

**BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO.8-BRONX
MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON FEBRUARY 28, 2012
BOARD OFFICE, 5676 RIVERDALE AVENUE, BRONX, NY 10471**

PRESENT

Community Board 8 Members: Sylvia Alexander, Chair Education Committee, Bob Bender, Robert Press, Robert Abbott, Amy Moore, Patricia Mullen, Robert Fanuzzi, Diane Kirksey-Floyd, Rita Pochter-Lowe

Guests: Lori O' Mara, Principal, MS/HS 141, Miawling La, Riverdale Review, Teri Colon, Rep. Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz,

The meeting began at 7:35 PM.

The minutes of the meeting of January 31, 2012 were approved as written.

Lori O' Mara, Principal, MS/HS 141, The David A. Stein Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy has grades 6-12 with approximately 1300 students. The Middle School is zoned catchment while the high school is mostly comprised of students who chose to continue attending 141.

She reported that the high school received an "A" on Progress Report and "Proficient" on School Quality Review for last 5 years. In addition, US News and World Report awarded the high school with a Silver Medal.

This year 9 Advanced Placement courses were offered - AP Biology, AP Psychology, AP Statistics, AP Calculus A and AP Calculus B, AP US History, AP World History, AP Art, AP English Literature with a tenth, US Government" planned to be offered next year. Ms. O'Mara highlighted that students seem to want more government/civics opportunities.

Languages now offered are Spanish, Latin, and French. One aspect of Latin class is a linguistics focus to increase vocabulary prep for SAT exams.

The high school had a 90% graduation rate in 2011 with 100% of those students accepted into colleges of their choice.

Each year, an average of 30% of students are National Honor Society members.

There are many changes implemented this year of which she is very proud.

They are:

- MS students, like the high school, now have an opportunity to have individualized programs, so they now may take honors classes. For example, a student may take an honors math class while taking a regular English class. This is especially helpful to address diverse student interests and ELL learners who can excel in math and science while improving their English.

- Additional after-school programs offered, such as Model UN, Olympiads, Leadership, Running, and even video game clubs such as Dungeons and Dragons. These are offered in addition, to their continued partnership Riverdale Community Center.

- More opportunities for social and emotional growth for middle schools students, such as: "Overcoming Obstacles" curriculum, RKA (Respect, Kindness, and Accountability) awards, and "You Make a Difference" awards.

The floor was opened for questions and discussion.

One topic addressed was how 5th grade students currently enrolled in Gifted and Talented programs, such as at PS 24, transition into middle school.

Each student who enters middle school takes entrance exams so that they may be in honors classes. Classroom space is finite so choices in structuring the school limit what is offered, and do not allow for exceptions. For instance, students such as those in G and T classes cannot be a priority at the expense of students with Special Needs. Principal O'Mara also emphasized that choices such as one in which teachers have their own classrooms leads to better lesson preparation and more stable learning environments.

A discussion of school funding outlined that the school does not receive Title 1 funding because of its socio-economic population, nor does it receive many grants because there are no dedicated personnel or volunteers to write applications. One program was obtained through Councilman G. Oliver Koppell's office is Health Corps that for the past 5 years pays medical students to intern for 2 years integrating healthy living into school curricula and activities. Sponsored through a Dr. Oz effort, it has at least 100 students active each year in initiatives such as having a small "model" garden to promote healthy eating. A "Health Fair" has been held every year for the last 5 years.

The program even encouraged one student to initiate participation in the clothing chain's Aeropostale's project that collected jeans to donate to homeless youth.

The Councilman provides funding updating computer technology including Smart boards for classrooms. In addition, upgrades and maintenance of community sports facilities, such as Seton Park, are vital to gym and after-school sports' activities.

The discussion closed with an invitation from Chair of the Board, Robert Fanuzzi, to students from MS/HS 141, who want more government learning opportunities to study the work of the board.

Chair's Report:

Noted that bullying has been a major topic of concern in the media. In addition to activities this committee has been involved in, the Board's Public Safety Committee will be discussing the topic with a focus on related gang activity in the coming months.

In addition, a discussion of how the DOE responds to what options students who have been bullied are given, when they can have a school safety transfer, but what impact does that have on a student who would be forced to enter a new school while the bully is allowed to remain in original school.

Teacher Evaluation for elementary and middle schools was released this week. A direct link to these reports will be circulated. A discussion was held regarding various misunderstandings of what this data represents, including the possible impact these statistics may have on local property values.

A flyer detailing a creative effort to make Anti-Littering video PSA (public service announcement) was circulated.

Bob Bender, Chair of Parks and Recreation Committee, reported on a summer youth educational/work program offered by the Van Cortlandt Park Conservancy in conjunction with Lehman College. HS students attend a credit bearing college class as well as hands-on paid work in Van Cortlandt Park. The deadline to apply is April 4, 2012. To get the word out, a link will be circulated amongst committee members as well as to the larger board.

Thanks to Patricia Mullen for taking the minutes.

The next meeting will be on March 27, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

Sylvia Alexander, Chair
Education Committee