

**9th grade PTO Meeting
September 22, 2020**

These notes are meant to supplement the presentation slides. Bold headings correspond to the titles of slides.

Welcome and Introductions

Jenee Uttaro--OLS dean
Alexia Thomas--asst dean and guidance counselor
Brendan Kobus--asst dean
[Jed Miller--Director of Therapeutic Services]

Guidance counselors:

Alexia Thomas
Ms. Young
Ms. Aggelar
Ms. Kennedy (Career Counseling)

Support Staff roles

Assistant deans and program directors: like vice-principals
Guidance counselor--go-to person for students and parents; also point people for the teachers.
Not sure who to call about something? start with guidance counselor

Social workers: one dedicated to 9th grade

All of these are focused on supporting social-emotional health of students

Welcome from Anthony Meyer, head of school:

The OLS deans all wanted to be part of OLS, part of a smaller learning community

Ratio of deans and of guidance counselors at OLS--higher than for older grades

Current student numbers: 1900 remote; 100 in person at OLS

Current schedule designed to transition well to hybrid model

Supt Jim Marini will take the lead on deciding timeline for shift to hybrid model

OLS is ready to host kids (kids are already there), but there is still work to do on other BHS buildings

Students should raise concerns, questions, challenges directly with teachers first. Parents should support students in doing this, get involved only when necessary, and start with teachers (before curriculum coordinators, deans, etc)

How We Welcomed Your Students to BHS (Ninth grade orientation on Sept. 15):

Admin worked on encouraging safe connections among students: masking, social distancing, etc (even outside of school hours)

Introduced students to BHS mantras: a big part of the life of BHS; permeate the school culture and environment

- *This is hard. You can do it. We will help you.* Nothing worthwhile comes easy. There are moments of high school that are supposed to be hard. But we believe students can do it, and we're here to help.
- *Freedom and responsibility.* BHS gives lots of freedom--certainly more than students have had in previous school years. Sometimes students misuse it, but we believe it's important for them to have. We help them learn to use it responsibly.
- *You are not done yet.* Growth mindset--everything is a learning experience. Not just school learning--at BHS, we learn about ourselves, who we are, what we can become. 9th grade is a great time to think about what you want to become and reinvent yourself toward that.
- *We create the culture we want.* We want BHS to be a challenging, rewarding academic environment, so students need to work hard and seek help. But we also want it to be kind and inclusive, so we have to model that.

What we are hearing

Comments came from Rose, Bud, Thorn activity from Hub advisory

What is Hub?

2x per week; 35 mins each time

Building community together in a small group

Place and space for kids to start to get to know each other; share interests, goals, struggles, worries

Restorative justice circle practice--everyone gets a chance to respond (there's a talking piece--a physical object--that passes from person to person); can always pass instead of speaking
85% last year's freshmen reported they liked Hub

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

Summer teacher work group focused on SEL practices and techniques, then shared with full faculty; created website that teachers can embed in their curriculum throughout the year.

Goal--learning to understand emotions, set goals, make [slide]

Innovation Fund, BEF, PTO all gave financial support for summer teacher work

Zoom expectations for BHS

Sept. 17 English classes--more Zoombombing

Students logged on with personal accounts, took another student's name

Teachers now using waiting rooms more--can check identities before admitting students

Next day--teachers spoke with students about harm and hurt that was done

Staff called home to families in the classes to check in; working with organizations outside of school to address issue

9th grade students have so far been very prompt to class

Remote Learning skills

Focus on executive functioning skills came out of summer work from teachers--at home students don't have many of the cues they have in the classroom for organization, self-advocacy, planning

These skills are targeted at remote learning environment, but will transfer to other environments

Each department will focus on a separate area of executive functioning skills (eg. how to write an email in an effective way)

BHS schedule

7 blocks of classes, meeting 3x per week (shorter blocks on Weds)

Attempt to standardize and simplify the schedule (after spring experience)

Not overloading with too many classes on a given day (fewer bits of homework to prepare for the next day)

80 min classes won't be 80 mins of lecture--80 mins of dedicated time [some synchronous with teacher, some time in breakout, some time to work on own (maybe with screen off)]

What 80 mins looks like will vary by grade (younger students need different flow than older students)

Easy to shift blocks around (eg Monday holiday = shift Mon schedule to Wed)

Purpose of the two week freeze on switching classes--makes students give the class a chance and see if they like it (try something out that they might not have had before)

There will not always be space to move into another class

Important school rules

Problem in class: have your child talk to teacher; try to step back to let your child address the problem, but step in if they need help doing so

Dates to Know

Many usual school events will happen (e.g. club fair)--dates to be determined

Questions from parents

When will students receive info about necessary materials?

Teachers are communicating about this now. Students will be getting answers this week

How will teachers facilitate class discussions in Zoom? What happens for students who don't feel comfortable participating in Xoom?

- Breakout rooms
- Chat
- Pairing students (based on student preference, sometimes)
- Sometimes student in own breakout room with teacher

What strategies will be used to support social-emotional learning in this remote start?

