

Freedom High School PTO Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2023, at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom

Wendy Simpson, PTO President:

-Welcomes everyone and thanks them for coming.

-Next meeting will be May 9th and will be elections for the Executive Board. Please send in nominations via email Freedomhspto@gmail.com.

Secretary's Report: Kathleen Sweeney

-Motion to approve the March FHS PTO meeting minutes – 1st approval by Jessica Kalavoda; 2nd by Jessica Hancz.

Treasurer's Report: Jessica Kalavoda

-PayPal + Checking account total is \$4,562.57. We received a \$36 donation from a parent this month.

Principal's Report: Laurie Sage

-Recently met with 8th-grade students from East Hills and Broughal Middles Schools to talk to them about the transition to Freedom. Ms. Sage, along with FHS teachers, administrators, or coaches, met in small groups with the 8th graders and answered their questions, and talked to them about some fears they might have. They also gave them ideas on study habits and the importance of getting involved.

-8th Grade Day at Freedom is Monday, April 17th. We already have approximately 420 confirmed as we reached out to private schools as well. This day will include a tour of FHS, a tour of VoTech, and an activities fair. Students will be able to sign up for a club or sport they might be interested in.

-We hosted a successful Career Fair. 10th and 11th-grade students had the opportunity to meet with people from 45-50 different career/job fields. These included jobs that ranged from summer employment to internships, and post-college careers.

-Spring Sports: Lacrosse and Tennis are currently in 1st place. Baseball will be playing this Thursday at Coca-Cola Park at 3:30.

-Theater Company's Beauty and Beast starts next week April 20-23. Tickets are going fast.

BASD ProudParents is participating in Advocacy Day on April 26th. Meetings have been happening to prepare for this day in Harrisburg. Students are learning, practicing, and doing run-throughs for that day. A lot of their focus will be on mental health and fair funding. There is a meeting tomorrow (April 12 from 2:15-2:45)

-Hoops for Hope is a fundraiser happening on April 21st at 1 pm. Sponsored by the Student Council and the proceeds will benefit the Pediatric Cancer Foundation of the Lehigh Valley.

-April 27th – Band Concert at 7 pm.

-May 5th – Art Show at 5:30 followed by Spring Choral Concert at 7pm

Q: Can you give us information about Class Dues?

A: \$40 and is used for things such as cap and gowns, prom decorations/photographer, and senior breakfast. Price will increase by \$10 in Junior or Senior year if not paid earlier.

Transitions Discussion Panel

John Kazmarak, School Counselor:

-Freedom will be hosting a College Fair on April 26 from 12:30-2:30. We have approximately 93 colleges coming. Students will come in ½ hour increments. Juniors will have to fill out a questionnaire on Naviance afterward.

-spoke about transitions to 9th grade. The process started back in January, when counselors from FHS met with the 8th grade to provide an overview of what high school is like. A few weeks later we come back and meet with them for the course selections.

-We host an 8th-grade parent night.

-April 17th is 8th-grade visiting day at Freedom.

-New students are the only ones present in the morning of the first day of school. We do our best to try to alleviate anxiety and ease the transition for them.

-Ms. Sage mentions that every new student gets a home visit in August from faculty and upperclassman to welcome them to Freedom.

Q: Where should parents and students go if they have a question about their schedule?

A: a Guidance Counselor

Ms. Sage spoke to the 8th-grade students about being an advocate for themselves and how important that is.

Q: How does Freedom help transitions for upperclassmen regarding post-high school?

A: Mr. Kazmarak spoke about the process for this happens throughout high school as students speak to their counselors about their interests and how course selections can help with future career plans. We also have college and career fairs.

Q: Can you speak more about the Pathways?

A: Yes, our elective pathways include Law, Project Lead the Way (PLTW – for medical and engineering interests), Communications, and Education.

(Basdwpweb.beth.k12.pa.us/programofstudies/ for more information about the Program of Studies.)

Mr. Lazarchak, Exec. Director VoTech:

-Spoke first about 9th grade Fast Track Program. 80 seats available. This gives the student a chance for career exploration. Rotating programs (26) to explore and allows them to identify what they like and do not like. You can petition to enroll immediately and be placed so there is no competition for a spot.

-If starting in sophomore year, you do a 4 class, 10 day cycle and have to compete for a spot. It is very competitive.

-Starting in 10th grade, the subsequent years become ones for exploration, then growth, and finally passion – as you enhance your skills and earn your certifications.

-Opportunities for dual enrollment, awards, and co-op programs, paid internships.

-We currently have 130 students. Employers are “knocking down our doors”; some offer tuition reimbursement for those who become employees after graduation.

-We have Live work programs, where students do work in the classroom for the community. For example, the automotive tech program will do oil changes and repairs.

-We have the Food Truck for our culinary students, and the House project for the construction program.

Q: What if they don't get into their desired program?

A: Then they can choose to go into their 2nd or 3rd choice.

Mr. Lazarchak gives advice about work ethics and to be successful you need to work hard in all 4 rotations, not just the one you are most interested in. He spoke about the H3 Grading system - head, hands, and heart. Effort > Ability.

-Mr. Lazarchak credits a great partnership with the high schools.

The floor was open for questions to any of our guest speakers tonight.

Q: What happens if my child doesn't pass the Keystone Exam?

A: Mr. Kazmarak reports there are many pathways to achieve the requirement for graduation. Speak with your counselor about ways to do this.

Special Guest : Maureen Leeson, BASD STEM Supervisor:

-Spoke about the new grading system that will be put into practice beginning in the Fall of 2023.

-This practice was piloted this school year in 6th and 9th-grade social studies and science classes.

-We started evaluating our grading practices back in 2019 and then more strongly once the pandemic hit.

-We took surveys and came up with the following **Grading System Statement:**

The purpose of grades is to communicate with students and parents/guardians about the students' achievement towards specific goals. With a focus on student growth, grades are intended to be used as feedback to guide timely improvements and offer enrichment opportunities. Academic support factors are reported separately from the achievement grade.

-The biggest change is the format of the report card. There will be an Achievement Grade, a Responsibility Grade, and a Classroom Engagement Grade. A rubric will be used to assess things such as work completion, class preparedness, and respect and will be graded as either 'beginning', 'developing', or 'meeting' these goals.

-FHS sends the students' transcripts and outlines the grading system when sending college admission information.

-The next school year has built in 3 hour delays in the calendar for time to support teachers in learning how to utilize the new grading system.

-Ms. Leeson spoke about the importance of feedback, not just the letter grade. This is where growth will occur.

Q: What if my child is not a good test taker?

A: Ms. Leeson used a sports analogy about showing up for practice makes a player better. In much of the same way, the level of content, the format, and the level of difficulty in the academic support factors, should all make a difference in the achievement grade.

Q: Will there be a reassessment period for the student?

A: Yes, a good assessment is aligned and actionable. We need to reflect on the issues so we can take action for that student.

Q: What are you hoping to learn from the pilot?

A: We learned a lot from the surveys and focus groups. We see how it is going, and how we can train our teachers, and how to communicate with students and families.

Q: There seemed to be a limited time for students and teachers to learn this new program.

A: Yes, but it is manageable.

Q: Is the Achievement grade just summative assessments?

A: Yes, tests, quizzes, projects, labs, etc.

Q: Will teachers use their own rubric?

A: No, they will use a designated BASD rubric. It will be uniform across all grade levels.

In closing, Ms. Leeson states it is all about making sure we report accurately what and how the students are learning, making sure we are bolstering their skills, and making sure that they are mastering the content being taught.

Wendy thanks everyone for coming tonight.

The next meeting is **May 9th, 2023.**