

Ithaca High School PTSA  
Approved Minutes for October 17, 2011

Meeting opened by Sue Merkle – past president of PTSA – welcome and announces the election of the new executive board members and coordinators:

Jarra Jange – Co-president – we are still looking for another co-president  
Treasurer – Julie Hughes  
Secretary – Vicki Brew  
VP-Communications – Tracy Vosburgh  
Membership – Sandy Studin  
VP-Programs – Alice Wu  
PTA Council Liaison – Nora Shang/Wendy Bakal

GENERAL BUSINESS

Members unanimously approved the executive board for 2011-2012 school year.

Treasurers Report – Julie Hughes proposed the budget for 2011-2012 Treas. Report unanimously approved.

**Reminder to teachers** - \$2300 in Teachers Request fund. Please get your requests in by October 31, 2011. There were handouts put in your mailbox.

Membership information – Sandy Studin. Please turn in your membership forms to the PTA. We encourage teachers, parents, guardians and students to join.

PTA Council report by Nora Shang – she attended a forum a few weeks ago to share information with other school representatives. The Ithaca High School Board representative is Sean Eversley Bradwell and the Board of Education welcomes/encourages parent involvement in Policy and Curriculum standing committees.

**Morning Munch** – A breakfast for the teachers/staff that will be held on the first Thursday of every month. Please contact Roberta Moudry at [rmm5@cornell.edu](mailto:rmm5@cornell.edu) if you can donate baked goods, drinks, bagels, etc. The next morning munch is **November 3, 2011**. This is held in room F36. You can also send in goods with your students on the days of the morning munch. The teachers really appreciate this program.

Introduction of Jarrett Powers

Welcome to week seven of the school year. He is enjoying his first 7 weeks as Principal and is very appreciative of the enthusiasm from students and staff on his appointment as Principal and welcomes his leadership team to this meeting. He was appointed principal the third week of August and it was a mad rush to organize everything (including placing 140 new students) and is happy to report that things are going well at this point. Mr. Powers then turned over the discussion to his leadership team to discuss their roles in the school.

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Ms. Shenk – History department – discussed the curriculum and projects for high schoolers and how they are working on writing skills, workshops, writing contests, etc. Field trips and studying the depression and civil war etc., living history day with civil war reenactment, et. Government class will attend a meeting at City Hall, listening to hydrofracking speakers, participating in story day in May (VFW soldiers share their stories with the students).

Phil Jordan- Dean of Students – working with 11<sup>th</sup> &12<sup>th</sup> graders to make sure they are on the right track to graduation and reaching out to families and community groups for assistance.

Nan Bell – librarian – October 24, 2011 library will be opened until 4:30p.m. Their book budget is in need of funding. PTA could help in this area. They currently have 2 kindles and would like more – if you can donate an Amazon gift card this is the best way to donate to the library. Additionally, the library is allowing students to listen to music while in the library as long as they are quiet and the atmosphere remains calm.

Karl Mellander – Director of student activities and math teacher. . Contact him about any club, graduations, dances, etc. He will also start working on the website.

Language Department – Lana Craig and Janet Bowman – receiving new books that will allow students to work online with the modern technology both locally and globally.

Carlin Gray – Science dept. chair and cross country coach. They have received new textbooks and the department offers two new electives: Marine Biology and Forensics . Each course is worth one half credit. They are also requiring more lab days to support students in science to get labs done and to help students prepare for regents. Instead of twice a week, labs are now every other day.

Carol Spence – Art Department Chair. She is grant writing with FBA, IPEI for assistance and also working with the community for resources. There are Art partnerships in education with Peace Corps. The Art department is undergoing renovation with new design and furniture and incorporating smart boards, studios space, integrating literacy in classes, crafts, fashion design and photography. Exciting things for Ithaca Art Department!

Josh Chase – Athletic Department Chair/Health PE. They are creating profile to be proficient competent in different areas. The department is offering life skills units for 10-12 graders. – teaching all students to be life long learners in health/physical education.

Gwen Freeman – AIS(academic intervention services) chair/ESOL - this department helps all students succeed with literacy skills, regents exam prep, critical thinking skills. They can help provide your students with the help necessary to succeed in high school.

