

## Middlesex School Parents Association Minutes for October 1, 2011 Meeting

**Summary:** MPA officers were introduced by Betsy Lawrence and she spoke of sign up sheets for the next two events: the Sports Tea on November 12 (same date as the next MPA meeting) and the Faculty and Staff Appreciation brunches on Dec 10 and 12 respectively. Dan Scheibe, along with Karlyn McNall, spoke about the new updates to the website including the forthcoming ability to see student's grades and comments on the "My Backpack" part of the parent's section and an online directory of parents and students and online accounts. Parent's weekend is October 28 and 29.

### **Details**

Betsy welcomed everyone to the meeting, held in the Green Room. She introduced the officers of the MPA, her co President Dawn Kreitler, Vice President Lisa MacNamera, Treasurer, Sue Gorman, Secretary, Patti Satterthwaite and members at large, Patty Popov and Julie McKenna. She encouraged everyone to attend the MPA meetings which serve as a conduit of information between the faculty and administration and parents. The meetings are full of good information and should be very useful going forward. She mentioned that her goal was to increase attendance at the meetings.

The two main MPA sponsored events that are upcoming are the Sports Tea and the faculty and staff appreciation lunches.

**Sports Tea.** The sports tea will take place on Nov 12 after the St Georges games. A sign up sheet was going around as well as online (under the parents section). Food of all types is welcome, just Nut Free and labeled with ingredients. Deb Zaffiro is the chair and she will be sending out reminder and helpful hints and suggestions emails for those who sign up online and at the meeting.

**Faculty and Staff Appreciation Brunches.** Each year there are several faculty and staff appreciation events that the MPA organizes. The first will be on Dec 10, for faculty and Dec 12 for staff. Robin Shapiro will be organizing these events this year and those interested in donating food or money should contact her. This event, held on Dec 10 for faculty, is the meeting that the faculty discusses all the new students in the school.

Dan Scheibe spoke about the new website which was launched at the end of the school year last year. It is vastly improved and has specific expanded content for parents. In fact, some parents are listening to the meeting now via a connection that is real time. He explained that he is the Assistant Head of School and would explain the general aspects of the website and Karlyn McNall, the Dean of Academic Affairs, would discuss the expanded Academic offerings, expected to go live in the near future. She will also describe the "accounts" section as well.

The Website ([www.mxschool.edu](http://www.mxschool.edu)) can navigate to the Parents section. Under that heading there is a dashboard with several options including MPA info. At this point he mentioned that there will be a Parent Connect Event on Monday October 3 at 8pm which

will be live but also available later in an archive online. The Parent Connect is a resource that is paid one half by the school and one half by the MPA and covers topics very relevant to teens such as dating, drugs and alcohol, sleep, eating habits etc. It is a good resource and worth listening too. There will be an email regarding this coming out on Monday and on the website as well.

Under the dashboard, there is a section about Athletics. There you can find your child's games and if they are cancelled or not. It is real time. One person suggested that information regarding non regular season athletic events also be listed on the website such as camps or tournaments. Dan took note of that.

There is a calendar option as well which can be imported into some global calendar software; ical is not working at the moment but will be soon. They are working on end times for events.

### **My Backpack**

Karlynn McNall spoke about the specifics under My Backpack in the dashboard. In order to get access to this information you need to send a signed form (available on the website) that gives permission to give this information out. If you fax or mail the signed form to the Technology office, they will email you a username and password. It is strongly suggested that you not give your student the username or password.

You can update your profile on the website and other parents can access. You can look up your student's friends names and other useful information through the Directory section of My Backpack. You can also specify if you want the information published or not as well. There is a printable version of the My Backpack summaries available.

In addition there is billing and academic information under My Backpack and the academic portion will go live soon. In the accounts section, your Middlesex account is accessible.

Under the academic section, there is the student's schedule, attendance information, marking period grades and comments as well as past grades and comments. It will be the same as what has been mailed out previously, but available on a more timely basis. Historical student data is also available. A question was asked about the cumulative grade point average and although it is not maintained or calculated by MX it is easy enough to calculate using the grades. There are no SAT scores or AP grades in this portion. With respect to attendance data they are tallied and explained in the summary. Absences from advisor meetings, sports, chapels, assemblies are not included, just academic classes. There will be mid term grades available at the beginning of next month.

With respect to accounts, there are three sections: tuition, bank and the store. You can track all of the billing through this section. Tuition is straight forward. The bank includes the grill charges and the store, the store charges. They can be tracked almost in real time

and there is a feature coming up that will let you fund an increase to the account for your student via a credit card or e check.

With respect to overall use, it was suggested not to use the back button but rather click on other sections of My Backpack. If you forget your password, you can email the Technology desk and you can get the information via email from 9-5 Monday –Friday for specific questions. Joe Alford, Head of the Technology Department, suggested emailing him with comments and suggestions. Sharon Smith who is the manager of the Website was also at the meeting and welcomed suggestions.

Dan and Karlyn spoke about the parent’s weekend, coming up on October 28 and 29. It is a great time to see your student and his or her classes and meet other students and their parents. Sunday and Monday are available to take your student home following sports on Saturday against Thayer. It is a “work day” on Monday and there will be no classes. There is also an opportunity to meet with your child’s advisor and your child should be getting in touch with you about the time and they will schedule for a 20-30 minute update with their advisor. Mid term grades will not be available until about a week later.

There were several questions. One asked about the grill and how to replenish the card. It was explained that the “Zebra” card functions not only as a card to get into dorms but also as a “debit” card in the MX world. It has a picture on it of the student and if the student uses it to purchase something from the grill their picture also comes up at the grill computer. The same happens in the book store. To replenish parents can simply write a check (until online payments are initiated, hopefully within the school year).

With respect to getting information about what the student is doing, it is a balance between letting them be responsible and having information that as a parent you would really need. Dan spoke about the Pond as a bi weekly source of information generally for parents and the ability to email the student’s advisor or dorm head. With respect to emailing parents regularly (as say maybe what parents might be used to in elementary or middle school), this is to be avoided.

With respect to downloading the calendar, the ical was not working right now but has a high priority and should be available soon.

Finally, Dan spoke about Verizon getting a tower here and improving service on the campus. That should happen soon.

The meeting adjourned at 11:10am.