

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association
Meeting Minutes for September 14, 2010

In Attendance: Jack Lorenz, Arlene Sarappo, Theresa Callaghan, Emily Young, Sara Erwin, Tina Telesco, Ines Bunza, Jeff Nyhuis, Basil Pizzuto, Angele Ekert, Nancy Cole, Anne Robinson Elizabeth Ronda, Bamini Pillai, Laurie Goodman, Linda VanGrover, Kate Douglass, PJ Lalwani, Elisette Besepar, Jessica Chao, Rob Goodgold, Rola Baddoura, Tara Callaghan, Mindy Dauber, Jocelyn Dreier, Karen Lorenz, Jill Stewart, Dolores Parks, Terry Caliendo, Maggie Leong, Audrey Fink, Rose Boniello, Kathy Orlando, Andrea Rademacher, Ed Fischer, Elizabeth Resnick, Kelly Coakley, Beth Jorgensen, Lisa Gobble, Beth Holmes, Kinpui Chan, Deborah Daughtry/Edghill, Traci Dubois, Vicky Herbert, Carol Rapaport, Gina McDade, Kim Lucky, Susan Donnelly, Mary Casale, Karen Feder, Lisa Sammataro/Kim, Elizabeth Gordon, Maryam Alsop, David Zrike, Cristy Sippel, Christine Shippee, Tali Shapiro, Jennifer Parsekian, Karen Cerasuolo, Elizabeth Calton, Lynn Granski, Angela Chang, Jane Stone, Bill DiModugno, Alane Steinacker, Tracy Autera, Jaime Frederich, Sharon Simoncini, Kathy Entwistle, Catherine Chriss, Linda Weisberger, Cathy Shea, Margie McKeon, Diana Lyandvert,

Welcome and Approval of Minutes: Arlene Sarappo, HSA President, welcomed everyone to the meeting, with special acknowledgement made to families new to RHS. She pointed out that we face particular challenges this year due to significant cuts in the school's budget and other financial restraints. We are fortunate to work closely with the administrative team at RHS to face these challenges with optimism, cooperation, and creativity. The goal of the RHS HSA is to provide information to families and foster communication between school and home. In addition to the RHS website, families may stay informed and involved by visiting the HSA website: www.rhshsa.org. Parents may also email Arlene directly at president@rhshsa.org to ask questions or raise concerns.

The minutes from the June 8, 2010 meeting were voted upon by all those in attendance and approved.

Assistant Principal/Guidance, Curriculum, and Instruction: Jeff Nyhuis provided a brief update on upcoming events sponsored by the Guidance Department.

The 9th Grade Parent Meeting will take place on Wednesday, September 15th at 7:00 p.m. It is the goal of Guidance to work with families to help first-year students transition smoothly to the high school.

The SAT will be offered on October 9. The PSAT will be administered to 10th and 11th graders on October 16th. The ACT is scheduled for October 23rd. All tests will be offered at RHS, but students must pre-register online. Jeff noted that RHS often has had space available for students on "standby registration", which is a good option for those who have missed the registration deadlines. Families should be receiving email notices from RHS regarding test registration dates, fees, and procedures.

The Senior Parent Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 29th at 7:00 p.m. All parents of 12th grade students are invited to attend this meeting to learn more about the college application process. Seniors are currently meeting during English class to review the application process with their guidance counselors. Specifically, counselors will go over the use of edocs, transcript requests, and teacher recommendations.

During the spring, Sophomores will participate in a career builder program administered through Naviance.

Also in the spring, Juniors and their families will be introduced to the college search process.

More than 500 parents responded to the Homework Survey, which was sent to families in June 2010. Since many of the responses included written comments, the information is taking a considerable amount of time to gather and encapsulate. Data collected thus far indicate that many RHS students spend approximately 2 ½ to 3 hours on homework per night, but that some students spend as many as 5 to 6 hours studying. Since about 85% of RHS students also participate in extracurricular activities, the feedback from the survey is of great concern to the school. Jeff and the Guidance staff would like to make sure that all RHS students learn to lead healthy, balanced lives, which include enough hours in the day for such essentials as sufficient sleep

and family time. These issues, as well as others relating to “success without stress” topics, will be addressed to the RHS faculty. For parents who would like to read more about these concerns, Anne Robinson made available several articles on homework overload, teen sleep problems, and teen stress.

