Hamilton; G. Higgins; L. Hotung; M. Jones; T. Kawi; W. Lowe; B. Lutz; M. Marinello; J. Munro; N. Oak; C. Pegado; S. Randaccio; B. Regan; M. Rockwell; D. Russell; M. Shaw; D. Swiniuch; T. Tantillo; M. Tomczak; K. Vanderhorst; L. Vossler; H. Williams; L. Wright; S. Yerkovich; D. Zacher

REPORT OF DR. ARANYA MARITIME, HEAD OF THE UPPER SCHOOL

- **Current News:** Nichols Chess Team and Mock Trial Team are both undefeated; Students gained awareness of suffragists' fight for the 19th Amendment by watching movie *Iron Jawed Angels* and subsequent advisory group discussions; Visiting foreign exchange students are going home this week; Appreciation expressed for parental efforts on class gatherings, most recently the rescheduled JPP Breakfast. Parent Comment: Parent gatherings have added a tremendous sense of community.
- **New Trimester Schedule for '09-'10:** (Please also see Headmaster Report-Sports/Academics) Upper School change to trimesters: makes time available for new electives in sophomore Arts, senior History/English.
- **New full year senior courses:** Intro to Computer Programming, Intro to Engineering, AP Human Geography (see Jan '09 minutes Headmaster Report on global engagement core competency/ history teacher Ostendorf's sabbatical work in preparation for Nichols to offer this brand new AP course)
- **'09-'10 Course Scheduling Process:** Currently in midst of course registration process; asked parents to note current stress levels and help kids choose reasonable load keeping overall picture in mind. Arena Scheduling: next week- Deans/College Office lead Soph/Jrs in lottery system registration for next year's courses; transparency of Arena Scheduling puts to rest previous misperceptions of unfair registration techniques. Students' top 5 course selections: school tries to guarantee. Any 6th/7th course choices: school tries to fit in to schedules. In April after arena process, schedule recommendations are mailed home. Definite schedules available in August.

MATH & SCIENCE INITIATIVES

- **Science Olympiad:** *Frank Brunner, Upper School Science Teacher*
Demonstrated some student projects created by our current Science Olympiad team. Each S.O. team consists of 15 students; all interested Nichols students accommodated in multiple teams formed in October; a lot of hard work-students practice Saturdays all year long on building events (using 3 page engineering specs for plane/bridge/catapult/sumobot projects) in addition to weekly practice for study events. Overview of where program stands right now: Currently in the third year of Nichols Science Olympiad Teams: Upper School competed with 27 teams in '07, 33 teams in '08, 37 teams in '09 and maintained 8th Place in NYS Regional

Competition all 3 years (defeating more teams each year). MS team had strong support from parents; Placed 3rd and qualified for the '09 State level competition on 4/17-18 in New Paltz.

• **Trout in the MS Classroom Program:** *Sandy Cunningham, Middle School Science Teacher*
Science and its application to the outside world (through Dept of Environmental Conservation/Trout Unlimited) made an awesome learning experience, raising 200 trout eggs. Details/webcam: <http://nicholsnet.nicholsschool.org/teachers/scunningham/>

• **Summer Math & Science Camp:** *Mary Rockwell, Director of Studies*
Pilot program this year for rising 6-8th graders; hands-on projects, field trip to SEESL (Earthquake Lab at UB). Future plans are to build program for Upper School students.

• **Center '63:** *Rick Bryan, Headmaster*

Construction: on schedule for new building; basement is excavated, warm 25° temps allowed more pouring of concrete than expected. When steel arrives in April, progress will get very exciting. Students will sign a steel beam prior to installation. On goal to move in next January.

Facility: \$6 million building will have 7 combination science classrooms/labs, 45 seat lecture room set up for distant learning, spacious room dedicated to long-term project building, small Math/Science Library with reference books, computer with specialized search engine.

Green aspects: Roof will be site of ongoing experiments-Insect/butterfly habitat, Environmental class will study 3-4" vegetated overhang, will insulate/trap heat, measureable. Energy usage monitors. North/south orientation allows a lot of sunshine in classrooms.

REPORT OF MR. RICK BRYAN, HEADMASTER

• **Energy Conservation Measures:** No question that new heating system installed in Albright/Moot has helped energy costs. Next project: right after commencement, more energy efficient windows will be installed. Next task: Determine how to reduce energy consumption of Rink-used only Aug-March consumes 35% of our energy usage; looking at lighting changes. Solar roof would not be cost-effective due to the large amount of steel that would be needed.

