



YORKTOWN PTA MEETING AGENDA
Monday, October 19, 2020, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

I. Welcome and Introductions: Dana Milburn, PTA President

Ms. Milburn welcomed all to the meeting. She provided a brief summary of the pre-meeting chat that occurred from 7:00-7:30 in regard to holding social events for the students during Covid-19. Please see Appendix A for the summary of that discussion. Ms. Milburn also emphasized that parents can email the PTA for general questions at info@yhspata.

II. Principal's Report: Dr. Kevin Clark, Principal

Dr. Clark began the evening by thanking parents for their patience with virtual and for welcoming staff and him into homes throughout this period of distance learning. He then proceeded to discuss the following items:

- **Transition to Hybrid In-Person Learning**

APS is currently preparing for Level 1 students to return to the school building; however, this applies to only five YHS students. The goal is to have these students return on October 29th. Level 2 students include the students taking Career Center courses that the goal is to have these students return on November 12th. Level 3 includes all other students and their expected return to school date is currently sometime in mid-January. All families will have an opportunity to update their selection from this summer of choosing to remain virtual or participating in the hybrid in-person schedule. This opportunity to update choices has not been sent out yet; it is anticipated to open sometime in late November or December.

- **Return to In-Person Learning Expectations**

Dr. Clark explained that he wants to be very clear on the expectations of what returning to in-person learning will look like. Teachers will be in the building four days per week and students only attend in person two times per week. During the two days that students are in school, teachers will be teaching to the 12 students in the classroom as well as the 12-15 students that are at home on those days. Dr. Clark wanted to be sure that families understood that the teachers will be both teaching in-person and virtually to the students at home at the same time. The survey for teachers to select their preference for in-person versus virtual teaching has gone out so those results will be in prior to the family survey that goes out in November/December.

- **Spirit Week**

Dr. Clark reported that this week YHS is celebrating spirit week. Today was best virtual background day and students played a Yorktown kahoot in patriot period. Later this week there will be other themed days such as Tie Dye Tuesday and Sports Day on Wednesday.

- **SAT/PSAT Information**

On Tuesday, October 27th APS will be administering the SAT only for seniors that have registered to take the test. These seniors will be excused from classes for this day, however all other students will have a normal school day. Also, as of now, Yorktown has designated January 26th as the date for the PSAT and it has not been determined yet if only juniors will be taking the test or if sophomores will be taking it as well on this date.

- **Synchronous Time, Asynchronous Time, and Homework**

Dr. Clark stated that he is aware that there has been some concern over the workload for students this year. To ensure that all parents are aware, Dr. Clark reviewed the structure for each class. Classes are set up as 95-minute blocks with 50 minutes synchronous teaching and 45 minutes asynchronous work (and, for the daily 3rd period, it is 30 minutes synchronous teaching and 20 minutes of asynchronous work). Teachers can organize this time as they see fit, but, Dr. Clark is asking the teachers to stick as close as possible to 50 minutes of synchronous time. As for homework, with the exception of AP and Dual Enrollment classes, no additional homework is to be assigned beyond what is expected to be completed during asynchronous school time. AP and Dual Enrollment courses may assign some additional homework, but, overall, YHS administration is working with both APS and its teachers to ensure that the asynchronous workload is not too heavy.

That said, Dr. Clark is encouraging parents to allow the students to advocate for themselves and reach out to their teachers directly if they feel that the workload is too heavy. If students are not comfortable in going directly to their teachers to address these concerns, they can also reach out to their counselors in the Counseling Department and the counselors can help facilitate a conversation with their teachers.

Additional Questions from Parents:

- Absences and tardies are still being recorded. YHS has had 99% attendance for all regular classes and a 90% attendance for patriot period! Dr. Clark asked that parents still call the Attendance Office if there are any situations in which a student cannot attend a class. Also, if the student misses a class because of a technological reason (for example if the wi-fi or electricity goes out), please contact the Attendance Office in that case as well.
- Yorktown is still planning to have Senior Experience this year. It may look different but YHS still has the goal of allowing all interested seniors to participate in it. On November 9th, there will be a kickoff meeting for seniors to learn about Senior Experience. In addition, further information will be provided in next month's School Talk and, a separate email will be sent to seniors with updates.
- YHS formed an Equity Team over the summer and, to date, they have held 4 meetings through which they have developed their vision, curriculum, instruction, and representation. If any parents or students are interested in participating in this initiative, please reach out to Shari Benites who is organizing and coordinating the

meetings and working-groups. To date, we have had almost 40 stakeholders involved including parents, teachers, students, and administrators.

