

**Wellesley Middle School Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)**  
**Minutes from the October 23, 2015 Meeting**

President's Welcome by Andra Jensen:

Welcome to the meeting. Thank you for coming and showing your support. We have many wonderful speakers today. The theme for this PTO meeting is everything available to our kids after school. We have asked some of our faculty to come in and speak on what occurs after the school day ends.

Principal's Welcome — Mark Ito:

Good morning. We have a microphone available if you cannot hear speakers so please let us know. It is a wonderful opportunity to have you here and learning about the many events the we have after school for the kids. Thank you to the PTO for offering this program. We have great breathe in terms of what we can offer to the children after school. These programs give confidence to the kids, make them feel better, and have a positive impact on their learning. Next week is the Halloween Dance. It is one of the biggest dances of the year with approximately 500 kids in attendance. The cost of the dance is \$5. P lease send the kids here with exact change if you can. We also ask that costumes be appropriate.

Speaker: **Ken Johnson**, Physical Education Teacher at WMS — **Intramurals @ WMS**

- The Intramural Program at WMS runs Monday through Thursday from 2:30pm to 3:30pm. In addition to Intramurals, Open Gym is also available. We also have the Fitness Center but 6th students are not able to use the Fitness Center until they have been trained on the equipment. This training is currently being done (some 6th grade classes have already completed the training).
- The kids who participate in Intramurals, Open Gym or use the Fitness Center also have a chance to catch the late bus. The kids are dismissed from the activities at 3:20pm so that they can catch that bus.
- All of the programs offered are taught by certified instructors to ensure kids are safe and behaving and following protocol.
- We understand that your kids have lots of things going on during the week so this program is done on a drop-in basis. If you kids can only come 3 out of 5 days that is okay. We are flexible because we understand the kids have many outside commitments.
- There is one exception to the drop in basis and that is in participation in the Junior Moving Company — specialized dance program.
- The other specialized program is *Fencing* — both beginning and advanced program. Parents will get a notice about this program in the PTO blast. This program can accommodate up to 25/30 kids. The beginners program starts on the Tuesday after February vacation and the advanced program starts after April vacation.
- Sneakers are required for all programs (except maybe dancing). Kids have an opportunity to change in the locker room but not required to do so.
- Programs: open gym, fitness center, boys and girls soccer, tennis at sprague tennis courts, yoga/meditation. These programs are open to all grades and no equipment is required to participate in these program (but you may bring your own if your want). All necessary equipment is provided.
- Future Programs: Badminton (November/December); Table Tennis, 3x3 basketball (for grade 6 and 7 but will try to have 8th graders as well); Wiffel ball; and Golf.

- If you or your kids have any idea, please let me know. We want to give the kids a wide variety of opportunities and we can explore new options.

Questions:

How can we (as parents) know when programs are offered? PTO blast has the calendar with the programs noted. This calendar is regularly updated so check it frequently. PTO blast best way to stay in touch. You can also email me. I also have a bulletin board that has information on it. The daily calendar also shows what is available that particular day.

Is this program under the umbrella for what we pay for extra school activities? Yes, it is part of the clubs fee.

Is there a try out for Junior Moving Company? That has already started but Ms. Sullivan will make an announcement for future participation. All kids are accepted; there are no cuts.

Is field hockey available as an intramural sport? No, it is an interscholastic sports. John Brown can speak to it. I am working with the H.S. coach to see if she and the varsity players can come over to the Middle School to do a clinic in the spring for 6th and 7th graders.

Are cross-country and track also interscholastic sports? Yes. Those two sports are open to 6th and 7th graders. They are the only two sports that are open to them.

Do the kids preregister for intramurals? They can just drop in. For Clubs, they need to sign up but for sports, they just drop in.

