

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association
Meeting Minutes for February 8, 2011

In Attendance: Ruth Parks, Jeff Nyhuis, Basil Pizzuto, Diana Capetola, Jia Liu, Terry Caliendo, Sandy Sullivan, Shannon Andrews, Marie Malloy, Jing-Kai Syz, Don Bushell, Adele Bushell, Linda VanGrover, Jane Stone, Hae K. Park, Aekyung Chang, Karen Feder, Arty Freed, Beth Holmes, Linda Diorio, Cristy Sippel, Liz Crowley, Donna Hansen, Linda Tarzian, Angela Chang, Lorraine Reynolds, Rocco Orlando, Kathy Orlando, Linda Weisberger, Tracy Autera, Lindsey Barclay, Jennifer Parsekian, Bamini Pillai, Gina Mitgang, Annalise Marcus, Joyce Suss, Vicky Herbert, Beth Jorgensen, Lynn Granski, Kim Lucky, Jean Cleary, Susan Munhall, Linda Granert, Judy MacLennan, Carla Felder, Suzanne Donovan, Barbara Pan, Emily Young

Welcome and Approval of Minutes: Arlene Sarappo, President of HSA, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes from the January 11, 2011 meeting were approved. Arlene acknowledged a recent gift of \$2000 from the Korean Parents Association to the Ridgewood High School Home and School Association. The donation will be used to support RHS guidance counselors at a national conference for guidance counselors in New Orleans.

Principal's Report: Mr. Jack Lorenz gave an update on recent and upcoming events at RHS. The High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) will be administered to 11th graders from March 1-3. Mr. Lorenz anticipates that RHS students will test well compared to neighboring school districts. The RHS Literary Magazine received a superior score in a national rating of high school publications, ranking among the top 300 in the country and 3rd overall in NJ. The Literary Magazine includes student produced artwork, poetry, and fiction. An RHS student was awarded the Garden State Student Award for her work on teen bullying. Seniors continue to receive word of acceptances to colleges and universities. RHS students are currently registering for next year's classes on Skyward. RHS administration initiated a new academic study hall beginning 2nd semester for students who repeatedly do not complete their homework assignments. Students who attend the academic study hall and complete homework will earn full credit for the assignment.

Assistant Principals' Reports: Mr. Basil Pizzuto, Assistant Principal for Administration and Student Services, gave an update of student activities at RHS. Student musicians from RHS recently were selected by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center to perform at Alice Tully Hall on April 14 at 11:00 a.m. Ridgewood students comprise three of the ten performance groups, who were selected from the NY metropolitan area. The Junior-Senior Homecoming Dance is scheduled to take place this weekend. The Sophomore Semi-formal Dance will take place in early mid-week in early March. The tenth graders will have a late opening the following day due to HSPA for eleventh graders. Student Congress is pleased to invite all senior citizens to the annual Senior Citizen Dance on February 14 at 5:30 p.m. for an evening of dinner and dancing.

Mr. Jeff Nyhuis, Assistant Principal for Guidance, Curriculum and Instruction, also summarized news and events from the Guidance Department. The High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) will take place March 1-3 for 11th graders at the usual start time of 7:47 a.m. All other students should report to school at 9:55 a.m. The HSPA is an important test and is required by all students to graduate. The meeting for parents of 11th graders is scheduled for February 17 in the Campus Center. Parents will be introduced to Naviance, followed by small group sessions with their child's guidance counselor. The guidance department is planning to invite parents of 8th graders to an informal coffee in April. In addition, parents as well as the incoming 9th graders will be invited to attend a club fair in May to familiarize them with the many different activities and clubs offered at RHS.

ACT testing will take place at RHS this weekend. Standby space is available with registration beginning at 7:15 a.m.

Discussion at the February faculty meeting focused on the homework-free December break. Participants included teachers, parents, and students, who met in small groups to share their responses.

The documentary, Race to Nowhere, will have another screening on Monday, February 28 at 7:30 p.m. in BF auditorium. Director Vicki Abeles will be present for a discussion following the viewing of the film.