- Dr. Clark reported that the school has a team working on our social emotional learning program, including ROCS and how we can further include social-emotional learning moments, lessons, and reflections into the school experience this year.

In closing, Ms. Milburn asked Dr. Clark how can we, as parents and a PTA, help with anything given the situation with Covid-19. Dr. Clark responded that it will be important that we are clear and transparent with our kids and that we set expectations as to what the school can and cannot do. For example, if the school is not able to hold classes in the building, then we cannot hold a dance such as Homecoming. However, if families or parents/the PTA want to organize something safe, YHS would do what they can to help facilitate such an event. However, it HAS to be safe and must meet the safety standards set by the state/county. Dr. Clark also asked that parents/families stay engaged with the school and ask questions to stay informed.

III. Counseling Department Update: Mr. Mark Rooks, Director

Mr. Rooks reported that the Counseling Department has been very busy working on creating the master schedule for our students. This has been especially challenging this year because the counselors usually have from May through August to work on the master schedule, however due to many uncertainties this summer, they were only able to start working on it in late July.

Mr. Rooks reviewed some of the items the counselors are working on now:

- Reaching out to students that are not connecting well for whatever reason. In turn, the counselors then work with the teachers and administrators to get the required support for students.
- Looking at grades to see which students are struggling and to bring in anyone that might be needed to help these students.
- Working on 504's – there are currently about 90 outstanding 504's still requiring review.
- To date, the counselors have received approximately 1700 different requests for recommendation letters, transcripts, and other items pertaining to college applications for our seniors. More requests are expected later this fall.
- In the spring, the Counseling Department will host an evening to have the juniors start thinking about what they need to do to prepare for college applications.

Ms. Milburn asked Mr. Rooks if there is anything the parents or PTA can do to support the Counseling Department or our students during this unusual year. Mr. Rooks responded that he thinks many parents are concerned about their children being consumed with screen time since students are needing to be online all day. He suggested that parents find ways to be together without screen time such as family dinners, family walks, and weekend outings. He said that parents should let students know that this is a challenging time but that we will get through it. Parents can help their children get through it by finding activities that give them comfort and peace. He suggested that perhaps the PTA could help by finding speakers to come in and help parents navigate these challenging times. Ms. Milburn told him about the work of the Family Network, which is discussed in these minutes in Section V.

IV. **Student Activities Department Update/Q&A:** Mr. Michael Krulfeld, Director

Mr. Krulfeld began by stating that he hopes that all students have found activities to engage in. This summer, YHS invested in a Canvas page which allows for students to participate in the various clubs remotely. Currently, there are over 80 clubs at Yorktown and each one has been vetted to ensure that the club is happening/meeting and has teacher sponsors. Twelve new clubs have been formed even though it has been a little more difficult finding teacher sponsors for clubs this year.

Mr. Krulfeld explained to the PTA how students can find out about what clubs YHS has. Each student should have been enrolled in Canvas Student Activities page. That page has each club listed and students simply sign up to join through Canvas. Once the student is signed up, they will begin to receive email notifications about upcoming meetings and activities. Also, families can go to the Activities page on the YHS website to see a list of all clubs, however, the students still must sign up to join a club through Canvas.

At this point, almost all clubs are meeting virtually with a couple of exceptions. Mr. Krulfeld expressed that he understands that families are interested in finding ways for some of the clubs to meet in person, however, since a few activities are required to be in person (such as class pictures), the Activities Department has had to focus on those. They did recently approve a Best Buddies friendship walk because it seemed essential to keep some of the students in that club connected.

Mr. Krulfeld also provided the following updates:

- **Freshman Mentoring Program:** This program has had some challenges this year due to the virtual learning environment. Typically, at end of school year, students in grades 9-11 apply to be a Freshman Mentor. These students then get assigned a teacher for whose class they will be a mentor (this is done through the English classes). Then, at the beginning of the school year, the mentors meet up with their mentees in the assigned English classes and typically each mentor has about 3 students assigned to them. However, this year, it has not been set up yet because there have been challenges trying to figure this out in a virtual world. A Canvas course has been set up to get the program started this year and hopefully the mentors will be meeting their mentees virtually in the next week or two.
- **Student pictures:** Yorktown has been holding their sittings for Senior portraits throughout the summer and early fall. Pictures have been taken in the auditorium and using safe socially distanced protocols. A few parents have asked for outdoor pictures due to certain needs. If any seniors want a senior picture to be taken outdoors, email Mr. Krulfeld and make the request. YHS will not be able to do this for everyone, but we are trying to accommodate the few seniors that may require it due to special needs. Emails should have gone out today for all the other students to come in for underclass pictures. The students will check in at the door to the cafeteria and then continue to the auditorium to have their picture taken. We will be bringing 30 students in every 15 minutes and plan to get them in and out of the school quickly.

