RHS HSA Meeting 10/10/2017

Call to Order 7:33 – Jeanine Dawkins

Attendees: Annette Testa, Therese Bonfiglio, Jennifer Bottigherio, Maria Saltalamachia, Patrick Venetucci, Jennifer Hamlet, Helen Dolan, Rebecca Rubenstein, Tammy McCarthy, Cathy Stillwagon, Hayley Gluck, Stacey Jacobs, Sandy Pires, Rohini Reddy, Joanne Cheng, Bernadette Ottarea, Brian O’Hara, Beth Hua, Salina Om, John Lawson, Dianna Cha, Angela Castillo, Donald Ward, Vincent Loncto, Jen Schnell, Pamela Lobosco, Stacey Loscalzo, Susan Harrison, Liz McCarthy, Anneke Meinardi, Michelle So, Anna Salerno, Laura Oscher, Gwen Sullivan, Lori Weil, Kate Yates, Kimberly Crimmins, Lisa Knopff, Allison Pemerlder, Jeongim Kim, Soogja Jeoy, Julie Stewart, Pam Chmiel, Neelam Todi, Mari Tagliabue, Kim Lucky, Deepa Prabhu, Jayne Schroeder, Ann Alvarado, C Brigante, Terry Anzano, Kathy Marshall, Suzanne Golabek, Donna Maashrarr, Jeanine Dawkins, Beth Clay, Tom Gorman, Jeff Nyhuis, Basil Pizzuto, Vicki Sharo

Jeanine asked new board members introduced themselves.

Approval of June minutes –

Motion by Lori Weil, 2nd by Liz McCarthy, approved.

Class reports:

PG-18 reps not at meeting but report things are moving along. Looking for a few committee chairs. Contact Jill or Nicole. October fest to be held 10/21.

Junior reps – Jane thinking of doing Jonny O (similar to Vineyard Vines) t-shirts w/ logo & will have a

Parent social in March

Soph - Pam w/in 2 weeks there will be a sale of gear for cool nights. Will be different sports-related but generic so all sports moms can wear. There will be a parent social in the spring.

Freshman - Kim Crimmins & Lisa Cobb 2021 wear selling [www.rhs2021.com](http://www.rhs2021.com) website will be active for all 4 years. Coffee Thursday at 66 Sherwood Road. Thank you to Sandi Pleeter for organizing fundraiser. Another fundraiser will be held around holidays w/ smaller stocking stuffers. Geared towards all RHS not just 2021. Will have social in spring. Samples of ’21 merchandise here at mtg to see. Last day to order is Thursday.

Student Liaisons – were not available due to miscommunication. We will have them next month.

Dr. Gorman –

Mtg had been set up for 40; glad to see so many parents here, great start. Welcome to the new board. 1st 5 weeks of school off to great start.

Went through laundry list to hit on major topics; will address topics in more depth in future.

RHS has added an additional enrichment morning. Almost 2x per month. They are professional development days for teachers. 1 each month w/ deal on building level; other at department level.

Social studies & English are working together. Discussing stress, student pressure & how to address as a school. Looking forward to new concepts. Also lets students sleep in as sleep studies say. We will do this year & next then see if we should keep or change.

Students can pre-order lunches up to 2 hours ahead. Will put in enews. Encourage kids to take advantage. Last year we had full year of after school snacks. Pomtonian supplies healthier snacks after such as fruit, sandwiches, smoothies. ½ hour before end of school until 3:30. Kids are gobbling up before sports. Can use card or cash. At least 100 a day using.

We are growing; current 8th grade approx 500 students. When they are seniors, school will be at all time high (approx 2100). Haven’t seen these #s like these since late ‘70s. Have converted some classrooms in aniticpation. Looking at things like varying scheduler. Will let you know in future how we will deal.

Meeting in cafeteria this evening regarding global classroom trip to Nicaragua. Incredible trip for children to get world experience. They disconnect, no electronics, some mission work, bond, experience wilderness. 5 other trips are being offered; Japan (sister school), Switzerland for physics, Spain, Germany, France. All separate trips, all different times. Encourage your children to take advantage.

This Friday grad from ’57 who shared in Nobel physics years ago will be at RHS to speak. Has spoken previously. Coming again to speak to physics students. Will talk about all his experiences. Lots of pride in Ridgewood. He’s looking forward to it.

Bergen County prosecutors speaking about heroin to freshman. Later this month or November.