Mr. Nyhuis also reported that “open gradebook” on the Skyward system is now available for viewing by parents. RHS teachers and administration hope that parents will use this information as a point of departure for discussion with their children about their schoolwork.

Mr. Nyhuis also responded to questions about grade point average and decile ranking. A student’s academic GPA includes only the grades from academic classes (English, history, mathematics, science, and language), while the student’s general GPA includes the grades of all of the student’s classes, as well as the student’s weighted grades from honors or AP level courses. Currently at RHS, a student’s decile ranking may be found on the transcript page. Other high schools comparable to RHS have removed the decile ranking to the school profile page, a change that is under consideration by the guidance department.

Mr. Nyhuis also reported that current 9th graders are required by the State of New Jersey to complete a class in Finance before graduation. RHS administration is exploring the possibility of satisfying the requirement through online courses or through economics classes already offered in the RHS course book.

RHS Learning Commons: Mr. Lorenz shared a power point presentation to introduce the concept of a Learning Commons at RHS. This facility would offer RHS the opportunity to integrate its many student services into a well designed, “learner friendly” environment. Support services such as technology, supplemental skills, math and writing laboratories, peer tutoring, and homework assistance would be coordinated into an efficient, flexible space that would encourage collaborative learning, problem solving, research, and community building. Mr. Lorenz noted the impact of today’s technology on how students learn, compared with the attitudes and expectations of students from a generation ago. He emphasized the necessity of rethinking traditional school spaces, such as the library, classrooms, and hallways, and the importance of creating learning centered environments. These redesigned spaces might include study nooks, carrels, integrated lab facilities, flexible work spaces for small group work, reading rooms, video conference rooms, and areas for computer screens, media, printers, and printed materials.

Mr. Lorenz reported that several parents have come forward with design ideas for this new space. Tina Telesco is currently planning a long term fundraising campaign. Gina Mitgang from the Ridgewood Public Library said that she hoped that the schools and public library would continue to share resources and databases to the benefit of all.

Faculty Update: Faculty representatives Diana Capetola and Ruth Parks thanked parents for the refreshments at the February faculty meeting. They encouraged parents to communicate with their children’s teachers with any questions regarding homework and schoolwork.

Board of Education Updates: Laurie Goodman reported that the 2011-12 school year calendar is now posted on the Board of Education website. Also posted is a Q & A addressing the ongoing discussion of the field lights on Stevens Field. Negotiations with teachers will begin in February, but the outcome of the talks may not be clarified before the budget is put before voters in April.

Executive Board Updates:

Arlene would welcome suggestions of topics for future HSA meetings. Please contact her at president@rhshsa.org if you would like to submit an idea.

Development chair Tina Telesco briefly outlined the upcoming fundraiser to support RHS programs that have been affected by the recent budget cuts. In addition to the letter from Friends of Ridgewood High School sent

to families, a “phone-a-thon” is being planned for March. Students, parents, and RHS alumni are welcome to volunteer in this effort which will take place over three evenings. Please contact Tina for more information.

Nominating Committee chair Lynn Granski invites all those who are interested in volunteering for a position on the RHS HSA Executive Board to please contact her as soon as possible.

Project Graduation 2011 chairs Linda VanGrover, Karen Stiles, and Artie Friedman gave a summary of PG2011 activities. Stationery cards are now available for purchase as is the Lord and Taylor fundraiser coupon. Please visit the PG2011 website for more details.

Class of 2012 representative Terry Caliendo said that the class is sponsoring a “Band Night” for parents at the restaurant Blend, with all proceeds to go to the class fund.

Class of 2013 parent representatives report that an organizational meeting will take place on March 3 to plan for the May 6 parent social.

Jamboree chairs anticipate raising more than \$100K to support RHS students in need of financial assistance for college. Please come and support the extraordinary talents of your fellow RHS parents! Tickets are available for Wednesday through Saturday performances.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

The next meeting will take place at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 8, 2011 in the RHS Library.

Respectfully submitted by Emily Young