

Chenery PTO Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 3, 2018
7:00pm

Attendance: approx. 25
Minutes taken by Laura VanderHart, Secretary

PTO Business – Barbara Bulfoni and Laurie Bufano, Co-Presidents

-Approval of minutes from last meeting. Minutes were approved.

-Budget Update. Barbara presented budget, since Anna was not here.

Budget is about \$8,000 over budget, which is excellent. Excess money will be used well by the principal. Last year, for example, we bought textbooks and a Chromebook cart.

-One more PTO meeting has been added. We need to approve slate of officers at next meeting. We will also have a group of teachers present, along with the BHS building committee. All parents of current fourth graders will be invited.

-We still need volunteers for the 8th grade party. Eighth grade parents plan it, Seventh grade parents take care of the party, then 8th grade parents clean up.

-Soon we will send out a call for volunteers for the remaining open positions for next year.

-Next Wednesday is Walk or Bike to School Day.

Principal's [Brief] Report - Principal McAllister

We are in the thick of MCAS. All is well.

Green Team Report - Priya Narasimhan and Cabell Eames

Priya Narasimhan from Green Alliance

Results of last year's Lunchroom Audit

Last year, starting at Wellington, we noticed that we threw away 200 lbs of food/week. At Chenery, it was 800 lbs/week. 75% is compostable. 15% is trash, but a lot is avoidable—like Ziploc bags. It's more like 5% that is truly trash.

Composting is impossible on site. It would cost \$3600/year per school. It comes down to 3 M's: money, manpower, mindset. We need to man the trash stations, teach the kids what to do, and pay for the pickup service.

Cabell Eames from Green Team at Chenery

At Chenery, we formed a Green Team for the kids. This was new. Ben Ligon worked with them. Trash Bashers was formed. Sixth grade had 20 signups. Then in fifth grade, there were 60 signups.

Composting?

Black Earth Composting will can up at schools. "Belmont Composts" is a new initiative that will hopefully pull in residents, too. Strategy in Cambridge was to start with businesses, schools.... Residents were last to adopt. Black Earth will have a table at Town Day.

One more note: kids have saved trash bags just by stacking the trays. When we start to compost, those trays will not be trash any more.

The Challenging Task of Raising Teens

Lisa Gibalerio and Wendy Conroy

Public Health Educators

Both Wendy and Lisa work with Belmont Wellness Coalition. Many people in Belmont are working on substance abuse, many in different ways. The point of the coalition is to keep teens healthy and safe, and to sit together at the same table.

Rules: Confidentiality, Ask Questions, Listen with an Open Mind

Wendy's Talk on The Teenage Brain, The Teen Experience

Science of the brain has come a long way in the last 20 years. New science: It's not growing larger, but connections are forming, starting in the back and moving to the front. The last part to form is decision making, self-control, judgment... sometimes not finally grown until 20's. Add in hormones (limbic system) and teenagers have a lot of challenges when it comes to making good decisions.

Culturally this is the first generation of kids (igen) with no idea of life before cell phones, a device moving with you. How we parent is also changing. The pattern of helicopter parenting has pros and cons; kids feel closer to parents, parents' values, but also are less independent. When they turn 14, a lot of issues emerge, often depression, psychoses. More people have awareness, but there is also a lack of connection among kids due to technology. They are developing their world view from what they see on social media, which can also seem isolating. NIH studies says that seeing curated images has an effect on their impressions of the world. Violence, news, etc can give a feeling of lack of control. Add to this stew, substances.

-Vaping is happening at BHS. Can contain nicotine, or marijuana. It is seen as a "healthier option."

-Alcohol use

-Prescription meds that are not theirs, like Ritalin

-Substances can help them cope with their feelings.

Overall substance use is down in the USA. Substance use does increase in high school nation-wide. Vaping has gone up. High school is time of greatest risk for use of substances.

Youth Risk Behavioral Survey from 2012: Jump from 8th – 9th grades in substance use, then steady incline throughout high school. Also you see a rise in stress, and Belmont is known for academic stress.

People use substances also to try to form relationships and be less inhibited. Often substances are used as a tool to make people more vulnerable.

All of these topics are interrelated. Parents need to recognize this.

Lisa's List of Helpful Tips—see handout also

Kids do not perceive some substances as harmful. The longer the kids put off dabbling in substances, the better. It is linked to less addiction. You may not be able to prevent everything, but you can put things in place.

- 1) Listen and talk. Talking to your kids about what you believe; it makes a difference. Make it an ongoing conversation. Talk about expectations/consequences. Reward good, follow through with consequences. Talk about why.
- 2) Create a parent network. You don't need to be best friends, but you need the parents' phone numbers. If your friends have a group, have a coffee together and get on the same page with expectations. Information is power.
- 3) Curfew. Have a curfew. The time can change, based on the event. Wait up. Say hello, wait up and hug them.
- 4) Not all parents supervise. It's not a good idea to leave town. Social host liability law means that if kids drink at your home and have a problem, you can be at fault. Plan surprise visits home. (#rager: party where parents are not home)
- 5) Modeling. You can model moderate alcohol use, technology use. We need to put our phones down, too.
- 6) Pick your battles. They will have temptations. BHS is tough. Kids are stressed. You can let some small things go, like the messy room for example. Let them know that no one is perfect.