Speaker: **Cathi Gordon**, Assistant Principal at WMS — **WMS Clubs**

(Presentation — Power Point) — “Everything You Wanted To Know But Were Afraid To Ask”

- Student Perspective: There are 24 clubs. We generally have an activities fair in late Sept/early October. We fill the entire cafeteria with information on all of the clubs; advisors are present at the activities fair and speak with the kids about the club; kids walk around the fair and sign up for the clubs they are interested in. They can sign up for as many clubs as they want. It is great fun.
- School Perspective: We want the kids to have fun but we see the clubs as much more meaningful. We are thinking about the whole child and believe the clubs help create affinity — helps kids find others who are just like them; confidence — participation gives them confidence; safety — being around kids with same interests.
- In terms of clubs offered, we try to strike a balance and have clubs that fit into the following categories: S.T.E.A.M., Cultural, Performing Arts, and Community. We want to have something for everyone.
- We do have a priority for having clubs that provide kids with an opportunity for exposure to S.T.E.A.M. since it is a priority for the District, i.e., Green Team, Math Team, Science Olympiad, Robotics and Robotics for Girls. We have a Robotics for Girls club because studies have shown that some girls will not join a robotics club with both boys and girls so we have a special club just for them.
- Clubs is a great way for kids to get to know teachers outside of the classroom. Connect with teachers through a common interest. Teachers are so excited to be advisors to these clubs.

- Parents and Caretakers: An Activity Card costs \$150 and allows a student to sign up/ join /and participate in as many clubs as they want. They must show the card at the beginning of the club session.
- We encourage parents to check in with their children and help them with scheduling. Encourage your kids to participate even if they have already missed a meeting.

- Things to remember: Teachers are running these activities (not people outside of the school); meeting are 1x per week for 45 minutes; teachers take attendance (so if you child says they are going to a club you can check and make sure they are actually do so); late bus available for kids who are participating in clubs.
- We love having clubs at WMS and the kids love participating in them. Clubs provide a lot to the greater WMS community, i.e., Chinese festival, performances, etc.

Questions:

You said that kids can join at any time, can they join even if several weeks have gone by? Yes. Just have your child go the teachers in charge and talk to them.

How do you get the activities card? You can purchase one on-line.

Can kids try out clubs before they commit? Yes

Can you develop a golf club? We can see if a teacher might be willing to do it but it would probably on the field rather than on a golf course.

Speaker: **Dr. Sabrina Quintana**, K-12 Director of Performing Arts — **Performing Arts**

(Presentation — Power Point) — Performance Arts @ WMS

Three types of performing arts at WMS: dance, drama and music.

- Drama Program: Junior Moving Company — the program meets after school. Kara Sullivan is the teacher. First semester, the kids work on choreography to support four musical number in the upcoming performance of Decadent Broadway. Second semester, the kids work on choreography that explores different genres of dance. Some opportunity to combine with WHS in the spring.
- Drama as a class is available to students during the school day — available to 6th graders, 7th graders and 8th graders (see chart in presentation for details on focus for each particular grade). These courses are taught by Kara Sullivan and Leah Fine.
- WMS Drama Productions this year — Decadent Broadway (3rd week of November) and Shrek (in the Spring). Auditions for Shrek will take place in January.
- Music Program: 5 types (General Music, Band, Choir, Orchestra, IVEP)
- General Music classes takes place during school day; they study great composers and introduction to instruments. This is open and available as a class to students in the 6th grade and in the 7th grade. In general, this class is about music appreciation.
- Band classes take place during the day and students can enroll in them as courses both at WMS and WHS. Students learn to play as an ensemble; they learn progressively more rigorous concepts. Band has two concerts per year. Other options: Tuesday Jazz Band (no auditions) and Monday Jazz Band (auditions required and this is a graded class). Students in 7th and 8th grade may also audition for Junior District Festival — see slide for more details.

