

**Minutes**  
**Hamilton Central School PTO Meeting**  
**October 3, 2018 at 6:30pm, HS Library**

1. Welcome (6:33 start)

Present: Jen Briggs, Jackie Cleary, Travis Ames, Kevin Ellis, Heather Cigeroglu, Julie Hengst, Jennifer Jones, Carey Hay, Jennifer Chouinard, Kathleen Stahl, Karli Murray, Jen Meyers, Travis Hall, Harry Jarcho

2. Ice Breaker: How many hours does your family spend on screen time? What are some pros/cons of living in the digital age?

3. Special Guest Speakers: Jennifer Meyers, MD and Travis Hall, PhD

Introductions (Jennifer Jones)

Dr. Hall received his PhD in clinical psychology from Duquesne University. He completed residency at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, and did post-doctoral training working with convicted sex offenders in a prison population. He is currently working with Community Memorial Hospital as a primary care Psychologist in the Hamilton Family Health Center. He is an HCS alumnus himself, and the parent of a future HCS student.

Dr. Meyers received her MD from Mount Sinai (now the Icahn School of Medicine) in New York City and completed her Pediatrics training at the University of Michigan. After 3 years as a hospitalist pediatrician, she moved to Hamilton to work in primary care pediatrics. This is her 11th year in Hamilton. In addition to her many patients who attend HCS, she has two children at HCS (5th grade and 8th grade), and a 3yo who will enter HCS in the next few years.

**Travis Hall:**

*Let's talk a bit about neurological and psychological development. Do kids have the capacity for boredom/idle time anymore? There's a constant demand for "what's entertaining me now!" What happens to empathy? What relationship do kids develop with themselves? Do they spend more time taking selfies than being present in the moment?*

*Common dilemma: what's the balance between kids' privacy and parental supervision of screens?*

- *Want to give kids a sense of privacy*
- *As parents, we are entitled to set limits/know what's happening*
- *We need to be engaged as parents so we know what our kids are engaging in. Participate more meaningfully in their screen experience by learning the games, understanding instagram, twitterfeeds, etc.*

*Can kids effectively self-limit? What is age appropriate at every age level? There are some bedrock principles to uphold when dealing with kids & screens:*

1. *NEVER give in to a tantrum. Unless you want to create many more tantrums.*
2. *Communicate openly and often about devices.*
3. *Elicit feedback from kids. Let them participate in negotiations about setting policies.*

4. *Establish objective outcomes (If your grades slip, if you stop making eye contact, if your sleep patterns change, then we'll need to cut back on time, etc.)*
5. *Focus on SKILL DEVELOPMENT. So often kids are given a device from a very young age (to quiet them in an appointment, at a restaurant) rather than taught how to deal with boredom or learn skills to self-soothe. All of a sudden, kids arrive to school and they cannot have a device to pacify themselves at all time and then teachers may observe behavioral challenges.*
6. *Model good behavior as adults. Set clear habits. Build in quality time and build relationships including while using technology (Play Fortnite Together...)*

*A very common problem is that parents don't learn the technologies/Twitter/games,etc., and then an 'intergenerational divide' gets created to the point where conversation STOPS. Learn the digital era so conversation can continue. Set limits but elicit children's participation while doing so. Revisit rules.*

**Jen Meyers:**

*Have you seen this article in The Atlantic: "Dangers of Distracted Parenting". This one hit me in the gut.*

*<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/07/the-dangers-of-distracted-parenting/561752/>*

*Start by examining your own behaviors as role models. Do you spend a lot of time with your kids? Is it QUALITY time? Remember the importance of basic snuggling, physical touch, eye contact. Parents may be present but when you are with your children, be aware of "technoference". Put down your phones.*

*Remember the Power of Play. Engage in the moment. It's good to be idle. There's a great website called [healthychildren.org](http://healthychildren.org) put together by the American Academy of Pediatrics. You can find a Media Time Calculator, tools to create a Family Media Plan, tips of how to start the discussion with kids as young as 3-5.*

*<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/default.aspx>*

*It's important to create device curfews to counteract the negative impact on sleep. Devices should be shut down at least 1 hour before bedtime, they should be stored out of the bedroom and ideally charged in a separate room.*

*Invest time in co-viewing (this gives you a framework to talk with kids about what they are engaging in online.)*

*Come to an agreement together of what your screen habits will be, then check-in periodically:*

