

MINUTES FROM THE CLASS OF 2012 PTO MEETING
JANUARY 12, 2010
“Sex and the Sophomore”

Introduction

Carol Levin opened the meeting at 7:05. The next meeting will be on Thursday, Jan. 21 at 7 p.m. in the MLK Room to discuss application to School Within a School (SWS). On Mon., Jan. 25, at 7 p.m. in the MLK Room there will be a sophomore parent network meeting facilitated by B-PEN, the Brookline Parent Education Network.

Announcements

Dean Diane Lande discussed today’s Martin Luther King Day assembly for which the whole school gathered in the gym. Students read poems, Camerata sang. Dean Mims gave the keynote address and read a poem by Langston Hughes (“I, Too, Sing America”) in which the poet describes being sent to the kitchen to eat, but growing strong so that he, too, will “be at the table/when company comes.” This metaphor about how everyone can “be at the table” if they receive love, strength, and respect will be symbolized at BHS by a table that will be set up in the atrium.

Dean Lande also mentioned the possibility of an intercession after exams to discuss what a “commitment to learning” really means, and what BHS can do to encourage that commitment.

Presentation

Roberta Scoff, BHS parent and health and fitness teacher, described the 9th grade health and fitness curriculum. (See handout.)

The course includes a unit on human sexuality, as developed by Planned Parenthood. This includes discussion of healthy relationships, decision-making, and risk assessment. Students learn about sexually transmitted infections (STI), and contraception. There is a focus on stressing *postponement* of sexual behavior. For example, students receive a pamphlet entitled “100 Ways of Making Love Without “Doing It.””

Marilyn Fife, social worker and sexuality educator from Planned Parenthood, and (former) BHS parent, introduced her work at the Planned Parenthood League of Mass.

Parents must be the primary sexuality educators. Regardless of how good the BHS health and fitness curriculum is, parents must follow up at home. School/Student/Parents: “This is a triangle that needs to be completed.”

We all want kids to make safe and informed decisions.

There is no right or wrong way, but parents must first figure out what their own values are about sexuality, relationships, and sexual behavior. In fact, relationships are the key to talking about sexuality.

Experimentation is a hallmark of teen behavior, so it is important for parents to be non-judgmental listeners. (Remember, talking about sex DOES NOT lead to early experimentation.) When surveyed, the majority of kids say that it would have been easier to postpone sexual behavior if they had been able to talk about sex with their parents. Parents, therefore, need to let their kids know that they are an “askable parent.” Sometimes, these discussions are easier if they are not face-to-face. Parents can, for example, suggest that the teen turn around so as to not have to look directly at the parent during a sensitive discussion.

Remember that parents always have the opportunity to come back and re-visit a discussion. You might, for example, upon further thought decide that you have changed your mind about something. You don’t only get one chance to discuss these issues with your child.

Four key components:

1. Rights.

- Parents have the right to be a sexuality educator for their children .
- Children have the right to receive the information that they need.
- Parents have the right to ask kids to listen.

2. Values.

- Schools will provide information, but will not share personal values.
- Parents have the responsibility to share their values with their children.
- Parents need to figure out what their values are and the share them with their children.

3. Self-esteem.

- Kids who feel good about themselves are less likely to engage in risky behavior.

4. Facts.

- Make sure that kids have accurate facts.

Whereas “sex” refers to the act of pleasuring oneself or someone else, and is also a biological term referring to male, female or intersex, “sexuality” is a term that encompasses one’s relationship to one’s sexual self, relationships with others, sexual behavior, physiology.

If your child says “you don’t understand,” ask your child to help you understand. Stay on top of media (TV, movies) so you are aware of the sexuality messages being conveyed. **MAINTAIN YOUR KID’S CONFIDENTIALITY** if he/she tells you something about someone else. Try to keep the attitude that “all questions are good questions,” and if you need time to figure out an answer to a question, make sure that you get back to your kid as soon as possible. You do not have to tell everything to your kid about your own life, but remember that kids sometimes ask these questions because they are trying to figure things out for themselves. In any case, it’s never too late to start a conversation about sexuality with your child.

Questions

Are kids “dating”? Kids date less, but tend to go out in groups. Sexual behavior is often outside of the context of an emotional relationship (“friends with benefits”). Sexually explicit text messaging is relatively common (see handouts).

What is the pregnancy rate at BHS? This is a medical issue, and is therefore unknown because of confidentiality issues.

What are the sexually transmitted infections (STI) that are most common? (See handout.) The most common viral STI is HPV (see handout). The most common bacterial STI is Chlamydia. Because Chlamydia is highly contagious and asymptomatic in the early stages, it is easily transmitted. If left untreated, it can lead to infertility.

What services does Planned Parenthood offer teens? Treatment is available for high schoolers without parental consent. One parent’s consent is necessary for an abortion if a child is under 18. One service is called a “HOPE” visit, which is a visit for which the teen keeps on his or her clothes. The child can get a prescription for birth control, or if under 18 can get a prescription for emergency contraception (previously referred to as “Plan B”).

What birth control methods are teenagers using? (See handout.) Most common for teens is the condom, which has the benefit of being a protection from STIs. Hormonal methods (such as the birth control pill) are now much safer than they used to be. It is recommended that any sexually active teen get tested for STIs.

Handouts (on the website under "Handouts" at <http://bhs-ptd.org/2012.html>):

9th Grade Health and Fitness Curriculum

HPV Vaccine

How Violence Affects Children

Nurturing Children

Protection Methods

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Parent and Youth Resource List

Sex and Technology

Teaching Teenagers About Harassment

The meeting ended at 8:20 p.m.