



Issaquah High PTSA 2.6.45
General Membership Meeting
IHS Library

October 7, 2019
7:00 pm

Our PTSA Mission

To expand educational opportunities and enhance the learning and social environment at IHS through programs, volunteers, advocacy, and financial support.

Call to Order Wendy Maruchek called the meeting to order at 7:01pm and led introductions. Proper notice of the meeting was given and a quorum was present. A sign-in sheet is attached to the original minutes.

President's Report (*Wendy Maruchek*)

Wendy Maruchek reported the following information:

- Wendy thanked the individuals and groups who volunteered at or contributed to the following events:
 - Our speakers this month: IHS Principal Andrea McCormick and ISD Superintendent Ron Thiele
 - *Staff Breakfast*: Chairs Lida Buckner and Sandra Puliezi, and all the September breakfast contributors: Christina Johnson, Michele Severt, Ellen Yoon, Victoria Evans, Lisa Small, Heidi Fuhs, Cindy Liddle, Meng Qian, Melissa Watts, Jaime Crothers, Toni Hunter, Carmela Gellos, Daphne Lenhardt, Sara Carmichael, Danielle Graham, Dallas Serumgard, Sandy Schmidt, Laurie Bateman, Elaine Eckert, Sheila Barlow, Yoon Kim, Amy Korb, and Laurie Staats
 - *New Family Ambassadors*: Chairs Amber Zielinski and Rebecca Fay, and Valerie Yanni, host of the September New Family Coffee
 - *Angel Program*: Chairs Joanne Wrightson and Jen Crewe, and all the volunteers who have signed up come in on Fridays to pass out the weekend Power Packs: Leslie Banic, Sandy Schmidt, Alyssa Darragh, Victoria Evans, Diane Karl, Tracy Drake, Kendra Hoffman, Sarah Riggs, Marisa Garcia Struck, and Kristin Brennock
- Current volunteer opportunities include: Chair for ACT/SAT Practice Tests, Healthy Student Committee member, co-Chair/Chair-in-training for the Individual PTSA Awards Committee, and College and Career Center Support
- Next Membership meeting will be on November 15 @ 9:30am
- National Reflections Art competition deadline for entry submission is October 30
- Check issaquahhighptsa.org for most current information about upcoming events

Business

The Consent Agenda included the following documents:

- Minutes of September 13, 2019, Membership meeting
- September 2019 Treasurer's Report

The Minutes and Treasurer's Report were emailed to members with the meeting notice, and were made available on the PTSA website.

MOTION: Kim Wilkinson made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, Renee Barnes seconded. Voice vote taken, motion passed.

Panel Speakers

The speakers, Ron Thiele, ISD Superintendent, and Andrea McCormick, IHS Principal, were introduced. Topics and questions were selected by the PTSA from those submitted via an email parent/guardian survey last week.

Topic 1: Opioids/Recent Deaths

- **Are there discussions taking place regarding the most recent deaths of students in our district due to the fentanyl overdose?**
- **What investigative efforts are taking place?**
- **What is the plan to prevent this from happening to other students?**
- **How is Issaquah High educating students about the dangers of opioids?**
- **How are drugs kept out of the schools?**

Thiele: Discussions regarding opioids had been ongoing even before the recent incidents, for example, I mentioned it as an issue confronting our community when I spoke at a Kiwanis event earlier this year. It's not a new problem, but it's recently become more acute. My email on October 4th gave very specific details regarding what to look for (blue pills marked with "M30") provided to us by the King County Sheriff's Office. Every family in the district should be talking about this issue with their kids. The School Board will meet tomorrow night with the Issaquah City Council to discuss ways to address this issue, and will meet with the Sammamish City Council later this month. The District will continue to work with its community partners to inform our families. I encourage everyone who wants to learn more to attend one of the upcoming "Hidden in Plain Sight" drug use awareness events. We are also working to understand why kids do this. Kids identify the competitive school environment as their biggest source of stress. Not only are we working to address stress and depression issues (for example, by adding mental health counselors to the schools, and adding flex time into the high school schedule), but we're also trying to send a different message regarding academics than kids got 19 years ago when I came to the District. Then, it was all "more AP courses, higher SAT/ACT scores, etc.", but now we're asking, what's too much? We're working to create an environment that encourages achievement but is not quite so competitive, and that emphasizes the learning more than any particular result or score. We will also continue working with our community partners to create new awareness events.

