

PTO Meeting October 2015

PTO Sponsored Meet the Candidates for Albemarle County School Board

At the last meeting the PTO agreed to host a forum for the Candidates for Albemarle County School Board to address stakeholders of Western Albemarle High School. Shortly thereafter, the county announced that it would hold a similar meeting. As such, the PTO sponsored event was no longer pursued. It was reported that the county hosted event was sparsely attended.

Update from Darah Bonham, WAHS Principal

Mr. Bonham enthusiastically updated the PTO on his plans for WAHS as the new Principal to include but not limited to the following:

- Growth of Environmental Science Academy and possible addition of more. Last year there were 27, this year 40+ with 7 or 8 from other feeder school.
- Building improvements to bring the high school up to date with not only the resources needed for academics, but for enjoyment and creativity. It has been shown that students and teachers alike benefit from windows and collaboration spaces. There's only an estimated 6-7 million dollars dedicated to improvements per year for 10 years. Most of the classroom are from 700-1000 square feet and contain much of the same furniture from the 70's and 80's. Most rooms have big black block tv's with VHS players that are not used. They're simply obsolete. Mr. Bonham remarked that it is amazing what the student accomplish within this environment and even more astonishing what the teachers and staff provide to the students.
- Areas for building improvement include:
 - Updating lighting, both natural and enhanced.
 - New modern furniture
 - Learning Spaces
 - Removing unused lockers and replacing with charging stations and work bars
 - Already on order are 150 new desks, 100 new chairs, 200 more new chairs in December, Skins for chalkboards

Parent Council Update – Randy Switz, Representative

Mr. Switz reported that each Parents Council Meeting is being held at a different school. This past meeting was held at Agnor Hurt Elementary School, which has recently been modernized.

A new Student Health Advisory Board is being established. One of the topics being addressed is homework. How much is enough? How much is too much? A homework survey will be distributed in the next few weeks.

Daily Communications from WAHS

Mr. Bonham noted that Avis Key has been out of the office for an extended period. During her absence, it was noted that many parents relied on the daily announcements sent via email. Mr. Bonham said upon her return that the issue will be resolved and he announced that he will begin his own blog with key dates and recognitions because it is not efficient for non-staff volunteers to be in charge of gather the information from the faculty and staff, synthesize it, and then communicate.

Student Engagement

Mr. Bonham discussed his desire to recognize students for their achievements outside of the classroom – they activities in the community. He raised the question, “How do we get adults to connect with students to share their talents.” Some ideas were discussed including mentoring, cybersecurity club, collaboration.

A discussion about how to close the achievement gap with programs other than remedial or CATEC. Growth depends on relationships time, space and creative experiences.

Michele Karpovich will be the new faculty liaison to the PTO. She is replacing Linda Shuey.

Mr. Bonham floated the idea of the PTO sponsoring a capital campaign to help with the modernization of the school. \$15-20k per classroom is needed. Can't choose one classroom over another. PTO would only be interested in funding a project that can be accessed by all students. A poll of stakeholders should be conducted to establish interest in project and what types of modernizations would be considered.

Volunteers needed for senior seminar.

Robotics open house: Oct 17, 2015

Start Up education weekend – 42 hour incubation will be hosted at WAHS in the library.