



**YORKTOWN PTA MEETING AGENDA**  
**Monday, November 9, 2020, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.**  
**PTA Informal Q&A, 7:00 – 7:30 p.m.**

**Special: Discussion with Nancy Van Doren, School Board Member**

**I. Welcome and Introductions:** Dana Milburn, PTA President

Ms. Milburn welcomed everyone to the meeting and presented the agenda.

**II. Principal's Report/Q&A:** Dr. Kevin Clark, Principal

Dr. Clark congratulated all parents on their students' completion of 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter. He thanked all parents and students for participating in virtual YHS. He asked that parents please keep communicating with any challenges, concerns, etc.

Dr. Clark then discussed the status of reopening the school. APS is using health metrics for reopening and, at this point, YHS has started with Level 1 students. We currently have 4 students back. Level 3 will be the next big stage that will impact most of our YHS students – the return date is still to be determined. The APS high school principals have been meeting weekly to determine how the return to school will look for our high school students. When we get closer to bringing the students back to the school building, Dr. Clark will hold some town halls and orientations on the return to school and how it will work. The last indication was that the selection window to update choices for virtual versus hybrid learning for Level 3 students is likely to go out in early December. One of the biggest successes of virtual learning has been the attendance of our students which is at 99% and, from observations, students are engaging in classes.

Dr. Clark took a question from a parent asking if the return to the classroom is based upon 95% of teachers agreeing that they will return in person. Dr. Clark explained that it is one of the metrics, but APS is really looking more at the Covid dashboard. APS is communicating with staff members about their ability to return to school and come into the building. Dr. Clark also explained how it might work with teachers that are teaching from home; basically the students returning hybrid will be in the classroom with a proctor while they continue to learn from that individual teacher through Microsoft Teams.

Dr. Clark provided updates on other activities occurring at Yorktown. This year, YHS has had a quarter of patriot period focusing on social emotional learning which seems to be going well. We hosted a senior school day SAT last month and had a little under 200 seniors take it.

Dr. Clark discussed the issue of APS not participating in Season 1 of winter sports. The School Board has asked Dr. Duran to pause this decision and evaluate it a bit more. A final decision will be made later this week. Dr. Clark explained that safety is of utmost importance and when we are not holding classes in our school buildings, it is hard to justify bringing students in for competitive sports. However, conditioning will continue even if we are not participating in winter seasons

There is one November scheduling update: Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> will be an odd synchronous day and Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup> will be an even synchronous day to make up for the recent lost school day.

Dr. Clark provided an update on the Equity Team and the Social Emotional Learning Committee. Both groups are comprised of students, staff, and parents and have been meeting. Any parents interested in participating on one of these committees can contact Dr. Clark.

The senior class participated in a Senior Experience meeting today. YHS will support our seniors doing this program even if it is in a virtual environment because many organizations are in virtual work mode anyway. Now is good time for parents of seniors to help them figure out what to do. This would involve finding a mentor and/or organization with which their senior might like to work.

YHS is continuing its Sources of Strength program in Patriot Period. We will be providing information about what this entails to parents so that they can discuss it with their children. Dr. Clark stated that we may have a Sources of Strength session for parents so that they can understand the program a bit better.

Dr. Clark proceeded to answer questions from the PTA meeting participants. The first question was about how the shift in in grading has negatively impacted some students – especially students of color and minorities. What is YHS doing about this? Dr. Clark responded that we are in the process of looking over the data from first quarter grades and identifying where some students are having trouble. We are currently working on identifying the needs and will plan a program from there. We are in touch with those students and their parents.

Another parent asked if in the hybrid model, will masks be required? Dr. Clark answered that yes, masks will be required with exception of handful of students with medical exemptions.

In closing, Dr. Clark reported that he does meet with a group of about 20 students once a month, so, he is getting feedback on how school is going from them, however, he is considering doing a survey of all students to get further feedback.

### **III. Potential PTA Events Discussion: PTA Leadership and Dr. Clark**

Ms. Milburn began this discussion by introducing one of the YHS student leaders, Sebastian, who is serving as the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Student President. She then opened discussions for two potential events that the PTA is considering sponsoring, but, indicated that first she wanted to identify the issues of greatest interest to parents.