Scott Breigle – Technology - Code Red robotics - currently have 64 students involved you're your students are interested please contact him. They are looking at community outreach and currently have two teams at BJM (lego league) and want to start the same programs at Enfield and Caroline in the future. This is a great way to expose young students to technology. Project Lead the Way has received grants for senior projects and were able to receive new equipment last year. They are redesigning the old tech curriculum to make it more current and have the ability to collaborate with technology and all students.

Astrid Brueckner – Director of Support Services – School Counselor–Check out the new Facebook page “ IHS Student Services” They have two new psychologists and social workers and they want to promote consistency this year. They will be holding meetings with all seniors to look at transitioning out of high school. Ms. Little will work on the Master Schedule and assist students when picking subject classes. This is to help students pick the right classes for their high school experience the first time and avoid a lot of changes after school has started. In the future, students will be able to sign up for their classes online.

Chris Rudd – Director of Special Education. Works with children with IEP (Individual Education Plans) that have been created with their parents/guardians and other instructors . The state has changed IEP rules. Diploma criteria is different for these students.

Rebecca Gergely – English Chair –English 101 and 102 are being offered to seniors for college credit at TC3 and/or high school credit. They are trying to get regents prep work out to students on blackboard. The PLC(professional learning community) is working on looking at common core state standards and common assessments. She just wants everyone to know that all the teachers at Ithaca are swamped with big classes and more responsibilities this year and may be slower at responding to emails, phone calls, etc. and appreciates your understanding.

Todd Noyes – math department leader – ski club advisor. The common core state standards are being worked on to match technology (i.e. smartboards). They offer help with homework during lunch in the math room. Precalculus can be dual enrolled with TC3 credit. Additionally they are working on getting Algebra2 dual enrolled with TC3 credit in the future. The graphic calculators that students are provided with are being returned broken and hopefully with the help of grants these will be replaced. Remember Math Awareness week in April. There will be a T-shirt design competition .

That completed the panel of the leadership team that attended the meeting .

### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Jarrett Powers commented on graduation rates being a top priority this year. We need to build a system that will sustain the graduation rate, not just succeed in one year.

There was mention that there will be an English January regents.

Security issues - IHS has six safety officers (down two from previous years) so there are incidents being missed. Mr. Powers, Ms. Abowd and his staff are trying hard to limit the incidents of kids cutting classes, fighting and working actively to tighten up on the incidents of bullying, harassing, etc. There was mention of an incident of some students leaving school and fighting in the Fall Creek neighborhood where a parent encountered this incident . The school is working closely in building partnerships with the police department and the county attorney’s office .

Jarrett Powers noted that last year IHS ended with 1317 students - this year started with 1400 students and we lost 10 full time teachers. Class sizes are larger and teachers are doing more administrative work.

Zero period bus scheduling? There have been some issues of kids not getting to school for zero period. Mr. Powers in contact with the transportation department and trying to work out the glitches of these problems.

A parent voiced her concern about the climate that is created when students receive a message about “regents” kids not being perceived as good as “AP/Honors students”, etc. How do you mobilize diversity and how do teachers incorporate diversity into their classroom.

Jarrett Powers response – “we have to change the idea that some people think and express that regents student are not successful. Regents students are very successful and sometimes more successful than an AP/Honors students. This begins at home as well. In week 7 counselors are still changing students schedules – 171 students are still trying to change their schedules. Parents need to know that students here are valued as humans and not valued as to having an H(honors) or R (regents) next to their name. There are AP courses with no prerequisites that accept all kinds of students. “

Parent question/comment: How do you make students feel comfortable in taking these Honors/AP classes? There is a perception from students that honors and AP student s are smart. Then there is also a perception of kids that struggle with special challenges(learning disabilities). Then there are students in the middle. These students are in a big nebulous wondering if they are ever being noticed because they are in the middle. How do you get help for these students in the middle?

Staff Comments: “As a teacher I think of the students as individuals and I don’t think any educator would think of any student as being in the “middle”. “ Maybe parents need to talk to your kids about this perception because as a teacher I try to make sure all kids get the help they need to succeed and make an effort to know each other whether they are in honors or regents or whatever. We are a community here and every student in every grade should make an effort to know their peers regardless of their academic ability. “

Barbara Bergman asked for volunteers at the high school: Help is needed with administrative duties (copying, stapling, sorting, stuffing, etc.) If you can volunteer to help make copies, please contact her at [bbergman@icsd.k12.ny.us](mailto:bbergman@icsd.k12.ny.us)

Jarra Jange thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.