



**Columbia Secondary School for
Math, Science & Engineering
Parent Teacher Association**

**February 14, 2022
6:15 PM -7:30 pm via Zoom**

WELCOME: PTA President, Veronica Villalpando welcomed everyone to the meeting, and reminded everyone that we have simultaneous Spanish translation.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES: Co-Recording Secretary, Laurie Brown Kindred quickly reviewed the minutes (which also appeared in the Newsletter sent days prior to the meeting). Veronica launched the poll. 100% of parents present officially approved

TREASURER'S REPORT:

- Cash balance as of 2/13/22 was \$90,591.81; \$866.66 in outstanding checks, leaving register balance of \$89,725.15.
- January Income:
 - Uniform & Facemask Sales were \$588
 - Membership Donations were \$2655
- January Expenses:
 - Dept/Grade Level Grant (Heaters for Rooms of all Grades) = \$2354.45
 - School Wide Support (KN95 masks for all staff/students) = \$3407.79
 - Teacher Mini Grant (Delta Math, Kahoot & Smart Learning Suite subscriptions) = \$232.48
 - Paypal/Square Expenses = \$101.84
- Now more than 90% of meeting Membership Donation Goal; need \$2300 to reach our goal!
- Ken and PTA proposed some budget amendments for approval, regarding items that are over budget or not on original approved budget:
 - **FOR LAB DESKS: Add a new line item for Engineering Furniture for \$9,000.** To purchase 16 engineering carts/desks. Current tables are falling apart and are impacting what our Engineering professors can teach. Total purchase price is approximately \$9,000 (after discounts from retail price of the MSRP \$787.64 each over \$12.6k in total).
 - **ADDITIONAL AMENDMENT: Increase School-Wide Support budget line by \$6,000 (from \$10,000 to \$16,000).** We have only about \$2,800 left in this line item (after funding of KN95 masks and planners). This would allow for additional flexibility to fund potential re-socialization activities (e.g. field trips or other socialization activities for students and community).
 - From a financial perspective, the PTA has enough to cover the additional \$15,000 of expenditures. With our current cash balance of \$89,000, if all remaining items in the budget were funded and no additional amounts raised, we would still have approximately \$16,000 left at the end of the year (that \$16k balance also includes paying for the \$15,000 expenses above).
 - 100% of parents present voted and approved.

FUNDRAISING UPDATES

- Farm to People (sustainable grocery delivery that partners with small farms and local makers to provide wholesome food to NYers): raised over \$440; will look to bring them back in the fall so families can order their Thanksgiving and holiday meals.
- Virtual **Spring Fling April 7th:**
 - We need YOUR help in getting auction items you wish to donate yourself or request from a business
 - Fundraising Goal is \$25k
 - Need tips on how to ask for donations? Visit the auction page on the school store site.
 - New This Year: GRADE BASKETS! (similar to holiday gift bags)

- Each grade will create a themed basket (grade reps will select theme & let parents know what's needed)
- Kids will bring in items and drop off in OSS
- Mid-March we'll package everything up!
- Some theme ideas might be pasta night (pictured), spa day, Father's Day, family game night, spring cleaning, book club, coffee shop, movie night, I love New York, sweet tooth, really anything! The only thing we're NOT going to do is a wine basket, because I don't want to be the one responsible for children bringing bottles of wine to school, m'kay? Stay tuned for more info about what to donate to come from your grade rep!
- To get involved in Spring Fling, look out for our meeting dates in the PTA Newsletter.

VOLUNTEERING UPDATES

- 6th-11th Grade Retake Day for Pictures is scheduled for March 3rd. To keep the day moving safely and smoothly, we need 2 more parent volunteers to be Class Escort and Portrait Stylist.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP UPDATES