*How are your grades? How was your sleep this quarter? It's an important skill to negotiate policy and to respectfully disagree w/ policy.*

*Rather than pull out your phone to look things up, work on skills of problem solving together.*

*READ books aloud to your kids all the way thru High School. Obviously kids can read well on their own at that point, but this is a time they will talk & share what's going on in life when they otherwise wouldn't.*

**Kevin:**

*At school we're working on the development of Executive Functioning Skills. Teachers use games that force decision-making. The workshop model really is designed to force kids to do the work. We encourage kids to metacogitate often (think about their thinking).*

Current policy at HCS is to phones are restricted and individual teachers decide on classroom practices. (Heather shared in the Oneida schools where she teachers, all restrictions have been lifted from phone usage and there's been a notable decrease in eye contact and classroom discussion in a very short time.)

**Jen/Travis:**

Parents use devices to pacify patients in the office all the time. Kids aren't learning delayed gratification or coping skills. They expect instant entertainment. Parents identify "behavioral problems" when in reality there's a deficiency or lack of adequate skills.

In PreK, HCS incorporates many 'purposeful play' activities to help kids develop these skills when they can't have devices.

Jen Meyers commended second grade teachers in recent years for adding extra recess to release excess energy. Physical activity helps children to focus. Kevin added Mindfulness and Yoga as useful tools.

The Epidemic is really how technology is influencing family dynamics.

Some digital strategy games also lead to complex board games like Dungeons & Dragons or Catan (see [boardgamegeek.com](http://boardgamegeek.com)).

In the era of 'fake news', just because you look something up online, doesn't mean it's true. It's important to teach kids how to curate what they learn/how to evaluate their sources. Do this with your child. Form good habits when they are young. It will improve personal and professional productivity in life over time. HCS Teachers are constantly addressing this as well.

Q: Are there warning signs of online bullying?

One challenge with online bullying is that the Social World exists online all the time (the playground bullies of the past only had an hour or so to taunt.) Have conversations early on. "What is it like to have this happening on Instagram?" There is a high incidence of depression and anxiety especially among adolescent girls, correlating to online activity.

Establish rules - will you check FB everyday as a parent? Will you check regularly? Encourage kids to speak to you and speak for themselves. Identify everyday opportunities to develop skills (let kids check out their own books at the library, order their own food at a restaurant.) Ask kids about Instagram - "is this good for you? Do you need it? Why? Have you shown me you are responsible enough to use it? How?" Let them articulate a clear case. One patient recently left my office and created a PowerPoint presentation to convince her parents she was ready for a phone. Encourage interaction and conversation around all media to continue to BE a resource for your child in this arena.

A good book called Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda (or the Movie, "Love Simon"). Good resources/coming of age stories that address challenging topics.

Be self reflective - Model behavior as parents. As parents, imperfection is OKAY, show kids how you are trying to improve "Sorry I was distracted and missed your goal b/c I had to take that call, tell me what happened?" etc.

Q: How do I know when it's time to stop monitoring my son's device?

*Define Behaviorally what you expect from your child. At some point, you let them brush teeth on their own, ride a bike thru town, etc. What do you need to see from them behaviorally to know it's okay to stop monitoring?*

*If you give them Instagram - how do you know this is a good idea? How is their mood? Are you seeing signs of increased anxiety? Are they keeping up with friends in person? Set criteria that work for your family. Ask them, how will we know if you are ready?*

