

**MINUTES OF THE SSFS PARENTS ASSOCIATION MEETING
WITH FEATURED SPEAKER, BROOKE CARROLL**

October 17, 2006

Yarnall Hall

8:15 am

Kathleen McKay, Clerk, called the meeting to order and offered the following query followed by a moment of silence:

In what ways am I open to knowledge and to the ideas and beliefs of others? How do I promote a climate of respect among others for considering the ideas of all? Am I willing to speak from deep reflection, sharing my own insights?

Approval of Minutes for the April 19, 2006 PA Meeting, Eileen Hollander

- It was the sense of the Meeting to approve the minutes of the April 2006 PA Meeting.

Announcements, Kathleen McKay

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| • Caribou Meet & Greet: | Oct. 25 & Nov. 10 |
| • PA Meeting for Worship: | Thurs. Oct. 26 |
| • 2 nd Annual All-School Spaghetti Night: | Sun. Nov. 12 |
| • Walk for the Homeless: | Sat. Nov. 18 |

Featured Speaker- Brooke Carroll, Ph.D.

**Topic: "Recent Advances in the Understanding of Adolescent Brain Development:
A Discussion for Parents"**

Past Assumptions:

- Incredible amount of growth in the structure and functioning of the brain in-utero and during the first several years of life
- By the time child reached puberty, brain was structurally similar to an adult's

Now we understand:

- Puberty marks the beginning of another massive growth spurt in brain structure and in the chemicals produced and used by the brain.
- Changes occurring in the teenage brain are profound and wide ranging.
- Adolescence lasts longer than previously thought:
 - The pruning back of synapses (neural connections) is seen until the mid-twenties.
 - Women's brains complete the pruning a year or two before men.
 - Myelination (the process of strengthening neural connections) can last into the 30's.

Other key points:

- The executive brain doesn't hit adult levels until age 25.
- With lack of full functioning of the prefrontal cortex of the brain, teens are without mature decision-making and impulse control capabilities.
- Hormones have a major effect in many areas of the brain and teen brains are awash with new and higher levels of hormones.

- The hormone melatonin, which induces drowsiness, is secreted up to 2 hours later in adolescents than it is in younger children and adults.
- Adolescents need 9 1/4 hours of sleep at night, but most teens in the U.S. only get 6-7 hours of sleep at night which can greatly affect academic, social, and emotional functioning.

So what does it all mean?

- Teens may look like adults, but they are very different from both adults and children.
- Adolescence is a distinct and active time of development and we have a great deal to learn about the implications of the growth that is taking place during this time.

Suggestions from Brooke

- **We need to expect adolescents to have difficulty:**
 - regulating and controlling thoughts, feelings, impulses
 - planning
 - anticipating consequences
 - focusing on more than one thought
 - making decisions
 - ✓ This means not getting *so* angry when they forget homework *again* or when they drive at high speeds...
 - ✓ It does not mean letting them get away with things. It just means we need to step in and help them manage it.
 - ✓ We should give structure within the choices we provide them.
 - ✓ We should not expect them to hold too much info in their heads that is not directly relevant to them.
 - ✓ We need to be present. Although they can't always articulate it, teens want adult contact.
- **We need to expect adolescents to have difficulty interpreting our meanings and reading our emotions.**
 - ✓ We should be clear, consistent and reliable with our communications.
 - ✓ We should understand that teens will not take in information and organize it like an adult would.
- **We need to expect adolescents to take risks.**
 - ✓ We should monitor those risks and work to facilitate beneficial risk taking.
 - ✓ We should avoid over structuring their lives.
- **We need to expect adolescents to be high energy/passionate.**
 - ✓ We should facilitate appropriate outlets for their energy and passions.
- **We need to expect adolescents to have difficulty integrating emotional experiences and cognitive processes.**
 - ✓ We should be gentle with their emotional outbursts.
 - ✓ We should spend time talking about their thoughts and feelings.
 - ✓ We need to be aware not to overload them with cognitive input when they may be having emotional reactions.
- **We need to expect adolescents to have different sleep patterns and to need more sleep.**
 - ✓ We should LET THEM SLEEP!!!
- **We need to understand that adolescent neurons are still making connections and that the experiences they have will influence how those connections are made.**

- ✓ We should be aware of the physical, emotional, and intellectual experiences teens are having.
- ✓ We should encourage teenagers to have a wide range of experiences.
- ✓ We should be aware that drugs and alcohol have a dramatic and long-lasting impact on neural connections.

- **We need to be aware that each teenager will develop differently and unevenly.**
 - ✓ We need to pay attention to where each teen is individually, and meet them where they are, not where we think they should be.

Some final notes:

- Adolescents are still vulnerable, impressionable.
- What happens to a teenager or between a teenager and a parent, school or friend still matters-perhaps more than previously thought.
- New information about adolescent brain development has significant future implications for education, juvenile justice, law and social practice.

Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Hollander, co-secretary