

Parent Topics of Discussion

October 17 – 11th & 12th Grade / October 30 – 9th & 10th Grade

Parents submitted questions on each of the topics listed. Summaries of our answers from the parent meeting are written beneath to each topic.

Athletics Questions

Practice schedules. These are published and clear for all to see. The postings of coaches should be accurate. If postings do not clearly reflect practice times, please let us know (highschool@yisseoul.org or dhale@yisseoul.org). Our athletic director will hold coaches accountable for inaccurate postings or practices that are longer than is permissible.

Time commitment necessary for athletics. These commitments are real, and I make no apologies for this. Coaches may require up to eight hours of practice per week for varsity athletes and up to six for JV. All practices must finish before 6:00 p.m. Competitions may for long weekends and late nights. Athletes must budget time well. In the States, time spent would be year-round and around 20 – 30% higher.

SAT Questions

We are currently looking to add SAT/ACT preparation to our Naviance subscription that offers both instruction and sample test questions for students to work through. This is a new service that was launched last year and will be made available for second semester of sophomore year. We have plans to open the service immediately to all 11th and 12th grade students as soon as YISS gains access.

Science Questions

Adequate resources and facilities for science laboratories. I am not ashamed of where we are as to science labs, but, at the same time, we are working to improve. We have increased budgets annually, hired excellent teachers, and improved our lab facilities. We are corporately aiming at three to four interactive labs per quarter in each class. In some classes, we are hitting that mark. In others, we are not. We have the resources tools for adequate labs, and those have grown every year since I have been here. We are implementing more and more quality lab experiences as a part of set curricula.

Difficult classes. Some science classes are quite challenging. Both physics and chemistry involve abstract thinking and application of principles learned. We make no apologies for the challenges associated with such courses.

Herein, I speak in general about what one should do when feeling such is the case in *any* class, and I say that our school holds teachers to rigorous standards of accountability regarding what occurs in their classrooms.

Please utilize opportunities to communicate with teachers about your concerns. One of the primary purposes of the parent-teacher conferences is that parents have opportunity to seek out best avenues for student successes in given classes. You say, “My son is struggling here. He has always done well in school. He likes you as a person and as a teacher, but he is not coming away with clear understanding of the concepts in this class.”

Teachers should be able to provide ideas, tools, resources, and strategies to assist you. If such communication is to no avail, then I am available to assist. We do monitor the grades in

classes, and we address things when grades seem to be too low relative to all factors. We see no such scenarios that exist at this point.

Chemistry for the Community. It was asked why we do not offer the class every year. We do offer it every year. During one year, not enough students signed up for it because parents. The class is a widely known course and does not disadvantage students in it. When counselors assign students to such courses, we advise that due to its being the best option for that student.

Parents and the Guidance Office

Both the 9th & 10th and 11th & 12th Grade Counselors have open door policies and are happy to meet with parents at anytime throughout the year. Appointments are made upon request and can be arranged by telephone or e-mail. The High School Guidance Department also has its own website (link). In order to be more available for the senior class during the application season, Mr. Wilson hosts several evening study halls and has created a G-chat forum to make himself accessible throughout the course of the day and evening hours. These services for the junior class will be made available during the second semester.

Number of APs taken

According to our policies, students are allowed to take up to two AP courses per year. We have allowed exceptions to this the requirement, but this is not recommended or allowed for everyone. If a student is admitted to three, there is a serious conversation that takes place between the student, parents, and academic counselor. Students are not allowed to reduce extracurricular loads for the sake of such a decision. These guidelines have been implemented to protect students who are unable to successfully handle the course load. Regardless, our transcript and profile state that we only allow for a maximum of two, and students are only judged internally against their peers. We also have confirmations that many schools are beginning to implement AP course restrictions like ours.

Number of APs offered

The simple answer to this question is that we will offer more AP classes as the demand for those classes persists. AP Biology and US History are cases in point. This year, for these classes, we had enough qualified applicants to offer two classes rather than one, and we did so. We will do this in any given area that we can.

This is, however, made more complex by the fact that, more often, we have something like three to five students over the limit for an AP class. That creates quite a challenge for us, and I understand parent frustration that crops up when this occurs. I simply state that we do our best to plan out having appropriate staffing for our students' needs. Our families certainly deserve such planning.

Student/Parent Communication Regarding AP Applications

Students receive a scheduling meeting every year in addition to a yearly meeting with their academic counselor. At the beginning of 9th grade, all students create a four-year plan that is reviewed annually. When the AP application process opens in the spring, announcements are made to all students via daily oral announcement time, via wall postings, and via the high school website. Available courses and application requirements are posted in the high school hallways. This year, we will make sure to send out an e-mail to parents via ParentWeb. AP applications and final confirmation require a parent signature.

