

Syosset Council of PTAs
PTA SPRING PRESS CONFERENCE
May 2015

General

- 1. Can all schools post the late bus routes on their respective school's website so that parents can assist their children with alternate bus options when needed?**

Late bus routes are available on the password protected areas of the middle school websites and they are also posted in the lobby of the high school.

- 2. When a work order is submitted for damaged equipment in a classroom, what is the time frame allotted for the completion of the repair? (i.e., a broken computer that a student is assigned to work on during class)**

Once a trouble ticket is entered into the system, the IT Services department will address the issue generally within an hour. A technician will look into the problem and resolve the problem immediately, if possible, or order the appropriate parts to perform the repair. If parts are required, it usually takes 2 days to a week depending on the availability.

- 3. Is there a policy in place to accommodate students who require extra help sessions after school while participating in a school sport with mandatory practice time?**

Each teacher provides a minimum of one extra help session per week. Sessions are scheduled both before and after school. The extra help schedule is available on the High School's website. Students may attend any session based on need.

- 4. What is the district's policy on the presence of "Automatic External Defibrillators" on the athletic fields and courts during a game, as well as during practice, to address a distressed player's needs as quickly as possible?**

The District practice is that our athletic trainer is on site during practices and games and keeps an AED with him at all times. Coaches are instructed at our pre-season meeting to bring an AED out to all practices and contests. The coach will bring an AED to any off-site practices or games. The home school is required to have an AED at the site of any contest as per NYSPHSAA regulations. Coaches at both the middle and high school are certified in the use of AEDs as per education law. Additionally, emergency protocols are distributed to each coach at the beginning of the season with specific instructions regarding what his or her actions should be in the event of an emergency.

Elementary

- 1. What are the district's plans to implement a more comprehensive Language Arts program that would include grammar, spelling and vocabulary, since these are not part of the current Common Core Curriculum?**

Once we began our transition into the Common Core State Standards, a district-wide English Language Arts Pathway Committee was created to study the standards and to develop our curriculum. In the review of the Common Core State Standards, vocabulary is addressed under Reading Standard 4 and Language Standards 4 & 6. Grammar is addressed under the Language Standard 1 and spelling is addressed in the Language Standard 2. All these standards are addressed during our Literacy instruction, and during Reading and Writing Workshop at each grade level. The ELA Pathway Committee, consisting of K-5 teachers along with elementary principal representation and the Administrative Assistant in charge of English Language Arts at the middle school, worked diligently to create a curriculum based on those standards. We continue

to review our curriculum going forward and will be looking to study what gaps and overlaps we have to help enhance our English Language Arts program.

2. With the time demands of the Common Core Curriculum and its focus on ELA, math, and test preparation, how are other subjects, including science and social studies, being addressed in the classroom?

This has been an area of focus for our Central Office administration and we have been observing lessons in both social studies and science at each grade level in each elementary school. We have also invested in purchasing curriculum materials from Putnam- Northern Westchester BOCES to help boost our social studies content. For science, we continue to use science kits and have recently added a part time STEM teacher to help students with their classwork in science topics. All schools continue to have these subjects built into their schedules for at least 60 minutes per week. As we did this year, we will continue to keep this as a part of our focus and conversations with the principals.

3. What factors are contemplated when afternoon recreation programs are being scheduled? Can religious education classes be taken into account when making the schedule?

The recreation program has been expanded to ensure that there is no waiting list and includes expanded offerings. Parents may choose to have their child attend any or all of the days that the program is in session.

4. What are the certification requirements for an elementary school foreign language teacher? Can they teach a language that they are not certified in?

Elementary World Language teachers are certified in the language they teach; i.e. French, Italian, Spanish. In addition, they hold a second certification that specifically relates to teaching at the elementary level. Teachers are allowed to teach a language in which they are not certified on a limited basis.

5. As we await grant approval, several elementary school playgrounds have been dismantled yet not re-built. This poses a spring recess issue for 3rd-5th graders who will only have portable gym equipment to play on during recess. What are the district's plans to update and purchase new outdoor equipment for the elementary schools?

An allocation for the purchase of new outdoor playground equipment is included in the 2015-2016 budget. Our goal is to have the new equipment installed by the fall. In the interim, the District has allocated additional funds for the purchase of supplemental playground supplies.

Middle School

1. This year, due to weather, one of the delayed openings occurred during midterm week at the high school. Due to traffic/gridlock on Southwoods Road the buses were up to an hour late in picking up some of the middle school students. Has there been a plan developed to avoid this situation?

The District has been exploring a variety of ways to address the Southwoods Road traffic issues and has asked our architect and engineering firm, (add comma here) H2M to review and provide recommendations/plans for the District. Immediate remedies are unlikely as geography and jurisdiction/property rights complicate solutions.

2. Can the district (or school administration) provide clearer informational guidelines on course descriptions in the middle schools? Occasionally, guidance counselors and teachers are giving

different descriptions for certain elective classes, including the 8th grade “research class.”

As the research teachers also teach other courses, sometimes on other grade levels, they are able to personally answer students’ questions about the course requirements and curriculum. These responses may naturally be more in depth than what the counselors or course guidebook offers. Parents and students are always welcome to request more detailed explanations when working with their counselors to prepare their 8th grade schedules by contacting the building directly.

3. Parents have voiced concerns regarding the Cablevision helicopter that circles HBT daily. Does the District feel that this helicopter could pose a safety issue for HBT students?

The District has been in contact with the Town of Oyster Bay regarding the helicopter flying in proximity to H. B. Thompson Middle School.

