

Woodrow Wilson Senior High School, Washington, DC

PTSA MEETING

April 18th, 2007

7:00 p.m.

Held at Woodrow Wilson Senior High School, in the Library

Mary Giffin and Catherine Ribnick open the Meeting

Catherine stated that the PAX program, which is sponsored by the State Department in order to bring students to the USA from former Soviet Union nations, is seeking host families.

Next PTSA meeting

Mary announced that at the next PTSA meeting there would be elections for the PTSA and LSRT.

The next meeting will also provide an introduction to the new management committee and a discussion of the inspector general's report.

Mary outlined the roles of the PTSA vs. the LSRT. The importance of the PTSA is outreach.

Catherine stated that the importance of the PTSA is as the voice of the parents. The PTSA's fundraising adds value to the DCPS experience.

Catherine called for more participants in the PTSA.

Dr. Tarason's Report

Dr. Tarason said he just met with the new Chinese teacher, who just arrived. The Chinese embassy is paying for the program.

The DC CAS testing was in progress. Dr. Tarason asked that all 10th graders be at school on time.

Regarding academy admissions, there were 690 applicants and 100 accepted. 4 are coming in via lottery.

There will be lots of kids coming from Deal and Jefferson, rising 9th and 10th graders.

All students must wear their lanyards with their IDs.

Students are the first line of defense against violence in the school. Please remind your student of their importance in the process of defense.

The spring advisory is in full swing.

19 kids were invited to participate in the National Merit program due to their PSAT scores. Many African-American students are eligible as well; their names will be announced later.

Mary introduces the speakers, Linda Samuel, and Craig Messersmith

Mary: Tonight's speakers are former Wilson parents, Linda Samuel, and Craig Messersmith. Linda is a social worker. Craig is a family therapist.

Linda: Adolescence and psychological development: kids are trying to tell who they are and who they are not. This is what they are asking themselves. They are worried about fitting in. They are also wondering who are their true friends.

Early adolescence is age 12-14, when the peer group is very important.

Pop culture has a great influence; that influence extends to children as young as 4th and 5th grade.

Middle adolescence is age 15 to 16; this is when parent run and "ruin" the kid's life (in the child's opinion). Being different from the group is avoided.

Older teens have more discernment.

The brain is developing in the teenager; they are not always able to avoid risk behavior.

The brain does not grow larger after age 5 but it still grows "hard wires" especially in the teen years.

For the teenager, the brain is formed, but the "executive" part of the brain is undergoing amazing growth at about age 9 to 10 until the early 20's.

The brain becomes stronger.

The "executive" part of the brain is the cradle of civilization.

This explains why teens have poor judgment and their moods are changing.

Stable moods are a brain function.

Empathy does not develop until the mid-20s.

Teenagers cannot even imagine being unsafe; they have no experience and cannot follow through to the logical conclusion.

Craig: factors that separate sexually active/harmful vs. sexually active/cautious include the father. The father who is more respectful raises a more self-respectful girl.

Consider the influences of society.

This is the "Generation My Space." We have to help teens survive "My Space" and "Facebook." Teens have no idea about what all those postings and pictures mean.

Parent: I am concerned, my child is constantly distracted by e-mail, calls, and text messages...even when doing homework.

Craig: The student's job is to do well in school; that must be understood.

Parent: I am worried about setting rules and limits when I do not know what ground I am on; I do not know about Facebook and texting.

Craig: We have to admit when we do not have control.

Linda: Parents move from the role of manager to the role of consultant.

Parent: As the child gets older she has more responsibilities, so gets more privileges.

Craig: Delay freedoms as long as possible.

Parent: I am concerned about computers and music as background noise.

Parent: "My Space" can be a positive outlet for kids to express their emotions. However, there are worries about kids being exposed to bad influences on "My Space."

Parent: I had a hard time admitting to my 19 year old son and to myself that I had no power to control his behavior.

Parent: I am having a hard time because my 15-year-old will not participate in family time.

Linda: Your children carry your voices with them. They can hear you (remember your opinion) even when you are not there.

Craig: It is very important to have your say. You can try to "stage" a conversation in front of your kids, to make sure you know your message will get through.

Parent: I was surprised when my child wrote an essay praising my values. I had an impact on him that I was not aware of. Despite all the fights. Respect your kids, they will respect you.

Craig: College now takes 5 or more years for most (75%) of the students. Regarding younger teens and cell phones, carve out your position, but do not lose that dialogue. You have the right to look at your kids' "My Space." Take a trip with your child, or an outing; talk side by side. This is a nice way to enjoy your child.

Parent: I am a teacher. Teenage is the time of planting seeds. Get on a bandwagon of success with your kids. Look at it like a process; build a culture of success and support, allowing some experimenting with behaviors.

Craig and Linda: Here are some books we recommend:

“Get out of my life! But first, drive me and Cheryl to the Mall.’

“Second Family” by Taffel.

Adjournment

Mary: Thank you Craig and Linda.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Ellen Leander
Wilson High PTSA Recording Secretary