#### **a. Helping our kids through virtual learning**

Sebastian began this conversation with feedback from his classmates. He stated that through conversations, he feels that many students feel stressed and over-worked. He said that he has suggested some kind of social activity to get classmates engaged with each other, but many students said that since they had so much school work, there is not enough time to socialize. In addition, he has heard that some students are having trouble being efficient at home and getting schoolwork done.

Other PTA members contributed to concerns about virtual learning. There are issues with loneliness/social isolation – especially for students that do not have fellow YHS students living close to them or students new to Yorktown. Uncertainty is also adding anxiety. Older students are dealing with the stress of college planning and academic achievement.

Many of these items falls under the idea of resiliency and, there are many experts that can provide some support to YHS parents on dealing with these issues.

Ms. Sheehy emphasized that the Family Network has been providing links to several virtual webinars on these issues in the PTA weekly newsletter.

The following questions were presented by parents:

- What can we do about so much screen time for our children? Dr. Clark responded that he is trying to encourage teachers to give some non-screen work during the asynchronous time, so, hopefully that will give students some break in the day from their computers.
- Can staff emphasize positive psychology practices on Mondays? Dr. Clark answered that YHS is covering components of this through the Sources of Strength program and the school is also encouraging students to build relationships with their counselors for support.
- For seniors trying to apply to colleges AND taking AP classes, the workload is beyond manageable. Can teachers ease up on the workload until college applications are in at the beginning of January. Dr. Clark responded that YHS is trying to work with teachers to encourage keeping AP homework to a maximum of 30 minutes outside of asynchronous classes.

- What about students that do not feel that the Monday Patriot Period is worthwhile? Some students do not feel that they are getting much from the social emotional piece. Dr. Clark explained that holding Patriot Period on Mondays provides an opportunity for students to be in contact with a teacher that is not necessarily teaching them a lesson. He recognizes that this may not be as useful to a Senior, but might be more so to a Freshman, so, we feel it is reasonable to maintain Patriot Periods on Mondays for all kids.
- A parent asked about the use of Canvas and ParentVue – can teachers be more consistent across the board so that we do not have to look at a number of places to try to understand how our child is doing? Can it be more like Virtual Virginia where completed assignments are crossed off? Dr. Clark indicated that in general, they are trying to encourage teachers to be as consistent across the board with their use of Canvas and ParentVue, but, there may need to be some variety of usage due to the different natures of certain classes.

Two more points were made regarding the virtual learning environment. First, the teachers are struggling with teaching in this virtual environment, so, parents should keep that in mind. Also, some students have “Zoom anxiety” in that they are attending class, but not fully “participating” because they feel anxious about virtual discussions. This should not be held against students.

Following this discussion, Ms. Milburn sent a survey for parents to fill out and rank which items they would most like to see the PTA focus on in an event addressing these issues. The results of the survey were as follows:

<b>Issues/Concerns</b>	<b>Results</b>
Emotional Wellness	10
Loneliness/Social Isolation	14
Social/Emotional Learning	3
Executive Functioning Skills	7
Other Organizing (such as organizing a workspace)	5
Stress (having trouble being efficient at home, feeling pressure to get things done)	18
Uncertainty/Anxiety – Election, Covid, School	8
Resiliency	11
College Planning and Academic Achievement – has been difficult in Covid world.	6

**b. Substance abuse**

Ms. Milburn reported that the PTA is planning for an event focusing on substance abuse. She asked PTA members to contribute any thoughts they might have in regard to holding such an event. The plan for now is to have a presentation by the YHS Substance Abuse Counselor, the YHS School Resource Officer, and a parent that has lost a child to substance abuse.

The following comments were made:

Royce Sherlock reported that the Family Network held an event on this topic a couple of years ago titled: Talking to Teens about Drugs and Alcohol. This event included a couple of Teen Network Board members, Officer Koch, and other adults. They did some speaking and role modeling. Ms. Sherlock offered to provide Ms. Milburn with further information about this event.

