

Summary of Key Findings and Conclusions of Task Force on Middle School Sports and Extracurricular Activities

Who: The Task Force was chaired by Tom Lengel, Head of School, and Kevin Lucey, parent and Board member. Its other members were:

- Deb Borden, Associate Head of School
- Amy Curran, parent
- Helen Gallagher, Director of the Middle School
- Agnes Gayhardt, parent
- Rick Hinckley, parent
- Maribeth McCallion, Athletic Director
- Meg McGinn, parent
- Bill Rouse, parent and Board member
- Dave Shannon, parent

When: The Task Force was formed in January 2014 and met approximately once a month until May.

What: The group was charged with reviewing all aspects of Rosemont School's Middle School sports and extracurriculars. More specifically, we examined:

- the future of football
- the desirability of adding lacrosse
- the sustainability of the Middle School Play
- the wisdom of having A and B teams
- whether or not we have the right balance of clubs and other activities

Methodology: We researched participation rates at Rosemont School (over the previous five years) and at local independent schools (Episcopal Academy, Haverford School, and the Academy of Notre Dame). We also compared RSHC's programs with those of Catholic Academy League (CAL) schools, primarily on a student participation basis. (Since most of those peer schools have larger student bodies than Rosemont School - in some cases much larger - it would be unrealistic to expect our offerings to match theirs. In fact, one of the overriding acknowledgements of this Task Force was that we can't "cannibalize ourselves" by offering too many choices each season.)

In addition, we held a listening session for parents in grades 4-8, which was facilitated by Kevin Lucey, and to which approximately 25 parents came; and an information session for Lower School parents, explaining the program we offer and our philosophy behind it. Approximately 35 parents attended the LS information session. Maribeth McCallion and Steve Clarke '73 spoke about the goals and objectives of the program, and parents found it to be helpful and informative.

We then presented our preliminary conclusions to the Board of Trustees at its May meeting.

- We remain firmly committed to our longstanding “no-cut” policy in Middle School sports and activities. *Interesting fact: we learned that we are the only school in the area – CAL and otherwise – with a no-cut policy for all extracurricular activities in Middle School*
- We will continue to emphasize proper training of our student athletes and of our coaches, to promote and ensure safety as our number one priority.
- Among CAL Schools, Rosemont School has the 2nd highest participation rate in Middle School athletics at 87% of our student body.

Other items of note:

- Parents clearly stated at the MS listening session *their support for and belief in having A and B teams in 7th and 8th grade, based on ability.* They and we agree that part of "Nurturing Excellence" is to ensure-through our no cut policy-that each child has a team on which to play, and that we want to be competitive in the CAL league on the varsity level. This means that varsity teams will continue to be chosen on merit/talent.
- While parents wish - ideally - for consistency from year to year as to the “grade level split” on A and B teams (number of 7th graders on A, vs. 8th graders on B), we realize that class numbers (overall and gender) change-sometimes significantly-from year to year, and so *such consistency is not possible.*
- *We do not have enough children to offer lacrosse in the spring.* And even if we did, we recognize the value of having children play on a higher level on outside teams, which includes making friends with children from other schools, in the townships, etc.
- We realized as well that we want to *build a better relationship with Saints Lacrosse*, which allows RSHC students to play in the CYO league on their team. We need to do a better job of reaching out to and supporting this team, perhaps including the use of Algeo field, since the Saints program provides an important outlet for our students who want to play lacrosse.
- *Sustainability of the Spring Play* - We remain firmly committed to the play. All agree that it provides a unique experience within Rosemont School of having the older children work with and mentor those in younger grades. It also provides an experience not found in other schools, because it encompasses four grades, and all players get a role.
- We need to find the balance of flexibility for non-lead players with missing some rehearsals, especially on Sundays, while acknowledging the limited time that the play directors have to produce a production of such high caliber. The play relies heavily on parent volunteers (costumes, makeup, stage setup and takedown), and there is a concern going forward that we will have enough volunteers because of busy schedules.
- *Clubs and Activities* - We have had some recent examples (after-school Mandarin Club, First Lego League team) of clubs or activities that were parent driven. The School provided space and support, but parents coached and/or organized these activities. We *need to remind parents that they can propose a club or activity to fit a perceived need*, and that the School must help maintain a balance so that we do not “cannibalize” our teams or clubs.