McCormick: IHS had an incident (involving a community member, not a student) a couple years ago that brought urgency to the conversation. Health and social-emotional learning classes do address this issue, and the Student Handbook talk at the beginning of the year covers vaping, but the struggle of this topic is not wanting to pique students' interest with too much information. Drug education is continuing to happen, but we need to consult experts to see how much to emphasize opioids in particular. Students here say they're only seeing alcohol and marijuana, so we want to be measured about our response without being naïve.

Our school benefits from positive community norms. Students want more learning related to stress management and mindfulness. Our kids are really good about reporting their friends' unsafe behaviors because they're concerned about their friends' well-being. Our anonymous tip hotline is used regularly.

Thiele: Our students receive one consistent message from K to 12 – the positive example set by the school environment. We have SROs and other people constantly watching out for unsafe behaviors. The community needs to watch for these behaviors, too, because the most common age for drug users in the community is mid-20s to early 30s. The opioid abuse problem will not get solved on ISD school campuses – the entire community has to be involved.

Topic 2: Traffic

- **Are there any improvements in the works concerning traffic around the high school?**
- **What are the constraints?**

Thiele: There is no easy, immediate solution to traffic. Building new secondary schools will help. Once those buildings are in service, it will remove 1,000-1,200 kids from Clark/IMS/IHS area. But school construction is increasingly difficult. It has taken three years to purchase property for schools approved in the 2016 bond. I have testified in Olympia regarding the Growth Management Act restrictions. For example, the ISD owned 80 acres in May Valley that we couldn't build on because it was outside the Urban Growth Boundary Line. We sold it, but then we had to buy more expensive land in the city that was buildable. Our district is about 110 square miles, and only about 40% of that area is buildable. We're just running out of land. The Talus and Providence Point sites are crucial to the ISD's future. Community pushback is a problem--some people don't want schools in their neighborhoods, but every delay costs millions of dollars because the cost of construction keeps going up. We're determined to get those schools built, but the community should monitor the process and support the ISD. City and King County partners need to understand that this is what we need to do. Target date for our fourth comprehensive high school is Fall 2022, but the city needs to help us with obtaining the necessary permits. We need to break ground on middle school six in April 2020. Work on the high school needs to start by Fall 2020 to keep us on track.

McCormick: A traffic engineer from city made some recommendations, but nothing is really going to help until we have fewer students at IHS. Buses have to be prioritized because of the tight window with other schools. Portables would take up parking spaces and we are up against city rules regarding the number of parking spaces per numbers of students that we have to have. Teachers are using common prep rooms so all classrooms are used for all periods. Fortunately our building has wide hallways and lots of natural light so it doesn't feel too crowded despite the number of students.

Thiele: It's important to remember that traffic isn't caused just by the schools—the Front Street corridor is backed up when schools are out, too. The Ten Trails master-planned community in Black Diamond will have a big impact because it will add about 15K residents to Black Diamond. It will be a commuter community, and the three routes to travel north will become more crowded: (1) Issaquah-Hobart Road; (2) State Route 18, and (3) the Maple Valley Highway. Infrastructure work needs to happen to relieve traffic in downtown's Front Street corridor—something like the Southeast Bypass project that was stopped by the Issaquah City Council 13 years ago.

Topic 3: Snow Days

- **What is the plan for future snow days?**

Thiele: The current-year calendar is set, but in the out-year calendars, we are trying to build in more snow days, but this lengthens the school year. We are also making improvements in how we communicate weather-related school information. Our new Emergency Transportation bulletin is available in four languages. Flash Alerts will send you texts. We are also building our own internal texting system, but the data has to be good--landline phone numbers won't work. Families should edit their Skyward profile so cell phone numbers are correctly identified. The ISD also can now change the banner information on individual school websites to provide the most accurate information.

Topic 4: School Schedule

- **With a school start date in September, the school year seems misaligned with national AP testing which occurs in early May. Is there any consideration of a school year shift?**

Thiele: Our school start date probably won't change for this because it doesn't affect that many families.