Q & A with Wendy and Lisa

Parent: My daughter resists having the conversation. Can you help me break through.

Answer:

-Try a ride in the car. Some kind of quid pro quo. Give a little reward.

-Find things in popular culture, a movie or a song. Talk about the message. Send an article on facebook. It's a way to convey your values.

Parent: Do the Chenery kids receive information in the Upper School along these lines? I know the younger ones have D.A.R.E., but what happens in the Upper School?

-Yes. We have recently changed curriculum so they get it in health in 7th and 8th grades.

Parent: Where does the popularity of vaping come from?

Answer: Because kids stopped smoking, the tobacco industry has found its way to that population. It has technology, it has flavors, they love the game of sneaking it, too. There are new federal regulations on vaping because they are clearly marketing to kids. Also, they think it is healthier.

Parent: My daughter is in high school. Kids say that the dog sniffing thing is a joke.

Answer: It is meant to send a message of “no tolerance.” It reminds kids that it is illegal. The hope is to say that you cannot bring any substances to school. The emails that go home also provide resources.

MMC: I don’t believe in doing it here. Interestingly we do talk a lot about privacy, but the fact is that privacy does not really exist in schools.

Parent: Are there any good YouTube links?

Answer: We did put some on the handout. MTV does a good series on online harassment.

Parent: I read once that kids who drink socially in high school are better adjusted. What do you think?

Answer: You can use your own judgment around that, especially in the family context. Some believe there is a forbidden fruit factor. But data shows that delaying use is the best policy. When teens use substances, they are more likely to become addicted to those substances as an adult. They build a reward circuit while the brain is developing.

MMC: Is there research on the forbidden fruit theory?

Answer: There is with younger kids and food, but not substances.

Parent: How much do we share about our own past?

Answer: You can answer that I am an adult now. But when I was a kid, we did not have the research we have now. Most of the prevailing wisdom is to be age-appropriate and honest.

Parent: Are some kids more susceptible?

Answer: Yes. Genetics, mental health issues, LGBTQ- all are factors.

Parent: What percentage of kids are drinking on weekends?

Answer: 30-40%. But turn it around. 60% are not.

Parent: What do you recommend if you find your kid is using?

Answer: Whatever consequence you laid out, follow through. Talk about concerns. It varies from house to house. If it becomes a chronic behavior, there are good counselors. It starts in the family.

Handout from Lisa Gibalerio is below.

Tips for Parenting Teens

1 – Talk With Your Kids

- Be clear about your expectations/rules – communicate those rules with your kids
- Be clear about the *consequences* of not meeting an expectation
- Make sure consequence is executed
- Reward good behavior too
- Tell them *why* (data on brain development, impairs judgment, etc.)
- Listen and talk and listen to your kids ... these conversations should be ongoing (not one-offs)

2 – Get to Know the Parents of Your Kids’ Friends!

- Create a Parent Network - have phone numbers to check in and definitely check in – especially around sleepovers
- Schedule a “coffee” or evening event to exchange information on: supervision, liquor in house, curfew, expectations, etc.

3 – Set a Curfew

- Set a reasonable curfew and stick to it
- Wait up to check in and say good night at curfew time (this is challenging to do, but is one of the most effective protective factors!)

4 – Always Supervise

- Do not leave teens unattended for long periods of time
- *Social Host Liability Law* codifies that you are responsible for what happens in your home, *even if you are not home*
- Plan to pop home at unexpected times

5 – Allow for Mistakes

- Our kids are not perfect, mistakes will be made
- Offer love and support, while also holding the lines you have set
- Know what’s important for their health and safety and don’t sweat the small stuff - (messy rooms, late on chores, etc.)

6 – Model Good Behavior

- Consider putting down your device, minimizing alcohol use in your home, etc.

These tips are shared in the hopes that the author’s personal experiences can help others.

Helpful Resources

www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources

SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration - info for parents

www.thecoolspot.gov

Alcohol/Drugs Education & Prevention

www.mass.gov/suicide-prevention-program

Suicide prevention education and resources

www.thetrevorproject.org

Provides resources and intervention for LGBTQ youth

www.thatsnotcool.com

Promotes conversations about respecting boundaries and healthy relationships

www.athinline.org

Addresses digital abuse: sexual harassment and violence on social media, by sexting, by tweeting, and in other online contexts

www.sexetc.org

Offers sex education by teens, for teens, including forums, videos, and FAQs. It addresses sexual violence in addition to other sexuality issues.

www.barcc.org

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center 1-800-841-8371 (24 hours)

<http://www.medainc.org>

Multi-Service Eating Disorder Association