

# MINUTES OF THE WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE PARENT ASSOCIATION

September 12, 2016

Hiten Patel, President, called the Business Meeting of the WHS IBPA to order at 6:30 PM on September 12, 2016.

The Secretary-Treasurer noted that proper notice of the Business Meeting had been provided, and that approximately 65 members were present at the commencement of the meeting. Mr. Patel asked for comments or corrections to the minutes of the May 24, 2016 meeting. There being none, a motion was made and seconded by Mrs. Robinson-Patterson and Mrs. Rawal, respectively, and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the May 24, 2016 meeting.

Mr. Patel reviewed the evening's agenda and requested members adhere to meeting etiquette to ensure an effective meeting.

Next, Mr. Patel turned over the meeting to Stephanie Childress, WHS IB Coordinator, to provide an IB Program Update on the Class of 2016. Highlights from the update include:

- There were about approximately 140 IB students in the IB Diploma Program ("IBDP") consisting of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders during the 2015-2016 academic year.
- 70 students (12<sup>th</sup> graders) entered the IBDP, and 68 students received the IB Diploma, for a 97% passing rate, an increase from a 94% passing rate in the previous academic year.
- 162 IB exams were administered in May 2016 and the average IB score was 5.34 (out of 7).
- The maximum possible point total in the IBDP is 45 (scores from HL and SL exams and the Core). For the Class of 2016, the highest point total at WHS was 44, while the average for all IBDP graduates was 34.
- Ms. Childress then showed a picture of Class of 2016 that was taken on Decision Day, and highlighted that students were wearing the t-shirts of their college choice. As expected, many students were in UT orange, but there were many students attending a variety of other universities, ranging from the UC schools on the West coast to Ivy League schools on the East coast.

Ms. Childress concluded her update and introduced Mr. Acosta, the new Principal of WHS.

Mr. Acosta provided some of his background, focusing on his touch points to the IB Program, from being a principal of an IB Middle Years Program middle school to being an IBDP teacher in a high school. Further, he highlighted his previous positive interactions with Ms. Childress as a member of the District's IB team, concluding that they were in alignment on the importance and potential of the IBDP Program at WHS.

Next, Mr. Acosta discussed his vision of WHS IB program. Highlights include:

- His belief that the WHS IB Program can grow to capture more students who might benefit from it. Mr. Acosta believed that the current program is strong, but there is room to re-look at certain aspects of the program, making it more appealing to more students. He will study the current program, do some analysis of other highly successful IB programs, and begin to develop a plan to evolve the WHS IB Program. He will require time to accomplish this, and welcomed significant parental input.
- His belief that students are overtaxed and being pulled in many different directions, regardless of whether in the IB Program. Mr. Acosta observed the students at WHS are stressed and need tools and training to perform optimally, and additional support from the administration and faculty.
- His commitment to work with parents to resolve issues within the confines of the IBO, District and Texas requirements. Mr. Acosta assured parents that he is the No. 1 advocate for WHS IB program, and that while Ms. Childress is the program director, he will be directly involved with any program issues. He believes that District leadership has set the tone for appropriately addressing the needs of each high school's community and foresees a refinement of the many programs the school offers to better address the needs of our community.
- His belief that our best days are still ahead of us. Westwood has a great tradition, faculty, students, parents, and the task of continuously improving to meet future challenges falls upon us all and will require us to work together.

Then Mr. Acosta opened a Q&A session to address some of the questions/concerns IB parents had. A summary of questions and responses include:

- Question: Why has the District wanted all high schools to be alike and why does Mr. Acosta want to grow the IB Program?  
Answer: For the first question, the main reason is for equity and parity across all of the high schools in the District. If an opportunity is offered to one student, it should be offered to all students in equal measure. As it relates to the second question, he believes that the program can well serve students who are not currently considering the program due to limited paths of entry into the program, for example. He believes growth can come without lowering the academic standards that is one of the pillars of Westwood's identity.
- Question: Our students are inundated with homework, and are overworked and overstressed. How can Mr. Acosta address this issue?  
Answer: Mr. Acosta first shared his knowledge on brain development and the process by which knowledge is stored. He believes we need to evaluate homework quantity and efficacy and ensure that we are not misconstruing quantity with quality and/or rigor. Mr. Acosta assured parents that he is fully aware of this issue but he needs time to learn more before developing changes. He plans to directly involve parents through focus groups. Parents urged Mr. Acosta to not delay in making changes since this is the biggest

concern parents have as it relates to their students' well being.