McCormick: Changing our school year would require a statewide shift (sports schedules, child care, etc.). This is a much broader issue than just our school.

Topic 5: 7-period Days

- **What is the feedback on the 7-period days?**

McCormick: Feedback on the 7-period day has been mostly positive. Classrooms are being used by more than one teacher, and shared white board space has been a little confusing for students, although the boards are marked. The block days take some getting used to. We are going to use the early feedback to work out the kinks, and then seek a second round of feedback after students have more experience. Students have been happy to have more electives—as the summer school principal, I saw a huge decrease in students taking health and PE this year because they weren't as worried about fitting it all in.

Thiele: The School Board is in the process of evaluating 7 period day. The benefit I see is in giving kids more opportunities to find their passion, or just to take their summers off. The old system required that a student never fail—more opportunities for credits takes pressure off the kids. We've also seen a big increase in demand for PE classes. One student said he enjoyed using his flex time to practice his instrument so he has more free time at home. The most added staff has been Career and Technical Education teachers, driven by offering more electives.

Topic 6: Number of Academic Counselors

- **The number of academic counselors seems too low to provide proactive or personal outreach to all students. Can anything be done?**

Thiele: The 2018 Levy added counselors, and our ratios are better, but still not good enough. We've doubled our number of counselors in the last five years. The vast majority of counselor positions are not part of state basic education. We can do more, but it's getting difficult to hire mental health counselors due to demand. We hope that the social-emotional learning lessons starting in kindergarten are overtly, directly teaching students skills so they don't end up in the counselor's office.

Topic 7: Running Start

- **How are Running Start students being supported?**

McCormick: It's difficult to support Running Start (RS) students because they're not ever here. We have one counselor dedicated to communicating with RS students. About 70% of the RS students are signed up for Remind.com, so we've added a RS group. School announcements are all on the website. We text the link to weekly info sessions a couple times a year. Our counselors have good relationships with Bellevue College and Seattle Central so we try to be proactive.

Thiele: With Running Start, students and families have a much larger responsibility for their own academic support. There isn't a system similar to Skyward to check on grades, so they may not know a student is failing until the quarter is over. We need to do a better job of communicating to students and families how RS works and how much extra responsibility it entails.

Topic 8: Bond Issue

- **How will the new bond issue affect Issaquah High or its feeder schools?**
- **Would increasing the School Impact Fees (paid by new building projects) be a viable option to reducing levies?**

Thiele: I'm going to assume that this question relates to the renewal levy that will be on the ballot on February 11, 2020, because we do not currently have another bond issue planned. The operations levies are the source of our extra counselors, the 7-period day, extra teachers, really they're about 12.5% of everything we do in the ISD. They are the operational dollars to supplement state basic education dollars. Bonds are for building, and it's possible we'll ask for a new bond in 2022. Impact fees charged to developers are typically passed through to the house buyers. They add to the price of the houses, and indirectly increase the problem of affordable housing in our community. Last year, the ISD benefited from about \$3M of impact fees, but the total ISD budget is about \$350M dollars, so, overall, their effect is very small. The fees are based on a 10-year growth plan formula for King County, and the ISD can impose only one impact fee for all five cities that are part of the District. The cities are looking at ways to increase the fees, but even if the fees were doubled, it still won't add much money. For reference, building a high school costs roughly \$150M, so at \$3-6M a year, it would take a long time to raise enough money to build a new school.

Topic 9: Advisory Committee for School Spirit

- **School spirit appears lower than in the past. Perhaps it's due to overcrowding and not feeling as intimate. Is there a committee of advisors and students who address school spirit?**

McCormick: I question the premise of this question. It depends on how you measure school spirit. The number of kids in clubs is up, the number of students attending dances is up, and other schools comment on our school spirit when they are at our events. On the other hand, with a freshman class of 700, how does that ever feel small and intimate? Our students tell us that one reason they don't want to do Running Start is that they like the environment here.

Thiele: As a closing comment, I wanted to express my gratitude for the PTSA, for volunteers, for parents, and for all of you who came to the meeting tonight. Thank you.

Adjourned 8:00 pm

Next Meeting: November 15, 2019 9:30am IHS Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,

Alisa E. George, Secretary