

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association

Meeting Minutes

April 14, 2009

Welcome – Elizabeth Resnick, HSA President

Elizabeth welcomed everyone to the meeting. The two featured presentations will be the Ridgewood Board of Education Budget and Student Life and Stress.

Ridgewood Public Schools 2009/2010 Budget Presentation – Dr. Daniel Fishbein

Handouts of the power point presentation were distributed. Dr. Fishbein reminded all those present that all this information is available on the BOE website as well. The three major budget challenges are: cost containment and alternative revenue generation; providing programs and services of the highest quality that are research based; restrictions imposed by S-1701, A-5, and the funding formula. These restrictions include limiting the surplus school boards are allowed to carry year to year. This impacts budgeting tremendously particularly in light of rising medical insurance costs, snow removal expenses....

The 2009/2010 budget process was difficult because of both the inability to maintain a fund balance to use for relief and a very large increase in out of district tuition rates. The detailed budget figures were presented by Dr. Fishbein.

Please remember to vote on April 21. The polls are open from 7:00 a.m to 9:00 p.m.

Student Life and Stress – Dr. Rick Gould, Basil Pizzuto and Jack Lorenz

Students are encouraged to “drop in” to Basil’s office and the other support offices at RHS to “share” confusing emotions. The students often are not sure how to express their thoughts and feelings, but what is important for them is to know where to go to “talk” and where they are welcome to do this.

Students want to be listened to; they do not want to be talked to. This is a key concept for parents to be aware of. Children do not want to be “preached to”, they want to be heard. The key to all of this is patience. Do not ask too many questions. Give your children space. Allow for silences in your discussion so they can gather their thoughts and allow time for them to open up. It is never too late to begin laying the foundation to communicate with your kids. Remember though, an open dialogue is not going to happen overnight but it is important to keep the process moving forward.

Regarding the economic stress that many families are feeling today, it is important to talk honestly with your kids. Your children can sense what is going on, particularly if you as parents are struggling or worried. It is best to talk to them about what is happening. Acknowledge the issues and concerns you are facing with them.

The RHS Administration emphasizes “relationships” with the students. The approach years ago in education had been “discipline” of the students. Today the administrators and counselors try to understand “why” particular students are acting out as opposed to “disciplining” them for acting out.

RHS has two Crisis Counselors. In addition each class has a dedicated Grade Administrator who remains with those students all four years at RHS. The Grade Administrators (G.A.’s) work hard to understand the psychology of adolescent high school students. The Principal, Vice Principals, G. A.s and teachers at RHS operate as a team working to do what is best for each of the students at RHS. Their goal has been to develop a culture of trust with both students and parents.

Regarding the transition to freshman year, it is important for parents to talk about their expectations and about the reality of stress and anxiety before their children start high school. Eighth grade students are well aware that beginning freshman year things like grades really do matter. RHS is working with the administrators and teachers at both GW and BF to ease the transition for freshman students, including work load, mid-terms and self-advocacy.

An initiative that Jack has begun at RHS is stressing to teachers not to give a grade to everything that is turned in. What students want most and learn from is feedback, not grades. Having teachers make suggestions as to how a student can improve their paper or project is very motivating for students and creates a better learning scenario.

Approval of March 10 Meeting Minutes – Elizabeth Resnick, HSA President

A motion was made to approve the March 10 RHS HSA Meeting Minutes. The March Minutes were voted on and approved by all those present.

Principal’s Report – Jack Lorenz

Jack assured parents that the BOE Budget cuts would not affect the quality and standards at RHS. The RHS administrators and teachers may need to tap into parents for additional volunteering, such as manning the Writing Lab. If cuts need to be made to extracurricular activities, they will be done very judiciously. In some situations, teachers have already volunteered to step in to offset the cuts in funding.

The Administrators and teachers are looking at how effective things are. They are evaluating each and every program – does it work and is it economically efficient? It continues to be a team effort on how to save money and how to minimize the impact on the students.

Jack stressed that the key to any school's success is "open communication". He wants to hear what parents are thinking and what suggestions they may have.

Guidance Update – Jeff Nyhuis

The third quarter has ended. The senior students have heard from the colleges and universities they applied to. More students have been put on Wait Lists than in years past. Many private schools are worried about the number of students who will accept admission thus they have increased the size of their Wait Lists.

RHS student course requests for 2009/2010 will be mailed out next week. This is a confirmation of what courses the student had enrolled for on Naviance, this is not their class schedule. Any course changes need to be made immediately. Changes are not to be made once the schedules are released. The Guidance Office will not be accommodating schedule changes over the summer. Students will not be able to switch around their schedules to get a particular teacher.

The College Speaker Series is sponsoring Peter Van Bursick on May 14. The presentation is entitled "The Admissions Game". Mr. Van Bursick is a dynamic speaker with a unique format of showing parents and students alike what really goes on in the college admission process. Parents and students are encouraged to attend this unique presentation.

Advanced Placement (A.P.) Exams will be held on May 4 through May 15. 1893 tests are being administered to 437 students.

President's Report – Elizabeth Resnick

Elizabeth thanked all the parent volunteers who have helped with the countless HSA endeavors this year including the ByLaws & Constitution Committee, Project Graduation, Safety Committee, Hospitality Committee, the Nominating Committee...the list goes on and on. The Senior Fashion Show hosted by Project Graduation on April 5 was a huge success. The Fashion Show is the primary source of fundraising for Project Graduation.

The HSA Gift Committee is made up of the HSA Executive Board and RHS Administrators who traditionally "gift" money to RHS each spring. If you have any suggestions as to programs or endeavors that you think the money should be gifted towards, please contact Elizabeth Resnick, Wendy Wong or Jack Lorenz.

Nominating Committee Update- Patty Mullen and Carol Rapaport

The proposed slate for the 2009/2010 RHS HSA Executive Committee is:

President – Rola Baddoura

Vice President – Arlene Sarappo

Secretary – Terri McAteer

Communications – Lynn Granski

Treasurer – Inez Bunza

The Development Coordinator will be announced at the May 12 HSA meeting. The RHS HSA 2009/2010 Slate will be voted on at the May 12 meeting.

Communication Update – Sara Erwin

RHS is going paperless. All notices, health forms, and the Booster Calendar will be sent to the parents of RHS students via email. It is imperative that all parents sign up for the RHS enews to receive these materials. Notices have been sent out to all current and incoming RHS parents regarding this new paperless initiative.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

In attendance:

Linda Tarzian, Cristy Sippel, Maryam Alsop, Arlene Sarappo, Amy Scher, Marianne Bennett, Lynn Granski, Elizabeth Resnick, Wendy Wong, Rola Baddoura, Elizabeth Gordon, Rose Boniello, Leesa Manderano, Nancy Coopersmith, Elaine Posner, Jacob Levitsky, Daniel Schwalm, Michele Lenhard, Jean Cleary, Terri McAteer, Diana Lyandvert, Carol Rapaport, Dixie Taylor, Patty Mullen, Traci DuBois, Donna Antonellis, Jack Lorenz, Basil Pizzuto, Jeff Nyhuis, Lynda Mather, Sara Erwin, Christine Shippee, Bob Hutton, Angelo DiSimone, Daniel Fishbein, Audrey Fink, Karen Dexter, Amy Davidson, Laurie Goodman