Jeff gave a general overview of contacts at RHS:

Parents may contact their child’s Grade Administrator (GA) for concerns about attendance or discipline.

12th Grade GA: Meredith Yannone

11th Gr GA: Basil Pizzuto

10th Gr GA: Elizabeth O’Brien

9th Gr. GA: Meg Schaefer

Parents may contact the Guidance Department for concerns about academics, including student schedules, the college application process, standardized tests (PSAT, SAT, and ACT), transcripts, and GPA.

Parents may contact their child’s teacher by email for concerns about assignments, tests, grades, or a general query about the child’s progress in class. Parents may also contact by email any of the department heads: Greg McDonald (Math/Computer/Science), Mark Ferreri (English/ Social Studies/World Languages), and Chris McCullough (Fine and Applied Arts/Business/Marketing).

Parents may also address any concerns to Jack Lorenz, Jeff Nyhuis, or Basil Pizzuto, who may be reached by email, phone, or through appointment.

Principal’s Report: Jack Lorenz complimented the parent leadership at RHS and applauded the level of parent interest and involvement in the community. Despite the on-going, extensive construction both indoors and on the grounds of the school, the opening week at RHS has gone smoothly. Jack noted the many physical improvements and repairs to the school, such as new lockers and signs.

Recent budget cuts have fostered creative and innovative measures at RHS. For example, students in classes with teachers absent for the day will now report to the Campus Center for that period, and will be supervised by the two permanent substitutes at RHS, as well as other staff as needed. Students will complete online assignments prepared in advance by their teachers. This measure eliminates the need to hire substitute teachers on a daily basis.

With funds that were reallocated and made available through the state of New Jersey, plans are underway to hire a full-time guidance counselor, who will work only with the Freshman class. This will significantly reduce the caseload of the remaining guidance counselors. Jack reported that the Freshmen are off to a good start as they settle in to their schedules. The Freshman Focus Program has greatly assisted the 9th graders in their acclimation to their new environment.

RHS administration continues to have concerns about inappropriate social interactions on Facebook, the online social network. Jack encouraged parents to maintain open communication with the school and welcomes any questions or concerns by parents regarding these issues.

Jack also described two surveys recently conducted by RHS. In a long-term study called Life Track, seniors were asked to respond to 15 questions about their high school experiences and their relationships with teachers and peers. The students will be further questioned in a follow up survey 18 months and 5 years from now. In the Indiana Student Engagement Survey, 11th grade students were asked to report on their experience with homework and class participation.

A new grading system is in place at RHS beginning this year. Quarterly grades will no longer be determined by a grading systems chart, but will be based on percentage. More specific details and explanations will be given at the next HSA meeting on Tuesday, October 12th.

Plans to implement Student Portfolios as part of student assessment have been postponed. The design model and implementation process will be modified to better correspond with ongoing classroom work. Implementation will be considered for next year's freshman class.

Assistant Principal/Administration and Student Services: Basil Pizzuto emphasized the importance of communication among students, teachers, home, and school. Currently, RHS and the rest of the district are transitioning to a sophisticated, new information system called Skyward. Skyward has many features that will enhance and expand communication between school and families. Through Family Access on Skyward, RHS was able to disseminate locker numbers and combinations to all students easily and promptly. As the system is further introduced and becomes available, families will have access to information such as their children's schedules, attendance, tardiness, test scores, and grades. Georgia Abrunzo, the district's IT coordinator, has been very helpful in assisting RHS as the faculty transitions from current communication systems (Blackboard, Moogoo, Google groups, etc) to Skyward. Basil encouraged feedback from parents as the school adjusts to its new information technology systems. Information about RHS events is available on the "Daily Announcements" pull down on the school's website. Families who are experiencing log-in, password, or other difficulties with Skyward may contact RHS or HSA for assistance.

Please note that the Guidance Department will continue to provide information about the college search process through Naviance.

Board of Education Report: Laurie Goodman reported on the previous night's Board of Education meeting. Overall enrollment in the district has increased by 145 students from last year. The total number of students currently registered at RHS is 1,692. Financial contributions to the district by individual families and various community organizations totaled \$546,000 during the previous school year. An online presentation of construction progress of the new turf fields is available on the district website. Laurie also reported that Board member Sheila Brogan did not think it likely that Ridgewood would receive significant, if any, monies through the "Race to the Top" fund, which is in its third round of proceedings.