- Will field trips resume? If so, what is the timing? *Field trips are resuming, but with restrictions (many institutions still require proof of vaccination to enter). As always, field trips are planned by school staff to coincide with curricular topics.*
- Why was EdMentum was chosen as the adaptive math learning program for the computerized math programming that middle schoolers are receiving? *Edmentum is one of several programs that interact with MAP assessment results to provide personalized practice for students based on their strengths and gaps as assessed during the MAP testing. We reviewed all of these programs, and Edmentum was the one that best served our needs.*
- What steps need to happen soon for next year's 8th grade to offer advanced math curriculum (geometry) to advanced math students so they have the future opportunity to take both Calculus I and II at Columbia University (before graduating high school)? What can parents do to help ensure this opportunity exists? *All electives, including the after-school math courses, depend on funding, staff availability and student interest. Electives vary from year to year and, generally, the elective programming is set at the beginning of the school year.*
- HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS: What is the screening criteria for CSS HS admissions this year? *CSS follows the DOE's selection criteria for screened schools. We don't have a separate interview or exam. Details about screened school admissions in NYC can be found here: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/high-school/screened-admissions>*
- Why is CSS removing any form of screen from the HS admissions process when other, less selective (not SHSAT) schools in the neighborhood are including extra requirements beyond the lottery to apply? *CSS has over 4,000 applicants to high school. All additional assessments must be given to all applicants. We don't have resources to interview 4,000 students and/or grade 4,000 exams. Schools with a smaller applicant pool may be able to screen all their applicants.*
- What is the school doing to address behavioral issues in school, specifically students acting out and "hijacking" classes? From what I've seen there are gradewide punishments being administered, but there is little being done to address the misbehavior of specific students. *The Dean's office sends out regular communications to keep families up to date on policies and events. Disciplinary consequences for individual students are not shared publicly.*
- When will the cafeteria be open and is the school obligated to share that new space with the other schools during lunchtime? And if the school DOES have to share with the other schools, why haven't the other schools shared their space with us this year as our children have had to eat in the auditorium or recess yard? *The cafeteria should be turned over to the school in March, based on the current timeline from the School Construction Authority. We may use the cafeteria this year, or wait until social distancing restrictions have relaxed, depending on the seating capacity of the new space. The new cafeteria, like the auditorium, gyms, pool and playground, is a shared space. All common spaces are shared among all the schools.*
- Where will students have recess next year when the yard is under construction? *We don't know yet.*
- What's being done to help students who have learning gaps whether due to the pandemic or lack of elementary school foundation for the rigors of the CSS curriculum? *We have built spaces into the school day for students to practice individual skills in ELA and math based on their*

assessment results (see response from Edmentum, above). We also have after-school tutoring in homework rooms, as well as a new high school-middle school mentoring program to help support middle school students academically and socially.

GUEST SPEAKER!!!! Tracy Lewis from....

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS of NYC "Workplace Mentoring School Info Session:

- **BBBS of NYC:** Founded in 1904, Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC (BBBS of NYC) is the nation's first and the city's largest youth mentoring organization.
- **Workplace Mentoring Program:** Introduces students to the professional world through on-site, one-to-one mentoring from employees of participating companies and offers workshops and support in goal setting, college and post high school planning, career exploration and more!
- **Having a Mentor:**
 - Matched with a company volunteer & ideally matched based on interests, similarities, etc. AND potential for a match that lasts past high school
 - Like an Older Sibling who can:
 - Help with college applications
 - Help you apply to internships and summer programs
 - Give feedback
 - Share their own experiences
 - Become a part of your support system
- **Program Basics:**
 - Your Corporate Partner: X
 - Sophomore through Senior Year
 - Where: Corporate office; Currently Zoom sessions, School Buildings
 - Number of Programs per Year: 15
 - Day & Time: Every other Tuesday from 4-6PM
 - \$10 Stipend per Program; via prepaid debit cards
 - Curriculum that covers college and career readiness, professionalism, and leadership skills: interviews, resumes, financial aid, post high school planning, college choice, team building, public speaking, end of year celebrations
- **Other Benefits:**
 - Get to know your peers
 - Looks great on a resume & scholarship opportunities
 - Access to internships & expand your network
 - Exposure to other academic and professional programs
 - College and Career Success Program
 - Program Manager support
- **REQUIREMENTS:**
 - **Communication**
 - Responding to your PM
 - Off-week communication with your Big
 - **Commitment**
 - 15 programs a year
 - 3 years
 - No more than 3 absences per year
 - **Engagement**
 - Participating in virtual and in-person sessions
 - Willing to get to know Big
 - Interested in learning workplace and college skills
- **Next Steps:**
 - Contact your SC
 - Fill out online inquiry form
 - Have your parents/guardians fill out an application
 - Interview with your PM (either at school or virtually)
 - Attend new students' meeting

