

Milton Academy Upper School Parents' Association
Meeting Agenda
November 19, 2019, 7pm

Upper School's Parents' Association Executive Committee Members Present:

- Leah Goldberg
- Lee Peterson
- Shadi Farokhzad

Featured Speakers:

Julie Seplaky - Science Department Chair

Gregg Reilly - Mathematics Department Chair

President's Welcome - Leah Goldberg, President

Meeting was called to order at 7:00pm

I. Julie Seplaky - Science Department Chair

This is Julie's 9th year at Milton Academy and her 6th year as Department Chair. The Science Department's mission is to nurture an inquiry mindset. They encourage collaboration.

-730 enrolled at Milton Upper School; 794 science enrollment (which means some students are taking double science courses.)

-Advanced and Honors level for core subjects

-Offer semester and half courses

-The approach:

- Student-centered learning in the classroom
- Student-led dialogue around Harkness table
- Inquiry-based practices in the laboratory
- Skill building, drawing from evolving skill set
- Divergent thinking
- Goal is to develop personal life skills

-Based on feedback from surveys, the department is working on inclusivity and helping kids feel safe and included in the classroom

-Faculty model lifelong learning: attend conferences, present at conferences and institutions, curricular design, and observe one another.

-Engaging students beyond Milton through programs with BIDMC, Broad, MGH, Harvard and MIT, Hosting from Perse School in England

II. Gregg Reilly - Mathematics Department Chair

This is Gregg's 19th year at Milton. He was department chair from 2006-2012. He is currently acting as interim chair since Heather Sugrue took the position of Academic Dean.

-The math dept believes that every student is capable of learning, and for students to view themselves as mathematicians.

-Goal is to foster deep learning and to allow student choice to pursue topics of personal interest to them.

-Math Expo each spring where students in Math and Computer Science present projects to the community.

-We value the students having the ability to communicate their mathematical reasoning clearly.

-Shift in culture by asking more open-ended questions, parallel tasks, and difficult problems that cannot be done in one class period.

-Current Offerings and Pathways:

Year 1: Geometry

Year 2: Algebra 2 + Math and Art ($\frac{1}{2}$) or Discrete Math ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Year 3: Precalculus + Math and Art ($\frac{1}{2}$) or Discrete Math ($\frac{1}{2}$) or Abstract Algebra & Statistics

Year 4: Calculus (Accel, w/Econ) + Abstract Algebra & Statistics & Advanced Statistics

Year 5: Multivariate Calculus, Advanced Calculus with Stats; Advanced Topics

Computer Programming Options:

In geometry, learn Java Programming

In class III, begin with a half course in programming

Followed by:

-Computer Programming 2, 3, 4 and Applied Engineering & Design

Acceleration:

-All students should feel confident and empowered in their learning. It is difficult to get the full experience of a mathematics course through summer study, so, in general, the department does not encourage acceleration.

Detracking:

-Geometry is untracked which allows all new students in Geometry a common experience.

Geometry develops mathematical writing; introduces Java, and also includes algebra review.

-The dept is discussing the possibility of detracking and/or restructuring courses after Geometry to best serve our students. Decisions will be made prior to Winter Break.

-The department is aware of the research behind detracking and taking that into consideration to make their decision.

III. Questions and Comments

What is the main difference between honors and non-honors science classes?

Main difference is pace, depth, and style of teaching. Honors is more fast paced, deeper learning and less guided teaching. Students can jump from honors to non-honors from year to year. Students choose whether or not to take honors-level courses.

Question on Honors Biology - as parents we hear that it is a huge amount of work. How do you view the course load in Honors Biology?

Honors Biology has a reputation of being a very difficult course. The difficulty is not so much the content but rather the time required to do labs and long lab reports.

Question on detracking math: Have you interviewed current geometry students who are doing well to see their feedback on detracking?

No, but the plan is to get feedback from the students.

Question on detracking math: If detracking, how will math students who don't feel confident in their math ability feel in a classroom with other very advanced students?

Each student can do work based on their ability and more advanced students can do a deeper dive. This model might allow for students to be less aware of who are the more advanced math students as each is working independently. We need to change the model of teaching to allow for detracking.

Comment on detracking math: It might be better to wait a full year to see how this year's geometry class does rather than make the decision by winter break.

Question on detracking math: How is math education shifting?

We have sent teachers to conferences and purchased books on subjects to keep up with all changes.

Comment on detracking math: A parent sat in on a detracked geometry class and was amazed.

Question on detracking math: Small class sizes in math and ability to do something different at Milton. Perhaps do more project based or inquiry based to allow for deeper learning? Science and math are very different and difficult to share the same model.

Question: Can we do placement tests for math in 8th grade? We currently do placement tests, more for department information, but all class IV take a common geometry class.

IV. Parents' Weekend Review - Class Reps

-Some parents felt frustrated with signing up with teachers; It would be nice to improve that process and allow parents to directly sign up with teachers.

-Class dinners - idea of assigned seating has been raised.

V. Review of Exam Week Activities

-We are having Barn Babies come back on Friday of exam week.

-That Friday is an orchestral concert and PA will be hosting drinks and cookies after the concert.

-Monday is candy bar for students in between exams.

VI. Parents' Independent School Network - Virginia Putnam & Eve Waterfall

Recent PIN meetings:

-Judy King started Wily Network to help students without family support transition into college

-Mathew Woodward - digital media specialist - discussed what the future will be like for class of 2032

-“Do you want them to watch that?” and consumption of media by kids

VII. Middle School PA Speaker Series -

11/7 Recording of Dr. Elizabeth Booma: <https://vimeo.com/372418818/879fee92a8>

- Upcoming events:
 - Sarah Ward, Executive Functioning, 1/9 8am
 - Cindy Pierce, Pornography, 2/27 8am

VIII. Faculty and Staff Appreciation Day - Leah Goldberg

- Event held on Feb. 12 (set-up on the 11th) - both breakfast and lunch.
- We are still in need of food and decorations chairs. Will again collect donated raffle items from parents.

IX. Next USPA Meeting - Tuesday, December 12th at 8:30am

- Special Q&A with Rod Skinner

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm