

May 10, 2021

District 8 BAC Meeting at Apex High School

Speaker: Lindsay Mahaffey

Thank you so much for all being here tonight. It has been a year. We are going low tech tonight. A big thank you to Mark Winters for working on finances non-stop this year. Between revenues and stimulus money we may be doing ok; it's not as terrible as we thought. A huge thank you to Apex High School for hosting.

Since the last time I saw you all, there isn't much that has changed. You may recall we spoke about new schools that are coming. There is a new high school here in Apex, it has hit a bit of a roadblock but we are going to hope that it goes the way we need it to. We are still working on it. If anything this year has taught us that life is unexpected. We are going to reframe our thinking and move on.

In our cancelled meeting in March, we were going to have virtual break out rooms. We are going to discuss the information that everyone submitted before that meeting. We are going to read through all of those responses. This was in March, so a lot has changed since then. High school had just returned back to in person, so we have already come a long way from then.

We wanted to chat and de-brief. De-brief is hard and if you don't want to do it, don't do it. One of the things for BAC that we wanted to talk about is how we communicate with our PTA, our parent community. We can chat about what works for some schools and maybe that will give others ideas.

Some people reviewed the forms on their own, others chatted in groups. (Please see attached pages.)

Thank you all for coming tonight. I can't say it enough how great it is to see you all in person. Walking around, I've heard different versions of the same conversation. Catching up, chatting about what the next year will bring. As we go through and we are looking and reflecting as we look at impressions from March, was there anything that stuck out? Was anyone surprised with anything? If you don't want to share, don't feel pressured. It's Monday. We will get to the PTA piece afterwards.

A parent shared - Overall impressions, since the pandemic, I've seen a transparency of the teacher's side and how they are teaching and then from my daughter's side. For me, I have felt empathy for WCPSS teachers for not being prepared and not having resources that could help them. Watching my daughter and then watching the teacher deal with 30 other kids that are so different. As I would go to my daughter's teachers and ask for resources, for transparency, it has been very interesting. And to see how my daughter learns. It has been very interesting.

Lindsay Mahaffey - Yes, watching my children learn has been very interesting

A parent - Overall, people seem very appreciative of the teachers. Some good stuff has come out of this, students are self-starters now. Some kids haven't had to worry bullying or other issues like that. One of our overall impressions, was that some of this (feedback that was given on the attached pages) was out of the control of WCPSS teachers. The consistency of teaching, if we could get that better across schools, that would be awesome.

Lindsay Mahaffey - Especially in a large district, how much is autonomous or how much is taught top down. There was a lot put on the shoulders of our principals as we were going through all of this. What can we learn and take away from all of this. One school does things differently than others, that is a tension that has always been there. But has been exasperated with the pandemic.

We see how much we are dependent on our teachers, our schools. People were asking why aren't we doing more in the schools. People had to take a step back and realize how much we are doing and how reliant families are on everything schools do.

One parent asked - Can high schoolers, if they cannot get a class in their schedule, would they be allowed to be in person but take a virtual class?

Another parent - Yes, if they get permission from their school.

I don't know that there has been a decision yet on that for next year. Pre-pandemic that was not allowed but the pandemic has changed everything. More information is to come on that.

A parent asked - Are they going to implement any new tools for teachers? For next year?

Lindsay Mahaffey - Everyone will use canvas. The way that teachers will engage with it is going to be up to the teacher, so it may vary school by school. We are going to get those teachers that want to be in that virtual space as virtual teachers. Most students are going back, so we won't have as many virtual students or teachers.

One parent asked – As far as the social aspects, I have a 1st grader and a 6th grader and they have been virtual. One is going into a new school, maybe there will be an opportunity for students who have been virtual to go into their school sometime this summer? Just so they can go and see and be comfortable before the next school year begins. The kids need to go back, even though they have done well virtually. They are missing something. My 1st grader, he had only been in that school building for not even a year in kindergarten, now in the fall he's supposed to go into 2nd grade – that's a big transition. Something over the summer, think outside of the box. We are going to have a group of kids that has not had these experiences in school and the fall could be tough for them. Material pick up days was exciting for my kids. As we are moving forward, show them where the lockers will be. Take. Some of the stress away from them.

Another parent added -There's something about the physical energy that is missing.

Lindsay Mahaffey - And that is something that we are focusing on for next year.

A parent asked – if things are looking better next year, will we be able to change our mind and send our kids back in?

Lindsay Mahaffey- Yes, we are speaking about that. It would be at the semester break. It will be completely in person or completely virtual. It will not be hybrid next year. The more we can keep that separated, the better off they will be. It may be an option. We cannot regulate who gets the vaccine with emergency use of the vaccine. We don't know when the vaccine will be available for everyone. Maybe if the vaccine is available for younger children, we may open up that window.

Lindsay Mahaffey - Best practices for BAC reporting to their schools. A lot of PTA's don't know what the BAC is. How can we engage with the PTA?

A parent responded - I Feel that I am super informed, the people at the PTA meetings are super informed, but it probably does not get much further than that.

Some BAC members spoke about emailing their BAC notes to the PTA or presenting to their PTA to try to get the information spread as best as possible.

Lindsay Mahaffey - The building does not make the education. You need good teacher and principals.

This pandemic has definitely taught us that.

Stephanie Michell was nominated and seconded for BAC Chair.

Cynthia Gigandet was nominated and seconded for BAC Secretary.

Lindsay Mahaffey thanked everyone for coming, and also thanked Apex High school for hosting.