- Start program

STUDY SKILLS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL & BEYOND

- While many teachers spend some class time teaching study skills, students often need more guidance than they get in the classroom. In middle school, there's more homework, it becomes more difficult and it requires analytical skills your child may not have developed yet.
- The study skills your child needs to do well on their test are the same ones they will need to succeed in high school and college: **getting organized, studying effectively** and **taking good notes**.
- Identifying your child's learning style:
 - The type of thinker your child *is* influences how he prefers to learn. Here's an overview of learning options for your child's thinking style.
 - Knowing your child's learning strengths and thinking style can help at home as well as at school.
 - That information can help you and your child find the best ways to study and prevent or reduce homework battles.
- Helping your child with organizational skills:
 - **Know your child's work-style:** Create it specifically with your child's personality and study habits in mind. If they work best around people, set them up in the dining room, kitchen, or living room. If they're easily distracted by clutter and noise, set up shop in a quiet, secluded space.
 - **Make it Mobile:** If your home doesn't have space for a permanent, dedicated homework space for each child, assemble what they'll need for a mobile work space and designate where they'll set it up each day — whether it's the kitchen table, the living room coffee table, the family computer station.
 - **Banish distractions:** Some kids require peace and quiet to focus. If you notice that your child gets easily distracted, think about relocating their study space — or moving the pets. Turn off the TV and ignore all phones during homework, kids aren't allowed to answer unless a parent is calling. Consider creating "homework time" so that everyone remembers to be quiet, say, between 5 and 5:30 p.m. One thing to remember: some kids do better with music in the background. But try to choose something without vocals, which can be distracting.
 - **Stay close:** Especially for children who may have trouble staying on task, try to stay close by to be available for questions or guidance. If your child is working in a more remote spot in the house, you can still let them know that you're there if they need you. This lets them know you care about and value their schoolwork.
 - **Have supplies in a central area:** To avoid stress-filled moments needlessly wasting time hunting for missing items, store school supplies in a central area. Shoe boxes do nicely to store pencils, pens, rulers, and scissors. Consider labeling big-ticket items like staplers, scissors, and rulers with a sticker that reads "Return to homework box." That way, everything is easy to find, and nothing goes missing when your child needs it most.
 - **Display a master calendar:** If there's space, get your child in the habit of noting assignments on a calendar. If you don't want to hang one on the wall, they might like a big desktop calendar. This is especially helpful for younger kids who are still mastering the fine art of keeping track of their homework.
 - **Keep the mess at bay:** Your child's workspace doesn't need to be military-precision clean, but encourage her to put things away after finishing her assignments and keep the area in order. Things are less likely to get lost in the shuffle, and the area will be a tidy blank slate for the next time she sits down to do homework.
- Helping your child with studying skills:
 - **Encourage your child to estimate how long each assignment will take:** They can then plan a realistic schedule, building in study breaks after subjects that are most challenging, and allowing for soccer games and guitar practice. Helping your child keep track of time spent studying — rather than staring at a blank page — will help them think about how they're using their time. If they're spending too much time on a subject that might be a signal that they need extra help or tutoring.
 - **Help your child break big projects into smaller ones:** A big research project will seem less overwhelming and will be less likely to be left until the last minute if it's done in manageable chunks, each with its own deadline.
 - **Communicate with your child's teachers:** If your child is struggling with organizational skills, talk to the school counselor or teachers about what might be causing the problems and brainstorm approaches to solve them.

- **People are productive at different times of day:** Some people focus better in the morning, others at night. Help your child find the times that his efforts will be most effective.
- **Help your child make the most of his time:** If they carry a review sheet or book along with them, sitting in the doctor's waiting room or subway can be productive study time.
- **"Did you do your homework?"** Parents need to ask more questions than this one. How much should you help with homework? Monitor homework but remember it's your child's homework, not yours. You can help by asking questions that help guide your child to his own solutions. Some examples:
 - What information do you need to do this assignment?
 - Where are you going to look for it?
 - Where do you think you should begin?
 - What do you need to do next?
 - Can you describe how you're going to solve this problem?
 - How did you solve this problem?
 - What did you try that didn't work?
 - Why does this answer seem right to you?
 - Tell me more about this part?
- Helping your child with note-taking skills
 - "Students who don't take notes well, don't use them," according to California high school teacher Jim Burke. "They lose faith in the process."
 - Burke prefers to use the term **"note-making"** — **making meaning from information** — to the more passive "note-taking." Note-making, he says, is **"manipulating information to make it sticky."**
 - Some students can make information "stick" by making outlines. For other more visual learners, colors might work better. Burke gives the example of one student who went back over her science notes using red highlighter to indicate blood and blue for oxygen. **Start a new page for each new class each day.**
 - Date it. Leave space between topics or ideas so you can scan the page more easily later.
 - **Take down key words and concepts, not sentences.**
 - Develop your own system of abbreviations or symbols (such as w/ for "with" or math symbols such as > or =) to take down key points. Here are some abbreviations to get you started.
 - **Listen for word clues from the teacher.**
 - Teachers often signal what's important to note, using phrases such as "the three incidents that led to the War of 1812 were..." Here are some examples of common lecture clues.
 - **Review notes after class to make sure they're accurate and complete.**
 - Doing this just before starting homework in a particular subject can help a student focus on the topic at hand.
- Supplemental resources:
 - <https://www.understood.org/articles/en/learning-options-for-your-childs-thinking-style>
 - https://www.understood.org/articles/en/different-learning-strengths-what-you-need-to-know?_sp=9d77c2b5-926e-4f68-b8e6-dc5a72ed8223.1644255541194
 - https://www.understood.org/pages/en/homework-battles-an-overview/?_sp=9d77c2b5-926e-4f68-b8e6-dc5a72ed8223.1644255572741
 - <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/study-skills-for-middle-school-and-beyond/>
 - <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/take-great-notes/>
 - <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/best-homework-place/>
 - <https://www.eapfoundation.com/listening/notetaking/symbols/>
 - <https://www.eapfoundation.com/listening/lectures/cues/>

63 parents participated.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20pm

Next meeting February 15, 2022 @ 6:15pm