• **Updates In Terms of Current Economic Scenario:**

-Summary of Enrollment: Re-enrollment-3/13 due date, one week from this Friday. New Student Enrollments- doing very well so far; 21-23 for 5th grade (goal: 30), 34-35 already enrolled in 9th grade (goal: 40). 567-568 students with a student/faculty ratio of 8:1

-Financial Aid: Seeing an increase in requests from current parents due to the economy. Expressed great concern about how economic challenges will affect parents after the summer.

-Staffing in terms of budget: $\frac{3}{4}$ of budget is spent on personnel; of those leaving, 2 will not be replaced: 1 grounds maintenance, 1 MS teacher (as only 2 class sections projected), helps avoid letting staff go. Ongoing Early Retirement Program, begun a year ago; 5 taking it this year: Coley Felser, John Mendenhall, Patty Sheehan, Don Cockerill, and Bob Guldner. Faculty moving: Frank Brunner, John Dare, Mike Salmon. New hires: 3, Re-hire: 1, Pending: 1 with three candidates under consideration.

• **Department Chairs:** To further develop continuity in curriculum, linking MS to US, there will now be one department chair overseeing each discipline school-wide.

• **Senior Dinners:** Begin tonight at Mr. Bryan's home. Seniors are invited in small groups determined by their Fall senior elective classes for discussions (they are used to talking to each other, but haven't been together in a class recently) to brainstorm new slogans/share views of

topics relevant to Marketing/Communications Committee.

- **Marketing/Communications Committee:** In addition to branding initiative previously covered (see January minutes Headmaster Report under this subheading) Sasha Yerkovich was called on to report on another component of the campaign: communication to the community on what Nichols does well, differentiating us from other schools- Nichols is NOT cutting Honors Programs, Sports or Arts in this economic downturn.

- **Sports/Academics:** In response to parent comments on time commitment conflict, replied that an enormous amount of time has been spent looking into that; to help balance it, Nichols joined Canadian League. This is one reason US moved to trimesters-week off for exams should dramatically help with Winter Sports schedule; trimester breaks correlate to breaks between sports seasons, will result in less class time missed.

- **Thefts on campus:** Internal- MS hockey bag, US backpack, \$20 bills taken from wallets in Jr/Sr Lounge. *People who have taken things will absolutely not remain on campus.*

External-7 police reports filed since January in Rink. One outside rental hockey team kicked out.

- **Measures to effectively address theft concerns:** Working with Security Director, Canisius College: allows us to monitor/learn how they dealt with outside rental issues;

- Video Security: New cameras in new building will have 4 very high quality outside video cameras, covering fronts of rink/gym, area between buildings; Upgrade of current cameras-Better resolution videos will be installed in rink, labyrinth halls of gym (past incidences camera tapes helped/recent incident camera tapes were inconclusive) Probable replacement: hall cameras in other buildings.

- Storage of Student Belongings: MS lockers- larger than US lockers, accommodate student needs well. Improving US storage-Next step after new building completion in 2 years is to revamp Moot to create space with new lockers or cubes and to separate Fresh/Soph storage from Jr/Sr area to reduce congestion

- Security Personnel: Expand guard hours until 11pm during Spring athletic game season, increase number for big Winter athletic competitions.

- Dr. Maritime remarked on the necessity of elevating the issue with candid discussions, post Honor Code signs, devote time in advisory groups

- Regan Hall Security: Until next January, construction causes re-routing of people through building to reach gym, however whole building is locked internally.

REPORT OF JOHN MUNRO, ASST HEADMASTER AND HEAD OF MIDDLE SCHOOL

Currently in the middle of ERB's (Educational Records Bureau assessment testing)

REPORT OF CYNTHIA PEGADO, SECRETARY

Correspondence sent on behalf of Nichols Parent Association: New babies were welcomed to 2 faculty members, both of US history dept, Joel Siepierski, Russell Combs. 4 members of the Nichols community received sympathy cards: US History Teacher Russell Combs (sister), Mr. Bryan's Admin Asst. Cathy Barish (mother), Food Service staff member Kathy DiMarco (husband), Family of Parents Association Secretary/student David Pegado '10 (grandfather).

