



# Upper School Parents' Association Meeting Minutes January 8, 2019

Upper School Parents' Association Executive Committee Members Present:

- Leah Goldberg
- Karen Falcone and Libby Albright

## **Featured speaker:**

**Lisa Morin - Director of Counseling**

Leah Goldberg welcomed attendees and called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Leah reiterated the email address for submitting questions before and during meetings: Email [uspa-questions@milton.edu](mailto:uspa-questions@milton.edu). She then turned the meeting over to Lisa Morin.

## **I. Lisa Morin - Director of Counseling**

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- Lisa began by providing a bit of background on herself and the Counseling Center. This is Lisa's ninth year at Milton. There are four full time counselors along with additional support from two student interns and a Board-Certified Psychiatrist.
  - 1) Lisa Morin
  - 2) Elihu Selter
  - 3) Amanda Chapin
  - 4) John Lee
- Students may contact counselors at any time, day or night, and appointments are available Monday - Friday. Counselors can provide simple support during a hard period, as well as more extensive help and regular appointments for those managing disorders such as anxiety, OCD, or depression. The Counseling Center is on call 24/7. The Center receives approximately 100 calls/year.
- All counseling is offered on a personal and confidential basis. Under HIPA students have the same level of confidentiality as when visiting a doctor or clinic outside of school. Parents are contacted if a diagnosis looks likely or if there is any risk of imminent harm.
- Students may self-refer, or parents can call a counselor on behalf of their child. Students are encouraged to involve their parents but have the right to receive services without doing so.

### **There are several ways to identify and refer students who might need support:**

- Faculty and dorm heads - may discuss students and any concerns at house head meetings.
- Outreach Team - consists of one adult member in each dorm and a couple adult members in the day population. These faculty members are trained to counsel adolescents. Students can contact an outreach member about a friend who they think needs help but may be reluctant to seek counseling.
- Disciplinary Committee - counselors will reach out to all students going through the discipline process as it can be stressful.
- Academic Skills Center - students who struggle academically may benefit from counseling as well.
- Parents can reach out to counselors.
- Medical Leave - counselors assist students with arranging medical leave. There are times that students need to take time away from academics due to illness/concussion, etc. There is also in-house medical support – students can go to the health center and take a break.

### **The Counseling Center is also responsible for:**

- HS&R - Human Sexuality and Relationships course. This is an elective course where students are taught both content and the process of teaching. A group of Class III students who complete the course can later be selected to lead discussion in the advanced course Junior year. The class is held at night for nine weeks. Topics include STDs/consent/body image, etc. along with the mechanics of teaching a course.
- ISS - Individual Student Support. Class I students apply, train, and work with a counselor, meeting weekly. They talk with students and act as a bridge to professional counseling. There is one assigned per dorm. This position is a popular leadership role for students. This is led by John Lee.
- Peer Leaders - Two Class II students selected by the counseling department lead a fun, laid back discussion group open to students in Classes IV - II. Leaders participate in weekly training sessions. Ensures that students feel they belong to a particular group and eases the fear of not having a group to identify with - similar to a “lunch bunch” group. This is led by Amanda Chapin.

Lisa discussed the ***Independent Health Check*** survey that is being administered to the upper school student body. This survey is modeled after the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey which is administered in public schools. Students in the Upper School will be asked to complete a confidential survey that contains questions on a variety of behaviors on campus such as the use of alcohol/drugs/sexual behavior/bullying/e-cigarettes. Findings are presented to faculty and administration/parents. The data collected is vital to knowing the trends and changes in youth health risk behaviors and determines the extent to which school policies and practices can help improve the health of the student body. In addition, the findings focus the work at the counseling center and highlight trends and the effectiveness of health programs/classes at Milton. The data is compiled, and analysis performed by demographic and physiographic characteristics such as:

- Day vs. Boarding Students
- International vs. Domestic Students
- Male vs. Female vs. Non-Conforming Students

The survey will be administered by the end of February. Parents are asked via email for permission for their child to participate. There is a mechanism to “opt out”. This is the second time the survey has been administered at Milton.

One action which resulted from the findings of the survey administered two years ago was an invitation to a speaker to discuss drug and alcohol abuse. Former NBA player Chris Herren struggled with substance abuse for much of his basketball career and discussed the toll it took. He described his road to recovery. Students really responded to his message.

## II. Q&A

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### ***1. What behaviors did you find surprising from the Health Survey administered in 2017?***

The amount of alcohol consumption is high. “High” is defined as more than five drinks at one time also termed as “binge drinking”. Students who stated that they drank more than five drinks at one time were also more likely to be allowed to drink at home. Also, there was a correlation between students who stated issues with depression and the likelihood of binge drinking. The survey highlighted that students are vaping at an increasing rate but are smoking less marijuana.