Community building resources from summer work group

Let us know how the social-emotional environment is feeling from your child's perspective

Are teachers teaching from home or classroom?

No mandate either way right now. Location doesn't seem to make a difference in terms of effectiveness. Because OLS is being used for students who have in-person learning right now, there isn't space for all OLS teachers to work from school.

Is it possible for students to meet in-person with teachers, even briefly?

Administrators wanted it to be up to teachers to decide how they could make a "plus". Some wellness teachers thinking about how to have classes in a tent. Social work groups also. Many teachers live outside Brookline, so in-person meetings are tough to schedule, but people are thinking about different ways that might happen.

A Meyer--we believe in our faculty taking the lead in what they can offer to students

Is it generally okay for parents to reach out to teachers directly to see how students are doing?

Yes

Is it possible for the district to post the syllabi for all courses?

Teachers post all of their syllabi on Canvas. Also, curriculum coordinators working on a document that details what happens in each subject area per quarter; it's 90% done--will share when done. Gives general idea of course of study in that subject.

Timeline for review of missed content from last year?

Focus is on new content

Some teachers using a spiral approach--doesn't begin as all review, but incorporates review as needed, along with new skills
Innovation Fund supported development of baseline assessments in five major content areas.
That will be part of early work in classes.

What kinds of assessment reporting will families receive?

Students will receive grades and comments on interim reports and report cards (four Interim Progress Reports [IPRs] and four report cards)
In remote learning, there will be more frequent communication--first IPR will be mid-Oct. Dates for each quarter ending--district is working on that (college application implications, etc). Will announce soon.
Move is toward more substantive feedback in comments (focused on performance and growth)

What is happening with sports and clubs?

Fall sports--registration just closed; sports for winter aren't set yet--decision depends on Mass Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), school dept, and health dept guidelines

Clubs and other extracurriculars--annual club fair will be held virtually in October (encouraged by successful virtual career fair in spring)--the fair will let students know what optys there are

Could X and T blocks be at the end of the day so students have the possibility of meeting in person for clubs? T block is advisory. X block during the day is an opportunity for students to get support from teachers; clubs do meet during X block, but also many meet after school. We expect the afterschool optys to continue (in safe, social distanced way)

Status of facility readiness?

OLS is complete; 115 not fully ready yet

Check in to School commit meetings for updates on move to hybrid

Can families switch from all-remote to hybrid, and from hybrid to all-remote options?

For high school, parents can switch in either direction. Email datateam@psbma.org to make a switch.

How do kids meet their guidance counselors? Guidance counselors are assigned by Hub; counselors have been popping into hubs; have office hours that are open every X block; communicating by Canvas; will hold seminars via Hub, setting up one-on-one meetings

Guidance counselors have 200 students in their case load, so can't call every student to do social-emotional check-ins. More effective for kids and parents to know where they can go to initiate support. Refer to chart of student support staff.

Guidance counselors are checking in with their students--will take longer to get to know students in a remote setting, but it is their priority. Some they will get to know more than others

(which also happens in in-person learning.) Nice thing for OLS counselors is that they only work with 9th graders--whole job is to get to know 9th graders.

How can parents/caregivers support teachers and staff?

Support the work students are doing at home, help students meet the expectations for Zoom, etc.

We are changing the way we are delivering instruction--curriculum coordinators are working with teachers to figure out what is essential to deliver, it will not be 100% of the content we had two years ago. We are saying, "Let's look at what we have been doing and why we're doing it and determine what are the essential pieces that we have to hit. What will work well in remote vs hybrid?" (e.g., physics teachers--saving up lessons that they hope they'll be able to teach in hybrid; meanwhile making videos to guide lessons that students can do more easily at home, like bouncing golf balls.)

BHS made intentional decision to not be part of Remote Learning Academy (RLA). For elementary schools, made sense to share resources for families choosing all-remote model. BHS chose to embed remote students in BHS classes with their peers.

Embedded in BHS hybrid model is support for cohort of students not in the classroom at the time. While there is a lesson going on, the same lesson in different forms will be taught to students who are remote. One thing to focus on is that education is not only something that happens when the teacher is in front of kids, talking.

Is it possible for teachers to share class lists with contact information (for those who don't want to opt out), to make it easier for students to contact/get to know each other?

Students have the same formula for their psbma email address--they can initiate contact that way. Jenee can encourage teachers to remind students of that.

Teachers will be doing a lot of group work (large part of curriculum)--teachers realize students don't know each other yet, so they'll structure group work as one way for students to build connections

Can parents advocate for OLS to open, since it is ready?

Admin would consider having 9th graders back first--Anthony Meyer and Hal Mason are working with district leaders on this. Their first response is that they'd like to bring everyone back at once (many classes are cross-grade), but they know OLS is ready, so will plan for both options (need to figure out how to handle electives). Bringing 9th grade back first has been talked about in School Committee meetings. Remaining issues for bringing everyone back are largely around ventilation. Hoping that these will be resolved in all bldgs shortly.

Further questions? Continue to send questions to ptoclassreps2024@gmail.com