

## **Ridgewood High School Home and School Association**

Meeting Minutes for October 12, 2010

**In Attendance:** Ines Bunza, Arlene Sarappo, Theresa Callaghan, Sara Erwin, Tina Telesco, Traci DuBois, Cathy Shea, Jocelyn Dreier, Mary Casale, Hannah, Kelly, Arty Freed, Linda VanGrover, Fay Mehran, Sharon Simoncini, David Zrike, Lynn Granski, Maryam Alsop, Christine Shippee, Cristy Sippel, Jaimi Frederich, Jane Stone, Joyce Suss, Rola Baddoura, Terry Caliendo, Audrey Fink, Bamini Pillai, Lynn Knight, Karen Feder, Shari Seroka, Linda Zwylun, Janett Balboa, Elizabeth Shadbolt, Leah Sonnick, Beth Holmes, Suzanne Donovan, Aekyung Chang, Paola Cobb, Tracy Autera, Carol Rapaport, Sherry Zimmer, Liz Gordon, Liz Crowley, Gina McDade, Alane Steinacker, Lisa Gibble, Ruth Parks, Emily Young

**Welcome and Approval of Minutes:** Arlene Sarappo, HSA President, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that tonight's agenda had been amended to address the needs of the school community in the wake of the suicide tragedies that have occurred during the past several months. While tonight's meeting would briefly address open grade book on Skyward and would include regular committee reports, the main focus would be Mr. Lorenz's presentation and summary of events at RHS during the past few weeks.

The minutes from the September 14, 2010 meeting were voted upon by all those in attendance and approved.

**Assistant Principal/Guidance, Curriculum, and Instruction:** Jeff Nyhuis reported that about 200 families so far had logged on Skyward to look at progress reports, midterm grades, and teacher comments. Currently, the grades posted do not reflect a "real time" change, meaning that the system does not yet have the capability to refigure grades as teachers enter new data from recent tests, quizzes, and assignments into the online grade book. Faculty representatives Ruth Parks and Diana Capetola commented that teachers are becoming more comfortable using the Skyward system. Ruth noted that parents who are concerned about a grade that seems especially low should be aware that the posted, online grade probably does not include all factors that determine a student's grade, such as class participation and homework. She also added that parents may contact teachers for clarification or more specific information about their child's current progress. Jeff said that he hoped that the online progress reports will promote conversation between home and school. An e-mail giving instructions on how to access the progress reports on Skyward will be sent home by the Guidance Department today.

Princeton Review will present a college preparation program at the Campus Center for students and parents on Thursday, October 21 at 7:30 pm. This program is part of the College Speaker Series and is sponsored by the Ridgewood Education Foundation.

The PSAT will be offered to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders at RHS on Saturday, October 16.

Jeff, Ruth, and Diana also noted that the RHS faculty has been very upset by the recent events in the news, but also felt encouraged by the high number of students participating in last week's assembly and by the work accomplished at the professional development day on Monday.

**Student Report:** Student Representatives Kelly and Hannah gave their impressions of the previous Thursday's school wide assembly, which was well attended by students. The girls described how kids gathered in small groups to talk about the recent suicides and how much students appreciated having the opportunity to talk about their feelings with their teachers and each other. Kelly and Hannah added that it was a way of making a big school feel a lot smaller, by allowing students to develop different, positive impressions of their peer group.

The student representatives also summarized the upcoming School Spirit Week at RHS. The week's events include Vintage Day, Ridgewood Attire Day, a Pink Out in honor of breast cancer awareness, and on Friday, a friendly Color War among grades, followed by a pep rally for the Varsity Football team, who will play a night game on the new turf field.

**Principal's Report:** Principal Jack Lorenz congratulated the 6 National Merit Scholars and 28 National Merit Commendations awarded to seniors at RHS. New Jersey requires among the highest SAT scores in the U.S. to earn either of these awards, making the accomplishment especially impressive.

Physics teacher Anjali Shah was one of six teachers worldwide and the only teacher from the U.S. to earn a 2010 Teacher of Physics Award from the international organization, the Institute of Physics. RHS will receive a \$1000 prize for Ms. Shah's outstanding work in Physics and Art.

Preparations are underway for this year's Global Learning Conference. Eight students and two advisors will arrive from Sweden in January.

Construction at RHS is nearly complete with new lockers installed indoors, and exterior walkways, outdoor lights, and the new turf field now in use.