### ***2. Were the results from the last Health Survey shared with the students?***

The intention of the administration was to share the data with students. In particular, to show students that a large percentage of the student body are not vaping and/or smoking marijuana. Students often believe that everyone is participating in a particular behavior and the survey clearly illustrated that was not the case. Unfortunately, the results were not shared with the student body last time but will be going forward once there is additional data from the next survey.

### ***3. How does the Counseling Center engage students and make them aware of the services?***

At the beginning of the school year the counselors who live on campus make themselves known, attend morning assemblies, conduct dorm introductory meetings, and ensure that students have the Counseling office “on call” number on their cell phones. In addition, each counselor teaches within the affective education program. These mandatory classes address a specific component of a student’s mental health:

Health (Class IV) – Discussion of self-care/sex/drugs

Values (Class III) – Discussion of one’s moral compass

Social Awareness (Class II) – Discussion of social justice

Senior Transitions (Class I) – Discussion of the transition to college/age of consent/LGBTQ/diversity/hazing

### ***4. Can you discuss concerns about vaping?***

The school is looking into programming around vaping. It is so new that there is not a lot of information on what schools are doing. The Middle School held a meeting for parents on vaping. There seems to be a misconception among students that it is “safe”. They don’t realize its addictive attributes. Students tend to see the health risks as something that happens once they are older – that these risks don’t affect them now.

Milton recognizes that there needs to be a program that addresses the effect of vaping on students now and in the future. This type of information is not readily available nor is it conclusive.

**5. *What is the school's policy on vaping?***

If a student gets caught vaping the first offense is a detention and a requirement that they speak with a counselor. A first offense with marijuana/alcohol leads a student to be brought before the disciplinary committee. Future drug testing and a meeting with a counselor is required.

**6. *How do you help kids with too much screen time?***

The best way to handle this is to emphasize balance. Kids do need screen time as a means to having down time. Too much of anything is not good. There is an effort to help students understand the implications of screen/computer addiction. Since everyone uses screens it is difficult for kids to understand the negative effects of too much screen time, in particular at night as it affects the levels of melatonin and therefore one's quality of sleep. The Counseling Center can work with students who are having difficulty with this. The message tends to resonate more when delivered by someone other than a parent.

**7. *What if a student doesn't want to come to counseling?***

Parents may call looking for their child to receive some counseling. The Counseling Center tries to be very proactive in the community, and a counselor is often selected that the student knows. This hopefully creates a connection with a student and they begin to realize that counseling is more about hanging out and talking, and less about being psychoanalyzed.

**8. *Do you believe that providing students with information about the physiological impact of juuling/drugs/alcohol abuse is an effective preventive strategy, or do you believe that the more effective strategy would be to address peer pressure/being cool? Is there value in incorporating both approaches with the belief that kids are different and have multiple pivot points?***

Both are most helpful to address. The best interventions are educational so that students understand the physiological effects - what can happen to one's body and how it leads to the potential for addiction. An addiction can also have psychological elements that are supported by social dynamics, i.e. "everyone is doing it".

**9. *Are students required to meet with a counselor when they have been "DC"ed or have utilized sanctuary?***

Both require a student meeting with a Milton counselor and also an outside counseling group.

**III. Information, Reports and Announcements - USPA Volunteers**

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**1. Parents' Independent School Network ("PIN")** update provided by Susanne Chiang and Virginia Putnam.

Please refer to the PIN tab on the website for minutes from the last meeting.

The next PIN meeting is the Annual Meeting/Head of School panel, hosted by Dexter Southfield School, on Wednesday, January 16th. Registration and coffee begin at 9:00a.m. The topic is "Civic Engagement, Preparing Our Children for Lifelong Community Participation."

**2. Student Activities Report** – updated provided by Jen Jordan and Meredith Hall.

The following activities will take place during exam week:

- a. Tuesday January 22<sup>nd</sup> - Candy given out during lunchtime at the Student Center
  - b. Wednesday January 23<sup>rd</sup> - Barn Babies 11:00-1:30 pm at the RSG. This activity gives students an opportunity to decompress during exam week by playing with baby farm animals.
3. **Faculty Appreciation Day** – Wednesday Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 11:00-2:00 pm – Cuban themed luncheon.
- a. Meredith Hall provided an update on current raffle donations that have been received. Several special donations received thus far are:
    - i. Vacation Homes in Chatham, Bahamas
    - ii. Tickets for Celtics/Boston College games
    - iii. Gift cards for restaurants, spa/wellness gift certificates, and sports tickets would be greatly appreciated.
4. **Upper School Panel Event** - Tuesday Feb 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm in Straus Library.  
Upper School Panel with Todd Bland, Indu Singh, and David Ball. Rod Skinner will be the moderator. Topic has not been formalized yet. The program will be held in Straus Library and will also be available online.
5. **Next USPA Meeting** – Tuesday Feb 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm  
Featuring **Kelli Edwards**, Performing Arts faculty member and **Adrian Anantawan**, Music Department Chair.
6. Meeting adjourned at 8:49 pm.

Reminder: All of this information, including minutes, can be found on the "Parents" page of Milton's website.