Have created a new maker space for STEM down by wood shop / photography. Have 3D printer. There are new courses in innovation & design. Ran into kids in there during free making Halloween decorations. Kids love experimenting w/it. Offering “Girls Who Code” club. Programming classes have competitive clubs to challenge other schools. There is a nationwide movement to get women into science & engineering.

10 classrooms have been updated with paint, lights, etc.

Teachers are revising / updating curriculum in some fashion. At least 75 % through by end of year.

Basil Pizzuto –

Been talking over the years about how student behavior relates to mental health, anxiety, depression. Very different career now from when he started. Now dealing w/ a lot of depression & anxiety. RHS has licensed clinical social workers. Program is connected to Care Plus state program.

RHS has a very forward thinking administration in terms of dealing w/ students, activities, attendance connected to mental health. We are moving forward but probably not using staff as well as could.

3 administrators went last year to San Diego for training by University of MD mental health pros. This summer spent time w/ cross sections of RHS staff to build multi-tiered system to deal. Allows us to put resources where need to be. If we can’t add resources, we can reprioritize. Tier 1 are things all students get. i.e. Freshmen focus, heroin seminar.

2nd tier are targeted students & top tier are specific students who need specific interventions.

We are not going to have all students meet crisis counselors. Will train others to work w/ students. Trauma / mental health minded. Will do longer program regarding this in future meeting.

One new phenom is vaping. Basically have stamped out smoking cigarettes. Vaping has replaced. Usage has jumped a lot but we are not dealing w/ a lot at HS. Parents concerned in survey about vaping in bathrooms. RHS monitoring more w/ security guards. Have changed consequences to them put more in line w/ drug use as vaping pens could use drugs in them & it would be hard to prove. Police don’t even know what it is as it’s too new. A lot of kids have vaping pens. Flavored, look like pens. Can use discretely. Can buy easily at 7-11 gas stations. Not just a Ridgewood problem, nation wide. Glow in dark, flavored, very attractive. State of NJ supposed to outlaw flavors. Hoping for that. Will stay on top of.

Heroin initiative (have been doing last 3 years). It’s the county’s program. Can’t handle volume of whole school so freshmen go to; older classes have attended as freshmen. Will be in early in November. Will get info to parents when it is occurring. Peer counselors will debrief w/ freshmen. There is a very close connection between prescription drugs & heroin. Things like Xanax are very easy to sell. Be mindful. Parents should lock up & hand out 1 at a time. Addiction usually begins w/ opioids then user turns to heroin when they can’t afford the opioid. County police really struggling w/ it. School nurse has Narcan.

The wellness speakers have been amazing. October 4 was “From Surviving to Thriving”. GW auditorium was filled. Very positive night. Talked again about cell phone issues. Staff have been taking phones at times. Policy is not meant to make students feel disconnected or make them unsafe. Kids (& adults) need to learn to be able to put down. 1760 students; most are fine w/ what teachers doing. Another struggle is w/ multi-tasking. Our brains do not work that way. Be mindful of homework while reading texts. Tomorrow night’s program is tech people talking about chrome book usage in school then “Disconnected” at BF 7:00 PM.

Student Congress are really excited bringing back more celebratory things. Lunchtime karaoke, activities because we have new equipment. They will continue to build on those things & do bigger like pep rallies, etc. + other plans that will be a surprise for students. Need parents to get behind some of the plans. Criticism from some parents is that events are planned then canceled. Parents need to commit, not wait until last minute. Hard to plan if no one commits. Have to cancel by due date of deposit if not enough sign up.

Parent asked about cell phone policy. Students can bring to school. Classroom policy is based on individual teacher. Some classes use phones, some okay w/ out on desk. Some put on front wall (students can see that the phone is safe). We want kids to be resilient; constant connection w/ parents is a disservice if they are always available to run to help.

Advil / Tylenol policy. Call nurse or check what was sent out at beginning of year to make sure correct.

Faculty report – Ruth Parks commented it’s great to be back. Thank you all for providing coffee at enrichment mornings & breakfast at beginning of year. Very nice students. Great kids this year. Surprised we are ½ way thru 1st quarter. Progress reports are coming out. Told students to check & make sure all makeups in Skyward. Parents shouldn’t panic if Skyward shows a “D” or “C”. May just be that the teacher doesn’t have many grades so far. Wish everyone a great year.