- **Athletics:** There will be three seasons scheduled by VHSL, however, ultimately the student athletic activities will be a local APS and local jurisdiction decision. Currently, we are allowed to bring in students for outdoor conditioning. Many students are coming to the conditioning sessions and enjoying participating. Today we had 4 different spaces with 4 different sports happening to total about 125 students. Team App is the method that we are using to communicate with parents about sport activities. To sign up to receive these messages, download Team App onto your phone or tablet and then find Yorktown and the sport you would like to follow. Currently, you sign up for the team that you are interested in participating for conditioning. Once a student makes a team, the student is put into the chat for that team and the parent gets signed up for the parents' group for that team. If a student does not make a team, they will not be placed into these group chats.

At this point, the students are only engaging in outdoor events, no decisions have been made yet as to how actual game activities will look. For now, upon arrival, all students are asked 7-8 questions to screen for any Covid symptoms and temperature is taken. Masks must be worn at all times and students can only be in groups no larger than 15. Hand sanitizers are provided for each team and students must stay 6-10 feet from each other. Sports with equipment will have the equipment cleaned and sanitized after each use. Mr. Krulfeld indicated that the coaches are sometimes finding it difficult to keep team members always at a proper distance, and often have to remind the students to spread out and not congregate.

Mr. Krulfeld answered questions about Winter Guard and Indoor Drumline. Winter Guard has been approved to hold activities outdoors. Drum Line will be considered for outdoor activity.

A question was also asked about what the expectations are for winter sports to actually begin in December given that students are not expected back to the building before mid-January. Mr. Krulfeld responded that there are still many logistics that need to be worked out; perhaps it can be done, but it will be very complicated.

Students will not be excused from Patriot Period for sport workouts because no sport activities are scheduled during Patriot Period.

One parent expressed frustration that their student's club had a last-minute cancelation. Mr. Krulfeld explained that often the club meetings are scheduled by the students, so, the sponsors are not responsible if there is a sudden meeting cancelation.

If parents have any questions about a sport or club, Mr. Krulfeld recommended that the parents reach out to the teacher sponsor for that club.

Ms. Milburn asked Mr. Krulfeld if there is anything that parents and the PTA can do to support the endeavors of the Student Activities Department or students. Mr. Krulfeld responded that he encourages parents to help their

children to find activities to get them engaged and involved. That includes considering county rec leagues. However, he also asked that parents be patient because activities that previously took 5 minutes to organize now may take hours. Mr. Krulfeld used the example of student pictures; prior to Covid, he simply had to ensure that the auditorium was available on certain days. Now, he has to schedule times for each student to come into the school, he has to ensure that all is safe, clean, etc. He also noted that the PTA does have a little more autonomy than the school does, so perhaps the PTA could plan some events for students that the school cannot organize. Finally, Mr. Krulfeld encouraged students to consider coming in to conditioning sessions even if they are not planning to participate in sport just to get them moving and socializing.

V. Brief Committee Reports:

- **Family Network:** Royce Sherlock, Dianne Vandivier
Ms. Sherlock reported that she and Ms. Vandivier have been reviewing and recommending a variety of free online presentations that may be of interest to the YHS parents. They will be providing regular recommendations in the PTA Newsletter. This week they recommended an online presentation from Karen Reivich, Ph.D., Director of Resilience and Positive Psychology Training, Positive Psychology Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The presentation is titled “Cultivating Resilience and Well-Being”. Another recommendation that the Family Network has made in previous newsletters have been the seminars that are sponsored by INOVA and Fairfax County Schools. These are available online until the end of this calendar year.

In addition to the regular recommendations in the PTA Newsletter, the Family Network is planning for the following events:

- Small Group Meeting – Ms. Sherlock and Ms. Vandivier are planning to pick one of the free online webinars for a group to watch and then this small group will come together for a 60-90 minute virtual gathering in which they can discuss the content of the webinar.
- Ann Dolin of Educational Connections - Ms. Dolin has come to Yorktown previously to discuss taking the SAT/ACT but, this fall she will cover a broader range of topics including how to navigate the college application process in the time of COVID. This virtual event will be coming up in November/December
- The College Funding Coach – Yorktown has hosted presentations from this group before and plans to do so again this spring. They are holding webinars, so, it will be a virtual presentation.

