

Hastings High School PTSA Parent Meeting

MINUTES

OF SEPT. 23 PTSA PARENT MEETING

Email

Communication

All HHS staff emails have been changed to [@learn.hohschools.org](mailto:learn.hohschools.org). Some staff may not have set their old emails to forward to the new address. With this new platform, Lou anticipates fewer problems with emails reaching staff (some email platforms had been blocked from the old system).

Later Start Update:

HHS and FMS are working on logistics for a four-week pilot of an 8:45 a.m. starting time in late October or early November. Classes will end at 3 p.m. Teachers will be available for extra help from 8:15-8:45 and 3-3:15. Band/orchestra rehearsals will start later, at 7:30 a.m. rather than 7 a.m. After the pilot concludes, parents and teachers will be surveyed, and HHS will decide whether to ask the school board to adopt the later start for the next school year. After the pilot program, parents and students will be surveyed about their experience.

ChallengeSuccess:

Challenge Success is a Stanford-based program aimed at reducing stress for students and parents. They have shown that students are getting an average of six hours of sleep a night, according to a wide-ranging student survey conducted as part of Challenge Success last year, and they recommend that high schools start later. Lou, along with members of the HHS staff and students, will be attending a Challenge Success conference in California.

Portal:

Another recommendation that grew out of Challenge Success was shutting down the portal during school hours so kids are not checking their grades constantly during the school day. There have been some glitches in reopening the portal after school, and Lou told parents to report that to him if it happens repeatedly.

Vaping;

Media coverage of the illnesses and deaths as a result of vaping, many of them involving young people, has resulted in a “significant drop” in frequent offenders, Lou said, and some students have told him they are quitting. HHS and FMS are working on standard disciplinary procedures for vaping, which would include some form of in-school suspension and undertaking an anti-vaping online course. Students now must sign out of class to use the bathroom, so there is a record to refer to if needed, and there are cameras outside the bathrooms.

Handling Incidents of Bias:

A swastika was discovered etched into a wall in the boys bathroom. Photos were taken, the police were called, and teachers were asked to discuss it with students. It is not known who is responsible.

Family University:

Family University is scheduled for Tuesday, October 22. The event is open to parents K-12, and students 7-12. Last year there was an excellent turnout of both parents and students for Family University, which offers workshops on drugs, alcohol, anxiety, healthy relationships, etc. This year, more workshops are planned. Dinner is served beforehand. A parent suggested that no homework be given that night.

Scheduling/Electives/Class Sizes:

Some students have expressed frustration at not getting the electives they wanted. Lou explained that creating student schedules in a small school is much more challenging than in a large school, where there are multiple sections of many classes. For AP and honors classes in particular there is often only one section. A complication this year was an unanticipated boom in the number of 9th graders (146 students in the grade); as a result, some teachers had to be switched out of teaching an elective. Lou said that having a study hall when a student is shut out of an elective can be a good thing, providing a time to do homework and studying.

A parent raised concern about having 30 students in a pre-calculus honors class. Lou said that while a class size of 22-24 students was preferred and more typical, he thought that high-level math students could handle the larger class size.

National Honor Society Tutoring:

A new system for free tutoring by NHS has been implemented. Parents or students have been emailed a form (it can be found on the website as well) to request an NHS tutor and one will be arranged. Students can be in middle or high school. Lou urged parents to give that a try before spending money to hire a tutor.

Teacher Departure:

Ms. Gizzi, a science teacher, is resigning to take an administrative job in another district. Lou said he has been pleased with the interviews for possible replacements when she leaves in mid-October.

PTSA News:

- The HHS Parent Handbook, which has lots of useful information for parents, is available on the PTSA website.
- The PTSA hopes to hold a practice SAT/ACT session on a Saturday to help 10th and 11th grade students decide which test is most appropriate for them. The date will be announced once it's set.
- The New Book Fair will be held from October 30-November 2.
- Two grants have been awarded: for an anti-bullying program and for teacher professional development classes at Windward School.

SEPTA News:

- A parent conversation will be held on October 16 at 6:30 p.m.
- SEPTA is relaunching its parent support group meetings.

If you have any suggestions for the agenda for future parent meetings, or have any other ideas or concerns, please reach out to one of the PTSA vice presidents for HHS:

**Hallie Anderson
Toby Linder
Susan Mermelstein
Joanna Steinglass**

...