Summer classes

We do not accept credit from outside institutions for online or summer work, except in the case of remediation or in the case of computer applications. Why do we allow such for our computer applications course. This particular course helps us with the number of students in our computer applications classes. It is also not a course from an outside institution. We see no need for students to “get ahead” during the summer. Students need 24 credits to graduate. They have 32 course slots/opportunities to fill those 24 credits. Enabling some to work ahead over the summer for the sake of enriching their transcripts would feasibly create a push for all students to do the same, and, according to college admissions offices, this would be poor usage of a summer for a student.

Alumni interactions

At YISS, we highly value our alumni and believe they remain a part of our community even after graduation. The amount of alumni that visit YISS during holiday and vacation seasons is a testament to the unique relationships that are fostered between students and faculty members. We do admit that we can improve our alumni relations, but are currently looking to launch a new website that will connect our alumni as valuable resources to our current students.

Evening Activities

We do not sponsor dances because we do believe that there is such a thing as inappropriate dancing, we will not be the parties making the decisions about what is and is not appropriate, and we know that students are not good judges of this themselves. We have in the past sponsored opportunities to swing dance, and ballroom dance.

Of course, parents must realize that what students do on weekend evenings is in our interest, but beyond our purview. It saddens us when we hear of students making unwise decisions. We provide good opportunities for good decisions.

Policy on partial-day absences from school

In September, Mr. Parsons sent an email detailing the kinds of partial day absences that would be marked as unexcused. This is a policy that we as an administrative team do not prefer to have to institute; however, the policy was necessitated due to regular abuse of the previous, more liberal policy. We do recognize that not all absences related to poor health merit a full day away from school or a visit to the doctor. On the other hand such partial day absences should be few and far between. On the rare occasions when students should stay home for at least part of the day, and in which there is no need for a doctor’s visit, there should be immediate, direct and specific communication between parent and school administration via telephone or email to Mr. Parsons (lee.parsons@yisseoul.org) or Ms. Oh (attendance@yisseoul.org). Such absences will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Posting of Teacher Biographies

The administration wishes to express our confidence in the qualifications of the high school faculty. We have no qualms about posting teacher qualifications and primary aptitudes. We are in process of reviewing the best manner in which to do this. Our YISS website is under significant review right now and will become the location that houses such information in the future.

Courses taught by two separate teachers

Every school in the world has some classes in which multiple teachers teach the same course. No matter the scenario, this is always less than the ideal. YISS has worked hard to create parameters and standards that make the best of the situation.

- Every such course has content percentiles that are set as similar for tests, quizzes, homework, projects, and such.
- Every such course has a lead teacher whose work is the starting point for decisions made about the course.
- Teachers begin with test templates that are identical and tailor assessments within such parameters.

Grading scale

We are very reflective on this question as it comes up quite frequently. To start, if we thought that our grading scale was in any way hurting our students, we would change it. Wilson Lee, our college counselor, sent this very question out to some of the most prestigious universities in America, and we were encouraged to keep our grading scale as is. Colleges get a copy of our profile, which includes our grading scale, and, as of this year, we are including the grading scale on all of our transcripts. Having this information allows students to be evaluated based on the community in which they come from. Keep in mind that colleges see transcripts from over 10,000 high schools.

Inviting experts on college preparation.

College preparation is a vital component to what we offer as a high school. Because of this, we employ a very experienced college counselor who is very well networked and experienced in the college application process. We annually assess options of bringing in outside resources to benefit our community.

Student Ranking

As an institution, we do not rank nor provide ranking to universities. We feel that this is the best course of action for a school our size. Based on this policy, we do not provide specific ranking for any of our classes.

Student Community Service and Volunteer Work

YISS has over thirty clubs. Many of these do involve charity work. YISS has faced challenges on this front due to the fact that many charity organizations require regular weekly commitments that extend throughout the year that includes all school holidays including summer breaks. While it is reasonable for charities to have such expectations, it is rare that students and teachers are willing or able to make such regular commitments. We seek more opportunities for such involvement. Please do share with us if you know of places to which we should direct our attention.

J&J

J&J has continually improved during their years of service at YISS. Due to the variety in their menus, students will at times find that the meals are not satisfactory to them. J&J thus gives regular surveys to ascertain which meals are their most and least popular. The results of the surveys are overwhelmingly positive, but the return rates are not high. It is the recommendation of the administration that parents who have issue with the menu copy and post the monthly J&J menus that YISS distributes and that they circle the foods served on the days that their students complain. When the next survey is issued, you would then have the tools to offer concrete suggestions.

As to the quantity of the food served, there is location for comment about such on the

surveys. Also, it should be noted that all students who purchase lunch are able to go back to receive seconds.

Popular menu items do result in lines at lunch. Our long lunch periods give ample opportunity for all to be served and eat, even when the lines are at their longest.

Questions unable to be addressed in a parent forum

Some questions presented for consideration at the parent meetings were of a nature that they could only be addressed one-on-one with a school leader. It would neither be professional nor appropriate to address personal or private matters regarding particular individuals at the school with a larger body of parents. On the other hand, we are more than willing to set up such one-on-one meetings as parents see fit.

One such topic is curricular content and direction of given classes. This is something that any academic leader from principal to curriculum coordinator, from teacher to principal would be happy to address.