*Jennifer Jones: Thank you so much for this wonderful discussion!*

#### 4. Reports

- a. Principal - (Kevin Ellis) I can hold all my report until the next meeting (given time constraints). However, I do want to point out Parent Teacher Conference times are different this year due to restrictions/calendar holidays. We have a half day just before Thanksgiving and the next one 2 weeks after report cards. We hope parents will be happy to see the grades then talk thru what happened the first marking period at the later conference date. Parent/Teacher Conference dates are correct as printed in the HCS Calendar.
- b. President (Jennifer Jones)
  - Superintendent Search Parent Meeting: Just came from the meeting with BOCES Superintendent Jackie Starks who is facilitating the Search Process. She hopes to have applications to the BOE by January 1, an offer made by late January and a Superintendent starting as soon as April/May. The BOE search will be conducted confidentially. After the parent meeting, a teacher meeting, a student meeting, notes will be shared with the BOE and the BOE will then conduct the remaining elements of the search with no input from additional sources.
  - Jackie also shared there is a leadership void across the region and 2 other surrounding districts are also conducting Superintendent searches at this time. Statewide 68% of higher ed leadership is expected to retire in the next 2-3 years statewide.
  - Jackie hopes to present a proposal to the BOE at the next BOE meeting (10/11) as to how to advertise. Keeping the search in state is more economical, National Search Fees can cost upwards of \$10,000.
  - Also, the PTO has removed the \$5 fee ("dues") that has historically been collected from members. In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, there's no expectation of paying membership dues. If you are part of the HCS community, you are part of the PTO. Join us.
- c. Treasurer (Jen Chouinard) - scroll to end.
- d. Coordinators
  - i. Parents As Reading Partners (PARP): Please come into the classrooms and read. Prizes will be awarded for the most time read. Principal Ellis will do a Challenge if School goals are met.
  - ii. Pumpkin Walk: Jen Briggs
    1. Need many volunteers to help on Gutting Day (Tuesday, Oct. 16 from 8-3 in the HS gymnasium. May also need help Wednesday to assist as kids carve 500 pumpkins. Also will need help Thursday to transport pumpkins.)
  - iii. Yankee Candle: Karli Murray (underway, materials went home to all grade levels.)
  - iv. Fundraising: Danielle Bikowsky (will meet w/ Jenn Jones to overview current initiatives)
  - v. Garden/Playground: Amy Sommers (weeding Wednesdays at 8:00, and pruning, will continue until the first frost/snow flies.)

- vi. Health & Wellness: Tara Langel (cut the Playground Cart request fees in half by seeking donations of balls, asking Mrs. Stoddard for extras. PTO will likely complete cart by purchasing requested hula hoops, jumping ropes and kick balls.)
- vii. Box Tops: Jackie Cleary (have 2700 box tops that need to be turned in by Nov. 1., will start sending home collection sheets the 1st of the month to see if that brings in more. New collection bin in front foyer. Looking for a spot to put on in the MS/HS.)
- viii. Hospitality: Julie Hengst (Supporting Pumpkin Walk, looking into Awards that parents might nominate teachers for across the state/etc. to show support for our teachers.)
- ix. Literacy/Book Fair: Sheila Catania (talking with Elementary Teachers about how we might support their Literacy efforts. Would like to collect gently used books to set up a book cart for people to take books at Parent/Teacher Conferences.)

#### 5. New Business

- a. Approve Minutes from September Meeting (Yes, approved.)
- b. Announcements
  - i. Recirculating Fundraising Efforts Chart to avoid duplicating efforts
  - ii. Language Club will be hosting the 2nd Annual Run Around the World 5k Run/Walk next Saturday, 10/13 at 9am. Registration is from 7:30-8:45 on the morning of the 13th, right outside the main entrance to the school. The cost is \$10.
- c. Volunteer Opportunities:
  - i. Pumpkin Walk Volunteers (October 19, 5-9pm / Rain date: Saturday, October 20)
  - ii. Need 1 Teacher to provide supervision for November Meeting - Kathleen will touch base with Zac Darrow.
  - iii. Elementary Reading Fair Coordinator (during parent/teacher conferences). Kat Catania is looking for somebody to take this one. Kids make posters about a favorite book or author then hang them up in the hallway.
- d. November Meeting Save the Date: November 7th, 3:00pm, HS Library

#### 6. Adjourn (8:15ish)

### **Treasurer's Report (Jen Chouinard)**

- 1. Set-up Debit Card
- 2. Donations/Income
  - a. Income
    - i. Alternative Fundraiser - donations are already coming in. Feedback has been largely positive about this humorous nature of this new approach. Some concerns have been raised regarding particular language which may have been unintentionally offensive. PTO Officers appreciate all input as we embark on new fundraising initiatives this year.
  - b. In-Kind Donations
    - i. Presentation by Jennifer Meyers, MD; Travis Hall, PhD
    - ii. Balls & supplies for recess
    - iii. PTO Bulletin Board for entryway (HCS)
- 3. Current Requests

**Approved Requests**  
since September 19 meeting

**Pending Requests**

<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Amount Approved:</b>	<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Requested Amount:</b>
PARP Prize Money/Supplies	\$125		
Pre-K Apple Orchard Field Trip	\$155		
Back to School Breakfast Teacher Breakfast Treats	\$125		
Playground Cart	\$200		