Ms. Milburn asked Sebastian if he thought students might be interested in participating in this event with their parents. Sebastian responded that if the event were at a good time (potentially a Monday, Friday, or weekend and afternoon times tend to work better for the students). He also said that the program should be interesting to the students.

Nancy Van Doren, Arlington County School Board Member and Board Liaison to YHS, mentioned that in the past, the School Board had a student from Yorktown come and speak to the Board addressing students' mental health issues. He presented a peer-to-peer approach with the goal of ensuring that students know exactly what to do if they needed help. His name is Perry Gibbs, but, he is away at college right now.

Another parent indicated that Arlington County has a taskforce called the Arlington Addiction Recovery Initiative; this parent will provide information on it to Dana.

Ms. Milburn stated that using this information, the PTA will continue to work on planning for such an event and will keep parents informed of developments.

**IV. Potential No-contact Ideas to Lift Kids' Spirits:** PTA Leadership and Dr. Clark

- a. What can we do for YHS kids, through virtual platforms or – if feasible -- by dropping off a little something for every child, that might lift their spirits? In-person gatherings are still definitely not recommended; even more so as case numbers hit record levels, but we're looking for ways to remind YHS kids that they are loved, and to spread a little happiness, if possible.

Ms. Milburn presented a number of ideas that have been generating within the PTA and YHS. These include:

- Student leaders have been asked for thoughts recently, possibly survey students and families.
- Trivia night (done by grade or whole school?)
- Movie night (if technology allows)
- Deliver *small* something to each student (if we have the person-power for it)
- Produce a list of ideas for families to do together and for students to do at a distance or individually.

Ms. Milburn then asked for any other thoughts and the following comments were made:

Sebastian, our student leader attending the PTA meeting, said that his 10<sup>th</sup> grade class officers had talked about this at their meeting today. They came up with an idea of maybe holding a virtual talent show. He also liked the idea of a Trivia or Movie night. His suggestions were that these events be held either on Friday afternoons or Mondays. Other ideas that they had come up with included a “twin day” in which the students meet up in a socially distanced and safe manner with a fellow student that lives near them. Also, possibly using some social media/video games such as Among Us or Dischord to help facilitate connections.

One parent suggested that if they hold a Trivia Night, to perhaps have kids work together in teams.

Another parent suggested helping students find hobbies that can be done in a group through zoom meetings.

Ms. Milburn concluded that we can perhaps include these activities in a survey to the students to ask if students are interested in participating in any of these.

**V. Potential No-contact Ideas for Teachers/Staff:** PTA Leadership and Dr. Clark

Ms. Milburn reported that at the beginning of the school year, the PTA and YHS together gave teachers Dunkin Donuts gift cards; it was a small amount, but, enough for them to buy something without having to buy additional items. The PTA is looking into other options for our Winter Teacher Appreciation, however, due to circumstances, it maybe be best to do another gift card.

## **VI. Special: Discussion with Nancy Van Doren, Arlington School Board Member and YHS Liaison to the School Board**

Ms. Milburn introduced Nancy Van Doren who is currently our YHS Liaison to the School Board. Ms. Doren reported that she only has about one and a half months left as a School Board member. One of recently elected Board members will be our new YHS liaison starting in January. She indicated that she understands the challenges of this time and stated that the most important thing we can do is to be present for our children, be resilient, and get through this together. She reported that Dr. Duran has been reading everything, is listening and is very good about incorporating feedback. To date, the Level 1 students return to school has been very successful. She feels that APS is responding very well to all the uncertainty and doing their best. She encouraged continued feedback to APS from all families and recommended that they write to [engage@apsva.us](mailto:engage@apsva.us) with any issues.

Ms. Van Doren stated that currently APS is working very hard on inclusiveness, equity, and diversity. They need people involved for community support, so, please be on the lookout to participate in any initiatives focusing on these issues.

Currently, APS is also working on establishing new elementary school boundaries, which may not impact some of the current high school families, however, eventually, this issue will be making its way up to the high school level. So, families should keep that in mind. The school system is also looking at instructional programs/pathways – specifically, what are the programs students can be involved in at the high school level such as language immersion or IB and so families might want to be considering what they might like to see included at Yorktown.