- Choirs for 6th, 7th and 8th grade — these are enrolled classes which are available to students all the way through high school. Students in choir learn how to read music. They also learn 2 to 3 choral repertoires — two to three part harmonies. They have winter and spring concerts. This year, the 6th chorus will sing with the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra; the 7th graders will participate in a musical festival in western Massachusetts; and the 8th graders will sing at the Providence Bruins game and at the Massachusetts State House.
- Orchestra Program: in 6th, 7th and 8th grade, it is an enrolled class (violin, viola, cello and bass) — great work done in developing skills specific to string instruments. Kids can start studying Orchestra as early as elementary school.
- IVEP - Instrumental and Vocal Extension Program — this program provides students with an opportunity to take private lessons. Students are paired up with a professional musician/teacher on the particular instrument. This is a tuition/fee based program. This is an optional program that is an extension of the music program in Wellesley.
- Arts education is quite value and important to a student’s development. Arts education provides students with an opportunity for creative expression. Classes in the Performing Art are core academic subjects under the “No Child Left Behind Act.” This areas of study develops self-worth. I encourage you to have students involved in an art form.

Questions:

*Is there an a cappella group for students at WMS?* Ms. Connors has a program after school.

*How do you sign up for extension program?* The sign up is on the Web Tract. We just finished fall enrollment. If you are interested in signing up now, we can prorate the fee. In addition, we will open up enrollment again in the spring. Contact our office for information.

*Can Middle School students take voice lessons?* Yes. I would like to offer it to them and think it is valid. Some voice teachers, however, prefer to wait to start lessons for fear of damaging vocal chords but we can manage to provide lesson and avoid these concerns.

*My child has private lessons outside of school, can they still join band?* We would welcome students to join even if they are studying elsewhere. Contact our office.

*Is participation in Shrek limited to 7th and 8th graders only?* Depends but all (including 6th graders) can audition.

Please email any questions that you have if you did not get a chance to ask them. [Note — contact information is on the last page of the powerpoint presentation.]

Speaker: **John Brown**, Athletic Director, WPS — **WMS Sports Teams**

- Sports & Athletics: The relationship between sports and school is very important. Athletics is a choice. People play because it is fun and that is what we want. They do not have to go and play, they

choose to go and play. We are lucky in Wellesley because our youth programs are strong. I understand the passion that parents have for sports. However, I always stress that not everyone is going to play college sports or professional sports. While the youth programs in towns are wonderful do not think that this is how your child will get a scholarship to college. Remember that sports need to be fun.

- If you see that there is a problem, do not hesitate to contact me. There will be no retribution toward your kids. A coach is always going to play the best kids so if your kid is good, they will still play and nothing you say will change that. Do not hesitate to talk to me or the coaches. Keep things in perspective — make sure kids have fun but we also want to win. Everyone wants to win — in sports, business, and at school — we are trying to succeed especially at the high school level.
- Middle School Sports is about development — allow the athlete to grow, develop, and have fun. We all want your student athletes to succeed. At WMS, development of the athlete is of utmost importance and we want them to succeed.
- I grew up in Natick and when I was a kid and you saw Wellesley on the schedule you knew it was a win. That is no longer the case. Golf and tennis teams are the toughest to make in Wellesley. We have lots of kids playing sports. We have the largest athletic program in the state — most kids playing sports.
- There are 22 Middle School Sports Teams — Boys and Girls Cross Country, Field Hockey (2 teams), Boys and Girls Soccer (2 teams), Football, Girls Volleyball, Boys and Girls Ice Hockey, Boys and Girls Basketball (2 teams), Wrestling, Softball, Baseball, Boys and Girls Tennis and Boys and Girls Track.
- Wellesley teams play in the Bay Valley League. Ice Hockey is a little different; it has crazy times because we do not have a rink and it all depends on when we can get ice time. Game times are all over the place. Boys are in a league; but girls are not because there is no league available.
- Sports schedules are on [schedulesstar.com](http://schedulesstar.com); we have a website — [wellesleyraiders.org](http://wellesleyraiders.org) — which will link you directly to website for athletics page.
- All athletic information is available in the handbook.