Rick Bryan added that a very meaningful Memorial Service was quietly held (to avoid media frenzy) at Nichols for Nicole Korczykowski '97 who died in the crash of flight 3407. 150 attended, Nichols alumni travelled home from as far as Europe to attend.

REPORT OF JACKIE ENNIS, MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADE REP COORDINATOR

5th grade: Parent Gathering will be 3/10

5/6th grade: had a great skating party, 1/23, with project to benefit Child Advocacy Center (CAC)

8th grade: provided Valentine goodies at lunch 2/13, had 2 Parent Gatherings morning 2/11, evening 2/27, a Spring dance is being planned

The uniform exchange program is underway in the MS, thanks to MS English teacher Debbie Howe

REPORT OF LORI VOSSLER, UPPER SCHOOL GRADE REP COORDINATOR

Form III (9th Grade) Evening Parent Gatherings will be 3/5, 4/17

Form IV (10th Grade) Valentines Breakfast was a big success, thanked parent volunteers

Form V (11th Grade) Evening Parent Gathering will be 4/23

Form VI (12th Grade) Dates TBA Spring Breakfast, Senior Picnic, Evening Parent Gathering

CHARACTER EDUCATION/WELLNESS: WENDY AMATO, PARENT/CHILD SUPPORT

MS Wellness Program: stress management, healthy living choices reached more classes this year;

Parent Chat: Last in '08-'09 traditionally includes students: will be 4/22 6:30-8pm

Nichols Summer Camps: fun, develop self-esteem/relationship skills-*Girl Power* (3rd year), *Boys Camp* (new); other schools welcome, but camps occur before public school year ends;

New Initiative sponsored by Parent Assn/Wellness Dept: Parent Program with Panel of Experts (includes Nichols parent, Dr. Dori Marshall); a candid chat supported by latest research on sensitive issues (substance abuse/mental health/anxiety/eating disorders) and Q & A to better equip parents 3/16 6:30-8pm. Buff Sem/Park/EFS parents also invited.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Annual Fund, *Tarik Kawi*: urged us to remember the value of a Nichols education and accomplishments we are able to enjoy because of the school and to make a statement of affirmation in a meaningful way; fund works in concert with Auction to cover the gap in cost beyond what is covered by tuition, all donations support operating expenses; \$835,000 goal. Parent phonathon was held, long way to go yet-less than 50% families participating so far, \$13,000 behind last year at this time. Annual Fund drive ends 6/3. Sarah Carney reminded of new option-divide donation into monthly payments on school bill or credit card, asked for our pledge of commitment showing belief in the school. Expressed confidence that we can do it.

Derby Day Auction, *Mary Bacon*: 5/2 encouraged participation/RSVP

Nominating Committee, *Chris Augustine*: vote on Parent Association leaders '09-'10 to occur at next meeting (May); Nominations-form on Parent Portal, email ghiggins@nicholsschool.org

Community Service, *Stephanie Angelakos for Tom Franz*: Bald for Bucks campaign with Roswell

Park, volunteers will be shaved during morning meeting on 4/24. Nichols Family Community Service Day TBA 4/18 or 25; hotdog BBQ after at Nichols.

Global Engagement Core Competency/One Community Activities, Mary Rockwell:

International Dinner-SRO-cultural performances, new format for food stations worked well; France Day-yesterday French exchange students presented regions of France, served cheeses, crepes; Nichols students leave soon for France/Costa Rica; Global Awareness-US History teacher Russell Combs hosted info session on Gaza current events, discussion followed in Advisory Groups. Author Ji-li Jiang (Red Scarf Girl), guest at Nichols on WNY tour (collaboration with UB Asian Studies) spoke on growing up in China during Cultural Revolution.

Spirit Committee, Barb Regan: Students took the lead, putting a lot of effort into supporting their Boys Basketball away games last weekend, school spirit/green bows. Parent comment-Nichols is showing a lot of class this year; our students did not respond to rude derogatory cheers.

OLD BUSINESS

Minutes of the Parents' Association General Meeting on January 14, 2009 were approved upon motion by Chris Augustine, seconded by Monica Jones.

Meeting adjourned upon motion by Dave Corbett, seconded by Katie Collins at 10:15 AM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Cynthia Pegado, Nichols Parent Association Secretary