The budget deficit for the coming year is going to be large – we are currently have a \$26 million deficit right now. APS is hoping that the CARES Act will provide some relief from Federal Government; if we do not get this support, APS would be looking at a \$60 million shortfall by next year. This would likely result in the need to look at budget cuts.

Following her discussion, Ms. Van Doren took questions from the parents. They included:

- The Covid Dashboard has changed dramatically in the past week. It is more confusing now and parents would like to see something clearer. Ms. Van Doren stated that she will bring that concern back to the Board and will let them know that families would like to know if the metrics need to be met fully before moving forward. Ms. Van Doren indicated that APS wanted something that is more flexible because we may not need to hit every metric in order to bring students back into the school buildings.

- Another parent asked about rumors that students cannot return to school unless 95% of teachers are willing to return to school and this parent also asked who established the metrics for returning to school. Ms. Van Doren replied that Dr. Duran established the metrics with the APS Emergency Manager, Zach Pope. Mr. Pope is working with the health department at the local and state level as he makes recommendations for APS. Ms. Van Doren stated that she was not aware of the 95% metric for teachers returning to school, so, she will look into this and get back to YHS PTA with this information.
- Ms. Sheehy asked how we can help our students with resiliency when there is so much pressure on kids to perform at very high levels and questions were also asked about pass/fail options versus grades during this unusual circumstance of virtual learning. Dr. Clark suggested that parents interested in pass/fail options should speak with their students' counselors as they will know if this is possible.

## **VII. Committee Report:**

### **a. Grants Committee: Jennifer Gold, Co-Chair**

Ms. Gold reported that the Grants Committee has opened up a second round of fall request for grants a week and a half ago. The application period will close on Wednesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>. Only two applications have been received so far, but since we did not know what to expect this year, we wanted to be sure to provide an additional period for grant requests. The Committee will review any grant requests provided by Wednesday and will move forward from there. The committee will be holding a third round of request for grants in February.

## **VIII. Financial Report: Dan Sennott, PTA Treasurer**

Mr. Sennott reported that the incoming revenue last month was \$3,800. He paid out funds for grants reimbursements at the amount of \$2,800. The VA PTA dues paid were \$1,321. We currently have 354 individual members on the PTA roster and the current balance of our PTA budget is at \$78,700. Upcoming expenses that we will be paying include a \$1,000 donation to CCPTA and a \$300 reimbursement to CCPTA to cover the Webex subscription.

## **IX. Approval of October 19, 2020, Meeting Minutes: Berrin Ozbilgin, PTA Secretary**

Ms. Ozbilgin presented the minutes from the October PTA meeting and asked if there were any questions or concerns. With no comments, Ms. Milburn asked for a motion and vote to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

## **X. Announcements: Ms. Milburn**

Ms. Milburn made the following announcements:

- **Mock SAT, Saturday November 21<sup>st</sup>**  
So far, we have 78 students signed up to participate. The deadline to sign up is November 19<sup>th</sup>. It is intended as a benefit for all high school students who would be interested in taking it, this includes all Arlington schools (a flyer was sent to all APS high school students via PeachJar). It also serves as a fundraiser for next year's senior class activities, but this year we will be accepting payments on a voluntary donation basis.
- **College in the Time of Covid, November 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup>**  
Ann Dolin, M.Ed. is the President and Director of Educational Connections. She will be providing a presentation to the YHS community on how to prepare for college during these unusual times.
- **The College Funding Coach, December 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
We have hosted this event in the past and will do so again this year. They provide information about funding for colleges.
- **Membership Update**  
152 Family Memberships  
48 Individual Memberships  
2 Sponsored/Free Memberships  
2 Teacher Memberships
- **Website**  
Please send any further suggestions for our website since we are all depending on it more than usual!

**XI. Adjourn:** Ms. Milburn

With no further business, Ms. Milburn adjourned the meeting. Our next PTA meeting will be held on Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup>.