Laura Moore - Looking forward to this year. Part of guidance. This is busy time of year for everyone due to requests for seniors seeking early decision. Also want to thank for BTS breakfast, wonderful! Thanks for coffee on enrichment mornings. Personal Thank you for letting Laura attend NACCAC in Boston. There are changes on common app, recs, naviance. Used national college fair to connect w/ college reps; unfortunately right after Harvey & Irma so FL & TX missing. There are RaiseMe scholarship opportunities. Tremendous experience. The Bergen County delegation is very close; close knit friendship & relationship. Very impressive. Colleges gravitated towards our group. Lot of new things coming out. Ramapo is using “Slate”. Systems sends email / text to student. Response captures IP address & tracks what children are doing.

Parent question regarding input of grades / timing. It’s frustrating when grades are slow. Why isn’t there a policy of how long to input grades in? Tom Gorman replied that teachers are instructed to enter grades w/in 2 weeks. If you have a problem w/ a specific teacher, please reach out to the department chair or Tom. He believes most teachers are on top but let him know if not.

Jeff Nyhuis spoke about the difference between inputting grade vs feedback. Some teachers give assignments back for revision. RHS is thinking of not using Skyward for a marking period to reduce student stress. Kids should talk to teachers if not getting feedback.

Trying to get some reports from Skyward but it’s not setup for that right now.

Jeff Nyhuis -

College application information / slide show

Tips for writing effective letters of recommendation + what information should go into different types of letters.

When talking to your kids, ask them why they are asking who they are. What do they know about you?

Examples & anecdotes; some teachers ask parents over summer to tell administrator about their children. If so, provide examples. Schools are changing how they are writing. Using bullets under different topics. It’s okay for a teacher to say no. It’s very rare but if feel they cannot capture child in best way they shouldn’t do it.

Counselor should explain how child behave in the community of school, not just classroom piece. All areas as a community. Teacher should focus on classroom. Counselor rec is different from teacher. Jeff feels this information helped teachers to focus. This info comes from college admission people. This is what they want. Shared other topics alike growth, engagement, resilience, etc.

We have over 150 schools visit. 40-50 have already been here. Jeff asked schools how valuable recommendations are. Provided Hobart / michigan state / Stonehill / Rutgers feedback as example.

Jeff gets a lot of questions especially since SAT changed. They (SAT) were starting to lose money. ACT has been around longer but was mostly Midwest test. Didn’t make it out here until last 10-12 years but now has surpassed SAT takers. Tests are still different but new SAT is more in line w/ ACT. This is 3rd year holding for juniors. SAT/ ACT fundraiser was for HSA. Kaplan comes free while we ask for donation. $ comes back to HSA / RHS. Gives good info back to students as to which test is more in line w/ your child’s academic profile. Tom Gorman used personal example of his son’s experience as validating results. Prep accurate as to actual performance. Students are glad they took both as they then can concentrate on which one they are more comfortable w/.

Tests accepted evenly at all colleges. Amazing info in guidance section of skyward. SAT / ACT comparison chart is there. ACT is subject content, SAT just reading & math. Subsection of history & science infused. Students get a sub-score. Colleges don’t really look at that. SAT used to have a 2400 score for about 12 years. Went back about 2 years ago. Math has a “calculator” & “non-calculator” section.

Essay optional in both tests.

Biggest thing w/ scoring is that SAT used to get penalized ¼ point for every wrong but lost nothing for skipping. Now no penalty for wrong answers as ACT does so students should always put something.

Act 36 composite 1-36. Reading/ English / Math / Science. Composite score. ACT is key ideas & detail, SAT word context, command of evidence. Infuse history in readings. Math in SAT very different than old. Very algebra heavy. Basic geometry. Old SAT used to have a lot of geometry. ACT has higher level math. Goes up to Trig. If your child is not in Trig / didn’t take may have little problem w/ ACT math. Jeff finds math ACT more straightforward. Questions more like math class questions. ACT not specific science, it’s reading & inerpretation. Buy a book & get kids used to through practice. It’s more interpretation. Science on SAT just infused in reading. No specific science section.

English & writing actual test on ACT. Both essays optional. When you receive your scores, you do it by test date & send to colleges by test date. Can’t send parts of tests from different dates.

Parent asked why do optional essay? Some colleges may use, some may not. May compare to essay on common app. Some colleges ask for a graded work to verify if your work is your own. If they take & get bad score, it has to go too. Doesn’t get factored into score; separate score. SAT scored 1-8.

Parent asked did ACT became more popular as students more successful? Too early to tell if new SAT has better scores. Last year was the first year. Will know more after this year.