Mr. Lorenz then talked about the heartbreaking challenges that the RHS community has faced in recent months. He stated that these challenges also offer the opportunity for the school to continue to grow as a safe, comforting, and even better place for young people. Jack described in detail the steps taken by the school during the last week of September as news of the tragic death of a former RHS student spread throughout the community. Working with district crisis counselors Kevin Feeley and Lauren DePinto and the administrative team at RHS, Jack emphasized the thoroughness and care that went into each decision made by the school, including verifying information from authorities, notifying teachers and students who were close to the student, alerting the rest of the RHS community, and safeguarding the privacy of grief and loss by family and friends. Jack spoke about the strong feelings expressed by RHS students, who grieved for the recent loss of all three of their schoolmates. In response to feedback by several students who met with guidance and crisis counselors, RHS administration planned a school wide assembly, bringing together nearly 1000 of the school's student body. Small break out groups led by two faculty members provided a safe setting for students to recognize and express their sense of loss. Jack praised the proactive approach taken by students and their willingness to discuss strategies that might make RHS a more respectful, unified place for students and teachers to learn and connect with one another. Many of the students' ideas, such as Spirit Week, have been put into practice, while others, such as resuming morning announcements and advisories, are under consideration.

Kevin Feeley commented that he was impressed by students' abilities to state their needs during time of crisis. Jeff Nyhuis thought that the small group discussion format was very productive and hoped it would be repeated again this year.

Jack also stated that the Professional Development Day on teenage depression and suicide presented by Dr. Rick Eile was timely and helpful to teachers. In the coming weeks and months, the faculty hopes to refocus and re-establish routines at school, but also reach out to individual students and maintain communication with families through email and Skyward.

Many parents at tonight's meeting expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the RHS faculty. Michele Lenhart thanked the staff for their hard work during the past few weeks.

#### **Executive Board Updates:**

**President's Report:** HSA President Arlene Sarappo summarized the recent activities of the Board. A panel of experts on noise, traffic, and air quality gave a presentation at the September 22 Federated meeting. Arlene found the discussion to be productive and informative. Issues on health and safety will be further addressed if and when construction at Valley Hospital takes place.

Bookmarks were distributed to district wide to remind parents about the new anti-idling law now in effect in New Jersey.

HSA welcomes Carlos back to RHS and will purchase for him four Friday lunches to celebrate his recovery and return to work as security guard and parking attendant.

The RHS Directory will be ready for proofing early next week. When this step is completed, copies will be ready for distribution. Volunteers are needed to help label them for mailing.

HSA is looking for two volunteers to head up the Hospitality Committee. Please contact Arlene if you are interested.

A full report on Development will be presented by Development Chair Tina Telesco at November's meeting.

A donation was made to Friends of Ridgewood Music in honor of Tyler Clementi.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Ines Bunza reported that the IRS audit of RHS HSA is now complete. Expenses for this past month were minimal. Ines also summarized two policies recently adopted by the Executive Board.

**Conflict of Interest Policy:** This states that no member of our Executive Board has a conflict of interest in any of the activities we perform.

**Whistle Blower Policy:** This states that all Home and School Association members may approach any member of the Executive Board about any topic or issue of concern.

**Committee and Liaison Updates:**

**2011:** Class of '11 Parent Representatives were pleased with the turnout at the Senior Parent Gathering in September and with the number of parents signing on to help out with Project Graduation. They would like to remind parents of the two ongoing fundraisers, RHS Cooks and the Innisbrook Giftwrap sale. Casino Night will take place at the Ridgewood Woman's Club on November 19. Please go to the Project Graduation News on the HSA website for more information on events. [www.rhshsa.org](http://www.rhshsa.org)

**2012:** Class of 2012 t-shirts are currently available for purchase! More information about the sale is available on the HSA website. Junior parent representatives are also planning a parent social event for the spring.

**2013:** Class of '13 Parent Representatives are planning a "Lucky 13" t-shirt sale!

**2014:** Freshman Parent Representatives completed their first fundraiser selling student planners, netting a profit of \$400.

**Curriculum:** Parent Curriculum Liaisons Audrey Fink, Karen Feder, Lynn Knight, and Bamini Pillai reported that district will begin its 5-year evaluation of the Science curriculum. Steps in the evaluation process include program review, student assessment, curriculum writing, revision, and implementation. The district hopes to convene a panel of volunteers from the community to help with this evaluation process. The panel will present its ideas in a meeting scheduled for November 30. Please go to the district website [www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us](http://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us) for more details on this important upcoming event.

**Jamboree:** Auditions for this year's show are being held October 13 and 19. More information on Jamboree may be found on its website: [www.rhsjamboree.com](http://www.rhsjamboree.com)

**RHS Cares:** Committee Chair Kate Douglass hopes to coordinate efforts with care committees from the other Ridgewood schools. Please contact Kate if you would like to help her with this effort.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm in the RHS Library.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Young