

Bergen Academies PPO
September 28, 2006 7:00 PM
PPO General Membership Meeting Minutes

Shiaoling Paxson called the meeting to order at 7:15PM. Shiaoling Paxson welcomed everyone to the 1st PPO meeting of the year and introduced Robert Aloia, Superintendent of Bergen Technical School District.

- **Robert Aloia**

- He informed the PPO of a series of Communiqués that he is starting. They will be handed out to the General Membership at every future PPO meeting.
- He informed the General Membership of the status of construction of the cafeteria which is now expected for completion in fall 2008 due to backlogs in the State. He also offered to have plans of the cafeteria on display again, if required.
- He then introduced two new members of the Academy administrative staff:
 - Mr. Daniel Jaye, joining as Director of Academy Programs
 - Dr. Raymond Bath, as Lead Teacher of Humanities/Academies
- He updated the General Membership on scheduling
 - Scheduling issues that were raised at meetings last year will be reviewed.
 - Once these issues are addressed, he will put together a task force, including representatives from all stakeholders, including PPO, and will update parents on future plans for scheduling changes.
- He then acknowledged the principal, Pat Cosgrove, the teachers, staff, and the students of Bergen Academies for being recognized as a 2006 Blue Ribbon School.

- **Introductions**

- Shiaoling Paxson thanked the hospitality chairs for the refreshments provided.
- Shiaoling Paxson introduced all the board members, asking them to stand and be recognized. She then introduced and thanked the class parents.
- She pointed out to the General Membership that the PPO has pledged not to solicit funds, and that the Class fundraising activities are for the class not for the PPO. She encouraged parents to support the Class Fundraising as it directly benefits the students.
- She then introduced and thanked the various committee chairs and requested the parents to contact the committee chairs to volunteer.

- **Buddy System**

- Shiaoling Paxson recognized the buddies and thanked them for their participation in the buddy system.
- She recognized Barbara for her contribution of the idea of the buddy system and announced that there are plans to have a breakfast on October 13 and possibly to have a second meeting, not during the day/work hours, to socialize and collect feedback on the system.

- **PPO Resources for dissemination of information**
 - Shiaoling Paxson introduced the PPO web site, www.academyppo.com, and also stated that there is a link on the school's web site.
 - Shiaoling Paxson recognized the efforts of Rama and Lalitha Ramakrishnan for organizing the new database, and of Will Paxson for updating the e-mail blast system
 - She announced that they have made a tremendous effort to get the membership directory out earlier this year and, to that end, it will be brought to the printer within a few days. She invited parents to review their information for final revisions at tonight's meeting, as Lalitha has her computer set up at the Membership table outside the auditorium.

- **International Dinner**
 - Rosanne Coletti Harris, the co-chair person of the International Dinner, mentioned that the volunteer forms were sent out with the Sept PPO newsletter, and were also included in the handouts distributed at the meeting.
 - She informed the General Membership that the International Dinner was free and all attendees are asked to contribute a dish.
 - She announced that the committee had plans to add entertainment unique to a particular culture or ethnicity to the dinner and requested volunteers to perform at the dinner.
 - She also requested volunteers to chair and subsequently organize tables specific to a particular country or culture i.e. Korean, Indian, Italian etc. and she requested volunteers for an open flatbed truck to transport helium containers from and back to the party store.

- **PPO Email Blast System**
 - Shiaoling Paxson introduced Will Paxson who discussed the new email blast system. This new system has already been used to send out emails. He asked that members who had not received an email, check in at the desk outside and make sure their email address are correct in the system.
 - Will mentioned that permission slips for the family directory had been received from all but 16 families. He also requested that if anyone had changes they wanted in the directory they should stop by the desk outside.

- **Membership Drive**
 - Shiaoling Paxson thanked all the families for their support of the PPO. She reported that 60 more families have joined the PPO this year to date, than the total number that joined last year. Considering that the incoming freshman class size has been reduced by fifty students, this year's increase in PPO membership is really more equivalent to an increase of 110 families.
 - This brought this year's membership to almost 80% of the school.
 - Shiaoling Paxson introduced Pat Cosgrove.