Ms. Milburn asked Mr. Rooks and Mr. Krulfeld if they had any input or suggestions for other content from the Family Network. Mr. Rooks indicated that MD Calabro might have some input/questions for the presentation from Ann Dolin, so, the Family Network will touch base with him prior to her presentation. Mr. Krulfeld stated that he would like to see a presentation on substance abuse

as it has been up since Covid began and it would probably be good for both parents and students to participate in a presentation on that topic. Ms. Sherlock indicated that one of the INOVA/Fairfax County Schools webinars was on substance abuse, so, she could reach out to that presenter to see if they might be available for a YHS seminar. Mr. Krulfeld said that he also knows of families that might be available and willing to talk about loss due to substance abuse.

- **Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning:** Susan Land and Gary Bogle, YHS Representatives to ACTL

The Advisory Council on Teaching and Learning (ACTL) is a council with representatives from all the schools in the Arlington County Public School System. They focus on curriculum and instructional programs and they review these areas for recommendations to be given to the superintendent and school board.

There are 14 committees within ACTL and each does a deep dive into specific areas of education (math, science, English, social studies, gifted, early childhood education, etc.). If any parents are interested in participating on one of these committees, let Ms. Land or Mr. Bogle know and they will get you in touch with the specific committee.

ACTL is genuinely looking for feedback from YHS – specifically what is working well for teaching and learning, what is not working well, and any suggestions for improvement. Please provide any feedback you might have to Ms. Land or Mr. Bogle.

Ms. Milburn added that the ACTL is a conduit straight to the school board, so, if there is anything you might want them to know, this would be a way to communicate concerns. Ms. Land and Mr. Bogle's contact information can be found on the PTA website under PTA Business – Contact List. Please email them both together so that they are both kept in the loop on feedback from YHS families.

VI. Financial Report: Dan Sennott, PTA Treasurer

Mr. Sennott provided the latest information on the PTA budget. It currently stands at just over \$76,000; we have received approximately \$15,000 in PTA dues and no-frills fundraising this fall; we have disbursed approximately \$1,300 for teachers grants that were requested at the beginning of the school year.

VII. Approval of September 2020 PTA Meeting Minutes: Berrin Ozbilgin, PTA Secretary.

Ms. Ozbilgin presented the September 2020 PTA Meeting Minutes and Ms. Milburn asked for a vote to approve. The minutes were unanimously approved.

VIII. Announcements: -- Ms. Milburn

Ms. Milburn had the following announcements

- There will be another round of requests for grant applications from teachers open from October 26th through November 9th. A final round of requests for grant applications will occur in February.
- The junior class will be holding a practice SAT fundraising event in November. It will be proctored online and an announcement for the official date will be coming soon.
- The Reflections Contest will be wrapping up this week with Thursday, October 22nd as the deadline for submissions.
- The next PTA Meeting will be Monday, November 9th.

IX. Adjourn: Dana Milburn

With no further business, Ms. Milburn adjourned the meeting.

APPENDIX A

Pre-Meeting Discussion

The following points were made in regard to social opportunities for our students during this time of Covid:

- Senior parents feel very sensitive about their kids' final year and about their kids' mental state and feelings of isolation in this strange year.
- Other parents pointed out that their kids -- not seniors -- did as well.
- The PTA suggested on-line/virtual events, like a trivia night, and asked for additional ideas for virtual events/gatherings.
- Ms. Milburn conveyed suggestions from Valerie Brennan, our Homecoming Chaperones Chair, who suggested bringing kids into the brainstorming process, including student government. This idea was supported by other parents.
- Some parents felt that social distancing, especially outdoors, could be achieved safely enough, and pointed out that sports teams are doing it.
- Ms. Milburn communicated that the PTA cannot be responsible for a super-spreader event, and there does not seem to be a way to guarantee that an event is safe from that. The PTA would be happy to help families brainstorm ideas for on-line/virtual events and encourage more suggestions. While sports teams might well be getting together carefully, in their case there is a coach with authority to throw kids off the team, as well as the threat of a lost season due to illness, if they don't comply with proper safety guidelines. Mr. Krulfeld did indicate that the coaches are sometimes finding it difficult to keep team members always at a proper distance, and often have to remind the students to spread out and not congregate. In addition, the sports groups are smaller than we could see at an event for a single grade, let alone the whole school. PTA chaperones would not have the same kind of authority with the kids to make them comply that coaches have. So as for in-person gatherings, even if outdoors, masked, and socially distanced, as Valerie put it, and the Board agreed: as an organization here to support the educational focus of kids and affiliation with the school, the PTA simply must be very conservative. While individual parents might move forward on their own with unofficial ideas that might result in kids' congregating, the PTA cannot be responsible for something that might result in a super-spreader event.