

PIN Meeting Notes

The Parent's Independent School Network (PIN) is a network of sixty-one independent schools in Massachusetts. The purpose of the group is to improve the quality of non-academic life at their member schools via the exchange of information among parents. The group is divided into two parts: lower school (our EMS campus) and upper school (our high school campus). Landmark is a member school of PIN. PIN meeting notes do not necessarily represent the opinion of Landmark School.

To get more information about PIN, visit their new website: www.pin-inc.org. If you want the access codes to enter their members only portion of the PIN website (all Landmark parents and staff can access this portion with the codes), please contact Janet Thibeau (P '13) clanthibeau@verizon.net.

PIN News

Risky Behavior: School Policies and Ultimate Consequences

On Friday, October 1, PIN presented a workshop on teenage risky behavior. The presenters were Jeff Wolfsberg, an expert and thought leader in drug education, Marian Ryan from the Middlesex DA office, and Libby Margraf, Dean of Students, Lawrence Academy. The following is a brief summary of the workshop content.

Too often, we prepare the road for our children, we don't prepare our children for the road.

Saturday night a student will be drunk, use illicit drugs, have casual sex, post or sext a racy video, tweet something cruel about another student. This is the reality of high schools, all high schools. You might think "that won't be my kid" but how can you be sure?

Independent schools like Landmark are filled with students committed to their education. These kids are also acutely aware of the pressures we as parents place on them to excel – in school, sports, extracurricular activities, college, on into adulthood. These pressure can be intense and can contribute to teens using risky behaviors.

Most HS kids don't have driver's licenses, check books or credit cards. So how do our kids get into trouble without us?

Below the statistics of risky behavior is a serious level of passivity - that kids will be kids, some risky behavior is acceptable, and it's a rite of passage into adulthood. When we send this message at home and they see risky behavior glorified in popular culture; where do our teenagers get the message that risky behavior is something to avoid?

After a recent drunk driving accident, the families who gathered with the DA didn't ask "are the kids okay?" They asked, "will this be on my kid's permanent transcript?"

What can parents and schools do? First, we need to let go of the pretense that everyone and everything is great. Then, every family needs to be able to articulate their family values – in words and in deeds.

We need to take responsibility for parenting them – to set limits especially when it's hard, model smart choices, know what they are doing, talk with them about risky behaviors, inform them of alternatives and work with them to limit their risky behavior, and if necessary, address mistakes head on when/if they happen.

PIN News

Protecting Your Child from Bullying

On Monday, October 25, PIN presented a workshop on bullying. The presenter was Robin D'Antona, Ed.D., an educational consultant and founding Board Member of the International Bullying Prevention Association, Inc. The following is a brief summary of the workshop content.

Topics covered

- ***Understanding the complexities of bullying***
- ***Overview of cyber-bullying***
- ***How Parents can prevent bullying***

Understanding the complexities of bullying

Bullying is when someone repeatedly says or does mean, hurtful things to a person who has a hard time defending themselves. The key concepts of bullying are that it is repeated, intentional and involves a power imbalance.

Bullying can be direct (hitting, name-calling, etc.) or indirect (spreading rumors, socially isolating someone, etc.).

Bullying most often happens in groups and involves three parties: the bully, the bullied, and the bystanders. Research shows that bullies don't usually suffer from low self-esteem; in fact, they often have quite positive self-esteem. The bullied person can be anyone. Bystanders range from passive supporters (people who

don't initiate the bullying but will participate if invited to) to defenders (people who will actively stand up to a bully and support the person being bullied.)

Overview of cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying involves sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the internet or other digital device. It can be direct or indirect. Although a lot of cyber-bullying occurs outside of school, it is often part of a larger bullying issue that involves school. Cyber-bullying can be directed at students, or at school staff via sites such as ratemyteacher.com.

How Parents can prevent bullying

The best way to prevent bullying is to help your child become a defender.

- Talk to your child about bullying from all sides – what works (telling someone if they feel bullied) to what doesn't (ignoring it or standing up to a bully with no other supports).
- Foster both your child's self esteem and empathy for others.
- Limit your child's access to the computer, especially to sites such as Quibblo and Formspring (which let people create surveys and receive anonymous responses.)
- Familiarize yourself with the new anti-bullying laws in Massachusetts <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2010/Chapter92> and with Landmark's bullying prevention programs and policies.

Additional resources

Stopbullyingnow.gov, netsmartz.org, stopbullyinginma.org