- **Pat Cosgrove**
 - Pat Cosgrove introduced some of the highlights of various programs that are already in progress:
 - 4 students went to Japan to work on a collaborative science program and the Japanese students will be visiting in March
 - A group of 23 students took part in a Video Conference with NASA astronauts in training while they were in the middle of the ocean.
 - Room is being reconfigured for a research and a cell culture lab with state of the art equipment.
 - Today students are using chicken embryos and fibroblasts for research.
 - The school is purchasing a SIM MAN, a simulated mannequin which is used by doctors and nurses in training and should be in the school by January.
 - There is now a Wednesday project involved in a Robo Tutoring service to give remote tutoring to children waiting for treatment at Tomorrow's Children at Hackensack University Hospital.
 - Pat Cosgrove then gave details on the process for the application of Blue Ribbon School Award and informed the parents that Bergen Academies was recognized as a Blue Ribbon School Status based on exceptional test scores.
 - She also stated that this is a federal recognition and while the school has been recognized by the state previously this is a great achievement.
 - She also mentioned that she will be travelling to Washington DC to receive the award from the Secretary of Education on November 9th and 10th.
 - She then mentioned the Ground-Breaking ceremony that had taken place in the morning for the new north wing which will have 20 state of the art classrooms.
 - She also mentioned the upcoming Cafeteria construction, and that the new Nurse's Suite will be ready by October.
 - Over the summer, all classrooms were outfitted with Smart Boards which allow all information written on the blackboard to be stored and distributed electronically.
 - She then introduced a Video produced by an IB Business student as a day in the life of a student. She stressed that it was her goal to create an atmosphere where the students had a sense of belonging to the school.
 - The school video was then shown.
 - She also mentioned that she would like more faculty members to speak at future PPO meetings and invited parents to participate in various projects and attend more activities at the school, such as the ground breaking.
 - Pat Cosgrove thanked the organizers of the Senior Breakfast and introduced some of the planned activities for each class including the sophomore 09 Outreach planned for October 22nd. She then invited two sophomore class representatives to outline the planned activities.

- **Outreach 09**

- The sophomore students made a call to all sophomore parents to participate in Outreach 09 which is to be held on Sunday, October 22nd 2006.
- Some of the activities planned for this include:
 - The design and painting of a mural at the Holly Center Children's shelter and the creation of coloring books to be distributed at the Holly Center.
 - Volunteering at a Senior Citizens home
 - Creation and distribution of new hats for children with cancer at Tomorrows Children's Institute in the Hackensack University Hospital. All hats have to be new to avoid exposing the children to any other germs.
 - Theater students will be performing at a retired actors center.
 - A food drive is in progress; all food will be donated to the Mahwah Food Bank on the 22nd.
- It was stressed that commitments made to volunteer should be firm, as certain commitments will have to be made to all the centers with number of students coming. Commitments do not have to be for the whole day, as people can volunteer for anywhere from 2 to 6 hours.
- The volunteers thanked Mrs. Cosgrove for all of her help in getting the efforts organized.

- **Pat Cosgrove (cont'd)**

- Mrs. Cosgrove returned and spoke of the various fall and winter activities planned, like the Social for the freshmen families, and the trip to Frost Valley which was in progress.
- She also requested freshmen parents to make sure the PPO database had their updated email addresses so they could be informed of the time of arrival of their children from Frost Valley.
- Pat Cosgrove then introduced Danny Jaye and Raymond Bath. She also thanked Russ Davis and Rona Gabin.

- **Mr. Rich Panicucci**

- He introduced himself as the District Supervisor of Curriculum and informed the PPO membership of some programs that Dr. John Grieco had started which are now coming to fruition.

- **Family Hub**

- The Family Hub is among these programs and was introduced as a program that has been running for a couple of years and is now being made available as an elective to all students.
- He introduced the various tracks of the Family Hub which are available. The Family Hub is a pass/fail course and is not graded. There is a meeting once a month which will involve the students and parents as well. The goal of the program is to induce children and parents to discuss various topics that would normally not be discussed at home.
- The Signup information is available as a link at the bottom of the www.bergen.org website.

- **Early College**
 - Mr. Panicucci then introduced the early college program. All of the academies have access to three early college programs:
 1. Offsite programs at FDU and NJIT
 2. Onsite programs integrated into core courses
 3. AP and IB courses
 - He stated that last year there were 30 students earning early college credits, and this year there are over 300 students earning college credits.
 - He mentioned that it is estimated that by 2010 students will have the option of graduating with at least 30 college credits.

- **Reading**
 - Another challenge that Dr. John Grieco had placed before the faculty a couple of few years ago was to teach the students at the Academies to read comprehensively and in depth.
 - According to Mr. Panicucci this has meant creating a program that is focused on advanced literacy skills to promote independent thought based on reading. With this in mind the Academies are introducing a three year plan to improve reading, writing and public speaking skills. This program will introduce benchmarks which will monitor progress of students in these subjects during the course of the three years.

- **Budget**
 - Shaoling Paxson introduced the proposed 2006-2007 PPO Budget for membership vote and invited Hala Saardi, PPO treasurer, to present the details.
 - Hala Saardi thanked everyone and mentioned that of the \$45,000 proposed in the budget the PPO had already collected \$43,500.
 - She then invited any questions from the floor with regard to the budget. There were no questions forthcoming
 - The motion to approve the budget was raised by Susan Bromberg.
 - The motion was seconded by Rosanne Colleti Harris and then presented for vote.
 - With no votes against the proposed budget it was approved unanimously.

- **Open House**
 - Susan Bromberg introduced the upcoming open houses to the PPO General Membership and asked people to sign up to volunteer at the desk.
 - The open houses are scheduled for November 5th, November 19th and December 3rd.
 - She also stated that all volunteers will be contacted prior to the open house to confirm availability.

The PPO meeting adjourned at 8:35PM

Respectfully submitted,

Parul Rawal
Recording Secretary