### Questions

How to do you register for a sport? Go to WPS or athletic page — click on registration and that will take you to WebTrack; it will take you to a picture of a hockey goalie — click on it and you can register for any open sport. Registration is only opened for a limited amount of time. Winter sports registration starts on November 1st.

Does everyone get to play? No. There are not enough spots for everyone and we make cuts. We try to encourage those kids who are cut to try out for another team.

- cross country (fall) and track (spring) — no cuts
- field hockey and soccer general have — no cuts
- basketball has cuts because of the limited gym space
- volleyball has some cuts (usually 18 kids on the team but we added a few more spots and did not make any cuts so we now have 21 kids)
- In general, we are not going to cut one kid. We try to keep kids involved.

Advice — Have your kids tryout for whatever team they want. We encourage it. Tell them try out if they love a particular sport even if there are cuts because you do not know how a coach will perceive your child as a player. You never know so try out for what you like.

What is open by grade? No specific answer to this question as it depends upon participation in the other grades. There are only two sports officially opened to all students at WMS (6th, 7th and 8th grades ) — cross county (fall) and track (spring). There are some teams at WMS that 7th graders play on — girls soccer.

Other sports: volleyball (only 8th graders) but if there are openings we open it to students in other grades; Girls hockey —open to both 7th and 8th graders because not enough 8th graders interested in playing to field a team; boys hockey (only 8th grade).

Looking to add lacrosse at the Middle School but the issue is where to play and who do you play. Right now we do not have field space in the town to add lacrosse. Right now, in the Spring, virtually all of the town fields are used everyday so it is tough to add a sports and then have no place to play. Also, lacrosse does not have a league and there are no programs at other schools. We are going to talk at the league level and see if we can get people interested in lacrosse. We cannot add it to the budget this year because we do not have field space and people in place to play at this point. Hopefully it is a couple of years out. We have an 8th grade team and if there are not enough kids to field it, we will open it to 7th graders.

Can you rent space from colleges or others schools? Issue is that they do not have the space to rent. They have already given us some time but nothing more is available. The times we are looking for are after school and that time is not available. We rent a lot from Babson and Wellesley Colleges and have a good relationship with them but space is limited. We rent from Babson for hockey — \$900 for ice time for two hours of hockey — very expensive.

How do you register for fall sports? Fall registration opens up on July 1st and is linked up with the fiscal year. We are looking to change it to open it earlier — maybe in May. We are working with the business office to see if we can make this change. In order to register, you must have a physical on file with the school. Give your physical to the school nurse to keep on file. It is only good for 13 months so as soon as it expires, your child cannot play so just give it to the nurse as soon as you get it. If you have another questions about registration, please contact my office. We are located at the high school.

What if you child tries out and gets cut, can they still go out for another team? Yes, so long as we have not made cuts to the other team that your child wants to go out for. This is really a fairness issue. Would not be fair to add kids when other kids have been cut.

Do the coaches cross over? HS coaches are generally involved in hiring coaches for the middle school teams so that we can keep things consistent across the program. We want to have the same general philosophy being followed at the Middle School that we follow at the High School. For example, coach for WMS boys hockey is the son of WHS boys hockey coach. Football coach at WMS also helps with WHS football team.

How would a parent know if there is an opening on a team or that it is going to be opened to 7th graders, for example? Problem is that we communicate through kids and we now realize that may not be the best way to do it. We need to do a better job at this communication piece. We do not do this well. When openings occur, we generally make announcements at the school. Coaches will also have handouts for the kids. I know we will be opening up basketball to 7th graders this year. If something changes, in terms of something opening up, it will occur the first week of December.

Closing Remarks: (Andra Jensen) — Thank you to our speakers and to all who came today. Please remember to come to the all grades parent social being held at the Local on November 6th at 6pm.

Respectfully Submitted by  
Connie Burton