4. As multiple half days are a challenge for working parents, would it be possible to schedule both the elementary school and middle school half-day conferences on the same day as opposed to different days?

Feedback from the middle school parents in the last few years has been that there isn’t enough time for them to meet with all their child/children’s teachers. To address this, the district has purchased new software called Appointment Plus to help parents schedule their appointments with teachers ahead of time. If we were to add the elementary school conferences on the same day, then scheduling for parents to attend conferences in more than one building to meet with all the teachers may become even more challenging. As in the past, teachers are also available to have phone conferences and/or to schedule appointments at times that may be better suited for working (should be a space between words) parents.

High School

1. Why do some teachers in AP classes allow test corrections or extra credit assignments while others do not? Shouldn’t AP classes be graded according to the same criteria, since the same material is being taught for the test?

All AP course curricula are approved by the College Board. Teachers of the same course follow the approved curriculum. While their instructional strategies may differ, teachers’ grading criteria and course goals remain consistent.

2. Some high schools include the first and second quarter grades for senior year in the student’s average before sending them out to the prospective colleges. Would it be possible for Syosset to consider this plan?

Students submit college applications prior to the completion of first and second quarter grades (September). In addition, averages cannot be calculated using the first and second quarter grades from senior year because courses have not been completed. However, we send mid-year reports to every college for all applicants. These reports include first and second quarter grades from senior year.

3. Would it be possible for the District to organize a high school social event that is noncompetitive, to help increase peer camaraderie?

From the 9th Grade Orientation through the Senior Prom, there are a myriad of high school social events that are non-competitive and work towards building a better Syosset High School community. These events are organized by our over 60 co-curricular organizations.

4. Is there any financial assistance available to students who cannot afford the high cost of the prom, club trips, class trips and out of state competitions?

When appropriate, fundraising activities are organized to help offset the cost of various events.

- 5. Currently, contracts for the senior prom location are signed as mid to long-term commitments with the expectation of cost-savings. Would it be possible for each individual senior class, at the end of their junior year, to choose the location of their prom and enter into a one-year contract? (Beginning, of course, when the current contract expires).**

The location for the Senior Prom is chosen by the Student Government representatives and advisors. The class officers choose the site for the prom based upon the quality, cost, safety and desirability of the venue. A multiple year contract is only entered into for the purpose of cost savings and price stability.

- 6. Would the district consider constructing, buying or renting a portable or permanent small guard house structure to eliminate the health and environmental concerns posed by this ongoing (running car) situation?**

At this time, there is no plan to construct a guard house at the front of the High School. However, the District is looking into alternatives to the running car situation.

SEPTA

- 1. How are students in the elementary school identified as requiring services if they appear to be struggling with reading? What strategies are used to help them catch up so that they are at grade level? Are there reading specialists trained in more than one method of teaching available to students?**

Students are identified for reading support services based on testing data, teacher observations, parental input, and classroom performance. The building-level Instructional Support Team (IST) reviews the information and makes a recommendation as to the intervention to use to address the student's need. Various research-based reading intervention methods are available. Parents are encouraged to discuss these interventions with the building principal. Reading specialists and/or special education teachers are available to provide an appropriate intervention program for the student.

- 2. How have the demands of the Common Core curriculum been adapted to meet the individual needs of the special education students?**

To address the Common Core Learning Standards, teachers work to identify the essential skills and knowledge that a student with a disability needs to acquire in order to master grade-level content standards. This process is unpacking the standards and requires teachers to task analyze the standards closely. Appropriate special education services, adaptations, and accommodations to the curriculum and/or the learning environment and materials are then recommended for the student by the Committee on Special Education.

- 3. Is it possible to have special education consistency throughout all of the Syosset schools? Currently, the elementary schools have no co-teaching classes, each middle school offers different levels of support for special education students and the high school only offers mainstreaming or self-contained classrooms.**

There is consistency of special education services across all Syosset schools as required by NYS regulations. Variability in special education programs are designed purposely to address the different developmental and academic needs of students at the elementary, middle, and high school level. The District provides co-teaching at the elementary level via a consultant teacher model. Each middle school

program is determined by the Committee on Special Education; availability of services is the same in each middle school. In addition to self-contained classrooms, the high school offers consultant teacher, resource room, and related services.

4. What services and supports are available to help special education students transition from school to school?

All school to school transitions include the following: parent meetings, student orientations, staff articulations, and annual review meetings. Should a parent have a special concern or need, they are encouraged to contact the building psychologist to discuss the need for any additional transition supports.

5. What criteria must be met in order for a student to qualify for a 504 plan? Do parents on the team help decide the 504 plan for their child? How are accommodations under a 504 plan communicated to the parents?

To receive a Section 504 plan a student must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or (2) have a record of such impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment. Parents of the student are members of the Section 504 committee and, as such, have input into the development of the Section 504 plan. A copy of the Section 504 plan indicating all accommodations, supports, services, etc. is provided to the parents.

6. Can an IS (Instructional Support) teacher always be part of the IS student's team in the middle school? Is it possible to keep the IS students on the same team?

While every effort is made to schedule students for Instructional Support with a team teacher, sometimes enrollment issues result in a need for staffing from outside the teaching team. All Instructional Support teachers are part of the collaborative planning process whether or not they are on the teaching team. Whenever possible, Instructional Support classes are grouped by team.

7. Why does the Instructional Support model change from 6th grade to 7th grade?

There is no change. The Instructional Support model is consistent from 6th grade to 7th grade.

8. What are the qualifications for an Instructional Support teacher?

Instructional Support teachers are NYS certified special education teachers.