Parent asked if there was a test STEM colleges prefer? Jeff- lot of STEM schools want subject tests. Either ACT or SAT subject test. ACT gives STEM score. Both tests have moved more in line w/ Common Core standards.

Parent asked when do students decide? This weekend is PSAT; for Sophs, Jrs. Scores received in early December & will give you an idea of how test went. Kids tend to be taking tests earlier. Be careful; don’t take so early they don’t have all the education. Spring of Jr year is what Jeff believes is ideal.

Test optional for some schools. Fairtest.org lists 1400 schools that do not require any tests. Great for kids w/ good GPA but don’t test well.

Thank Kim Lucky for booster calendar.

SAT was last weekend

PSAT this weekend

ACT end of this month

Had 9th & 12th grade meetings.

Parent asked if we are doing test boot camp? Catalyst prep weekend prior to SAT / ACT (Feb). $175 8 hours of instruction. $30 back to HSA. For SAT weekend before March SAT. Beginning. 4 sat 4 sun. Kids last year said helpful. Even if had prior tutoring.

If students are signed up for PSAT, the only notification was after submitted payment for PSAT, no other reply. Should get email from Miss Hellman.

Parent asked if students get tutored for SAT? Not everyone. There is a portion that does. Khan academy has free on-line SAT prep. Don’t have for ACT.

Parent asked if top colleges have specific requirements? Used to be measure for top colleges. Not used that way anymore. #s seem to matter more for early action or for 2 similar students.

Laura – it takes about hour to hour & half to write good letter of recommendation so please be patient w/ Jr teachers through October. Early decision has a November 1 deadline.

Parent asked how many recommendations do they need? Counselor + 2 teachers at most. Very specific w/ seniors to check what school wants. If school only wants 1, they will only read the first. Srs need to check.

Sheila Brogan – Board of Ed updates. Full day K started in September & it off to great start. Vince Loncto here also. In August, board heard report from special ed consultants. Results are on-line. Request is for continued professional develop & looking at programming IEP. Did well & continue to learn; always looking at how to do better.

Build on maker space. Monday nights during school year room will be open to community. 4-9 PM. Hope it becomes inter-generational time.

Plug for tomorrow night. Discussing the book “The Big Disconnect”. Had the speaker last year. Fabulous book about how relationships can change, be improved when technology impacted.

How our response as parents will affect how children talk to us.

Kathy Marshall / The Foundation –

Gave a description of foundation; used to be REF. It is a 501c3 to raise private funds to enhance Ridgewood Public Schools. Works across all grade levels and all schools. Grants are targeted to be impactful & effective to the Most students at one time. Examples include $110k for Learning Commons, led 1:1 Chromebooks, partnered w/ District over 4 years on STEAM program,$85k to redo Middle School science rooms. $125k for Maker Space in RHS & middle schools. Have supported recording studio & physics materials + some furnishings for active learning classrooms.

There are 2 more years of STEAM that we need to raise $ for. Every other year there is an Octoberfest. Not this year. In lieu usually send Friends of Foundation letter but those have gotten less effective. Will have phone-a-thon 10/24-10/26. Will send out info in enews w/ specifics of what we are raising $ for. s

James Sharo – Jamboree

Gave description – it is a fundraiser for scholarships for RHS seniors

Has raised over $1MM over 70 years. We need people to be in show, support show. Casting call 10/16, 10/18, & 10/24. Need volunteers. Lots of fun. Creates great memories. Fliers available or go to RHSjamboree.org

Show to be held 2/7, 2/8, 2/9, & 2/10

Jeanine Dawkins -

Thanks to Kim Lucky for calendar. She has calendars to sell. About 10 left.

Thanks to exec board for collecting funds at BTS night & Kaplan testing.

Please sign in if you did not.

Beth Clay –

please pay your HSA dues / order directory on community pass. Dues are $27 & include a directory.

Kate Yates

- thank you for Friends of Ridgewood which raised $21k

Vickie Sharo–

Gave overview of budget. Copies available in back. Biggest change in account was the $21 from Friends of Ridgewood.

We will use the $ raised from test prep to fund guidance going to mental health conference

Please send in dues

Jeanne Johnson –

“Walktoberfest” began a few years ago & was expanded this year. Walkers experience Ridgewood. Have designed over 40 guided themed walking tours. Ridgewoodwalks.com. This Friday @ 10 AM there will be a walk at RHS. Dr. Gorman will lead.

She has fliers. You can get speed limit signs from website also.

Next Meeting – November 7, 2017

Adjourned: 9:25 PM