

WAMS PTO GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 17, 2018, 9:15 to 11 a.m.

WAMS Auditorium

I. Roll Call (Speakers)

Meena Sharma-Shukla, Stephanie Caesar, Karen Hudock, Cara Rychecky, Jamie Sutton, Lori Thompson, Amy Stem, Marissa Berkowitz, Dr. Barbara Bush, Jane McGarry, Debbie Bune, Lisa Romano, Debbie Karuppan, Steven Tardibuono, and members of the audience.

II. PTO News and Events

PTO President Meena Sharma-Shukla introduced the current PTO Board members and the new WAMS AO PTO Representative Stephanie Caesar.

Meena then invited the audience to join the PTO and encouraged parents to get involved. She emphasized that there are many opportunities to do so, with different levels of commitment: from volunteering a couple of hours of your time at an event, to chairing a committee, to serving on the PTO Board.

Meena thanked all volunteers and families for supporting the 2018 Magazine Drive and Cookie Dough Sale, which was again highly successful, with total sales of over \$30K, highlighting that 40% of the money raised will go towards PTO initiatives to benefit the school and students directly. In addition, 30% of all 8th grade sales will offset the student's D.C. trip costs.

She also announced the PTO's Turkey Trot, to be held at Mountain Park on October 28th rain or shine and reminded the audience that we publish important dates, reminders, and upcoming events through our weekly VVE, to help parents stay informed.

III. WAMS Athletic Organization (AO)

Stephanie Caesar introduced herself and explained that the WAMS Athletic Organization (AO) is a nonprofit, parent-run organization. You can find more information on these activities through the WAMS AO website, their Facebook page, or through the VVE.

The WAMS AO has a Box Tops fundraiser underway. There is a collection can located in the main office, so please consider clipping those box tops and sending them in. Proceeds from this and other fundraisers help support our students and help fund our pay-to-play activities.

IV. WAMS Update from Mrs. Hudock

Mrs. Hudock did a brief overview of current events at WAMS and then introduced the School Culture and Climate Initiative, a 3-year relationship with United Way of Northern New Jersey Youth Empowerment Alliance, in partnership with the College of Saint Elizabeth, which starts this year, with the support of the WAMS PTO. She explained that the school administration has been looking for a comprehensive program like this for a while now and this seems like a very good fit for our school's needs and goals.

For more information on the School Culture and Climate Initiative, please refer to the slideshow of Mrs. Hudock's presentation.

Finally, Mrs. Hudock introduced her support staff and their specific roles.

V. WAMS Support Staff

A. Cara Rychecky – School Counselor / Guidance Department

Mrs. Rychecky explained that counseling services are very integrated into the school and into the students' day-to-day lives. Counselors reach out to all students by teaching lessons, or modules, in classrooms throughout the year. Additionally, they meet with all teams regularly to discuss student needs and team concerns.

Though school counselors are assigned to specific grade levels and teams, they all work together as a unit. Therefore, if a child's school counselor is absent, for example, or if the child feels more comfortable talking to a male/female counselor, another member of the counseling team can pitch in to help.

If your child has an issue with a specific teacher, parents are advised to first contact the teacher directly. The school counselors encourage parents to contact them with any questions or concerns regarding their kids.

B. Dr. Barbara Bush – Student Assistance Counseling

Dr. Bush is a licensed psychologist who works closely with the school counselors on some of the most sensitive cases. She is also a member of the school's Intervention and Referral Services / Section 504 Committee, the School Safety Team, and the Character Education Committee, which has been working closely with Community in Crisis and other community groups to develop and offer parents a variety of programs on the adolescent brain's development, teenage drug use and vaping, among other relevant topics.

Dr. Bush, Mrs. Stem and Ms. Sutton are available as a resource to parents if they have any concerns regarding their children. If a student or parent contacts the program, no one will know unless the student or parent shares that information or asks the Student Assistance Counselor to share the information with a designated person. The only exceptions to this rule are cases involving life threatening behavior or suspected abuse or neglect.

Dr. Bush also announced that she has been working with Mr. Lederer (7th Grade Assistant Principal) on a book talk to discuss *Artificial Maturity*, by Tim Elmore. They are very excited to share this with parents. There will be two daytime meetings and an evening one may be added, if there is enough demand.

C. Lisa Romano and Jane McGarry – Child Study Team

Mrs. Romano explained that the Child Study Team works closely with school counselors, teachers and administrators to offer the necessary support for children who qualify for special services. She was pleased to say that, even though there is normally a stigma attached to special education services, this seems to be changing. Kids now seem empowered and willing to discuss their own IEP (Individualized Education Program). This is encouraged by the Child Study Team. In fact, 7th graders are sometimes invited to attend their IEP meetings and 8th graders are expected to, in preparation for their high school years.

D. Debbie Karuppan – School Nurse / Health Office

Ms. Karuppan introduced herself and reminded parents that they are not allowed to dispense medication to a student (either OTC or prescription) without a doctor's note and that parents must call in before 7:45 AM if their child will be late or absent from school. It is always better to call, rather than to send an email. She then encouraged parents to contact the health office with any questions or concerns.

E. Steven Tardibuono – Aramark Food Services

Mr. Tardibuono made a brief presentation about the school lunch program offered by Aramark (please refer to slideshow for details) and then offered a special tour of the cafeteria line for parents in attendance, so they could experience it for themselves.

Submitted by:

*Tissiana Oliva
WAMS PTO, VP of Programs*