- Question: How can we make IB more fun?

Answer: Ms. Childress mentioned that the fun starts at 11<sup>th</sup> grade and IBSO organizes many social events to engage students. Some events will be for pre-IB students as well. Mr. Acosta also has ideas to bring some energy and fun into the students' days with lunchtime DJ's and dances, chess/checkers tournaments in the hallway, etc. He will also need teachers' support to help bring some fun into students' lives.

- Question: In addition to the removal of accelerated science class, are there other academic changes that will be made to the WHS IB program?

Answer: Ms. Childress has been working on other changes and information will be available around in early Spring 2017, prior to course selection. Mr. Acosta added that the current course choices at WHS appear to be in siloes, and he'd like to see more cohesiveness between programs and course offerings. He will work to broaden course pathways into the IBDP.

- Question: Is WHS working with IBO, the organizing body for the IBDP, to revisit WHS IB curriculum planning?

Answer: IBO is constantly evaluating and modifying the IBDP, and the District and The IB Program Office are reflecting these changes in the curriculum at the appropriate times.

- Question: The parent of a freshman pre-IB parent asked if IB is worth it from a GPA and rank-in-class perspective.

Answer: One parent whose child graduated from the WHS IBDP spoke highly of the WHS IB program and commented that the program prepared her daughter amazingly well for college; "it was the greatest gift we could have given our daughter." Several other parents concurred that their students had also experienced a seamless transition to college. Mr. Patel also informed the parents that the WHS IBPA would host a young alumni panel on January 4, 2017 where parents and students can hear directly from graduates about how the WHS IBDP has impacted them.

- Question: The issue of how much homework is directly connected to the quality of teaching. If the student receives poor instruction in class, a greater burden is placed on him to learn the material independently at home. Therefore, part of the problem with too much work at home reflects poor pedagogy. How can Mr. Acosta change this?

Answer: Mr. Acosta plans to audit every area of the school, and will be evaluating the faculty in due course. Where teacher performance is below standards, the proper developmental resources will be provided to ensure improved pedagogy.

- Question: What's the impact on a student in term of GPA, college admission, career, if he or she starts in pre-IB but chooses to not pursue the IBDP?

Answer: WHS has many other strong programs such as AP and dual credit to prepare students for college and beyond. WHS prepares all students well for college, if that is their chosen path. Mr. Acosta stated that the schools data showed that many of the students who graduate in the bottom quartile proceed to college and often times get into colleges comparable to students

who graduate from other schools in the first quartile. Mr. Patel also added that IBDP may not be the best path for every student, and that it is unlikely that a student will complete their four years at WHS without any struggle or challenge, regardless of path chosen. Students and parents need to embrace this truth and learn how to overcome the obstacle along the way, hopefully with some self-discovery and self-realization along the way. Ultimately, high school is a journey, not a destination.

Mr. Patel thanked Mr. Acosta for his time and welcomed him to remain for further casual conversation with parents at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Patel shared the calendar of events with the parents for the current year. Events are broken down into six groups: business & annual meetings, BYOLunch Series, open house, social events, enrichment events, and book club. Book club is targeted towards parents, but is open to students if they wish to participate. Mr. Patel briefly went through each group of events and highlighted the following upcoming events:

- September 23, 2016 BYOLunch: Parent Panel on transitioning to WHS.
- September 23, 2016 Parent Social.
- October 2, 2016 Enrichment Event: All Ages Improv Night.

Events details will be sent to all members as dates approach. Mr. Patel urged parents who have not done so to complete a member survey to become a member, to join our Facebook group, and to subscribe to Elizabeth Vetter's weekly WHS e-letter to receive WHS IBPA event updates.

There being no old or new business, Mr. Patel adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

These minutes being a fair and accurate recording of the events of the meeting on September 12, 2016, they are respectfully submitted as the official record.

/s/ Chunyan Pei

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Chunyan Pei  
Secretary-Treasurer