The Parent Satisfaction Survey that was sent out by the Board of Education in June received a high response rate by Ridgewood families. Information from this survey is still being compiled and will be presented in the upcoming months.

HSA Executive Board Updates:

President's Report: HSA President Arlene Sarappo reminded everyone that the annual dues membership for RHS families is \$25 and includes the cost of the student directory. Money raised goes entirely to the general support of RHS, and not to any specific club, organization, or team. The order form for the RHS directory may be found on the HSA website.

The Hospitality Committee provided RHS faculty with a delicious breakfast on September 2nd. Thanks to all contributors. A sign up is available for those who would like to contribute to the next hospitality event, scheduled for November 1st.

Communications Report: Communications Coordinator Sara Erwin shared a handout titled, "Stay Connected." It outlines the different websites that are pertinent to RHS and gives clear instructions on how to access them. Websites on the handout include: Ridgewood High School, Guidance Department at RHS, RHS HSA, District, and Family Access/Skyward. This useful handout will be available on the HSA website.

Sara also reported that parents of 9th graders will receive log in and user id information for Naviance at the 9th Grade Parents Meeting on September 15th. The deadline for families to register on Skyward has been extended to the week of September 20th. Sara would also welcome any volunteers who would like to help proofread the directory.

Treasurer's Report: Ines Bunza reviewed the procedures for HSA financial transactions, including deposits and disbursements. These forms are available on the HSA website online, and must be filled out and signed, accompanied by any checks, receipts, or Excel spreadsheets, before they are submitted to the treasurer. Tax exempt forms that are used to purchase goods or services must now be original documents, and each individual form must be signed in person by Ines. (We will incur a fine if Xeroxed copies are used.)

Ines explained the importance of documenting all monies handled by HSA committees. In past years, HSA had reported income collected primarily from dues and directory sales. Now HSA is also required to include funds collected by Project Graduation, which significantly raises our total income, since senior class families typically raise more than \$100,000 toward PG.

Ines presented the proposed HSA budget for the 2010-2011 school year. The proposed budget was voted on and approved by all those present.

Development: Development chair Tina Telesco said that the annual appeal letter will be sent home this fall to RHS families requesting financial support for an educational initiative or technological need at the school. Last year's fundraiser by Development resulted in the purchase of 14 laptop computers and six Smartboards for RHS.

Class of 2011: Communications chair Kate Douglass reported that operations are up and running for Project Graduation 2011! Upcoming events and fundraisers include the Senior Parent Social on September 24, the Innisbrook Wrap Sale, and the "RHS Cooks" recipe book. Please check out the Projection Graduation newsletter on the HSA website to learn more about the countless ways you can volunteer or lend your support to this wonderful program. This year's PG co-chairs are Lisa Gibble and Arty Freed.

Class of 2014: Class representative Cathy Shea said that the Class of '14 class planner books will be available for sale at the Freshman Parents Meeting on September 15 as well as during the Club Fair on Friday, September 17th. The cost of each planner is \$10 and all proceeds will go toward Class of 2014 activities.

RHS Cares: RHS Cares supports members of the RHS community and their immediate households during times of need, often by providing home cooked meals for families. Volunteers may sign up on the HSA website or contact chair Kate Douglass for more information.

Ridgewood Education Foundation: Liz Gordon explained that the mission of REF is to enhance the quality of education in Ridgewood's schools through its many programs, including Super Science Saturday, the REEL Voices Film Festival, and classroom mini grants for teachers. The deadline for Fall Grant Applications is September 20th. More information about REF is available on its website: www.ridgewoodeducationfoundation.org or you may contact Liz directly at egordon35@hotmail.com.

Jamboree: Jamboree Chairs Bill DiModugno, Rob Goodgold, and Alane Steinaker invite RHS parents to audition for this year's show, which will be performed in early February. Volunteers are needed for behind the scenes work as well as for onstage acting, singing, and dancing. Last year, Jamboree awarded more than \$100,000 in scholarship funds to RHS graduating seniors in financial need. Auditions for this year's show will be held on October 7th, 13th, and 19th. Please go to the Jamboree website for more details: www.rhsjamboree.com

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 12th at 7:30 pm in the RHS Library.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Young