

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association

Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2009

Welcome and Approval of November 11 Meeting Minutes – Elizabeth Resnick, HSA President

Elizabeth welcomed everyone to the meeting and proposed the November 11, 2008 HSA Meeting Minutes be voted on for approval. The Minutes were approved by all those present.

Principal's Report – Jack Lorenz

Jack and Jeff Nyhuis have visited all eighteen Freshman Focus Groups. They told the students of their experiences growing up and memories they have of being in high school. Each freshman student is now to write a letter to Jack with a photo of himself attached to it. Jack, Jeff and Basil will read each letter so that they can get to know each student better. The students know that their doors are always open. In fact, many freshmen have taken Jack up on his offer to stop by and share their thoughts with him.

The students will have an opportunity to watch the Presidential Inauguration. The Inauguration will be shown live in the Campus Center on Tuesday, January 20.

As most of you are aware, the RHS Student Council hosted a school wide dance last Friday night, January 9. Unfortunately a number of students made some bad choices. Jack will be sending out a letter to all RHS parents addressing underage drinking. Included in the mailing will be a checklist for students and parents to fill out individually and to then discuss together including the risks involved in underage drinking. The RHS Administration is continually working to reduce the harm our students can get into as a result of poor decisions. Jack highly recommends the book, What Kids Need to Succeed written by Peter Benson, Judy Galbraith and Pamela Espeland.

Jack is pleased to announce that the Pfizer Corporation has donated 25 laptop computers to RHS. This is a wonderful donation and it will be great to replace some of the older computers at the school.

Technology Update – Jack Lorenz

RHS has a wide range of technology from low tech to high tech. When Jack came here three years ago, the school was overwhelming in need of updated technology. \$1.2 million has since been infused into technology upgrades at RHS. The HSA has been a huge contributor in addition to the Ridgewood BOE.

Education has changed significantly since the introduction of the Web. Now with Web 2.0, teachers and students have a very interactive tool to work with. It is important to note that our children have grown up with computers. They are a very technologically savvy generation. Our kids are very well versed in “multi-tasking” and are use to constant communication and interaction. Web 2.0 allows students and teachers to interact, share and respond. Web 2.0 is changing learning and teaching is adjusting accordingly.

Podcasts are audio presentations. They can be distributed on the internet which means a teacher can disseminate his lectures and the students can in turn listen on their iPods or computers. Audio Book podcasts are also becoming available. Depending on the student’s learning style, an audio presentation of a book, is a more effective teaching tool.

Blogs are an “on-line journal”, a website for reflection. Blogs can be a very versatile way of sharing and collaborating. Educators use blogs to post materials, host on-line discussions, create a class publication, share lesson plans and gain feedback.

Wiki is the acronym for Wikipedia. It is more accurate than the Encyclopedia Britanica. Wiki is a collaborative website. Traditional textbook teaching is becoming antiquated. Wiki is a live, interactive textbook for students.

Curriki stands for “curricula + wiki”. Curriki is a phenomenal resource for teachers to share and evaluate lesson plans. Teachers can collaborate on and tweak lesson plans and then archive them for others to utilize.

The RHS Refrigerator is a project of Jack’s that he hopes will be unveiled soon. The RHS Refrigerator will be where RHS teachers can submit well written work for all to see. When launched, one can go to the RHS website and then go to the Refrigerator to see selected artwork, poetry, music recitals... The Refrigerator will be a way to showcase outstanding student work. Seventy five percent of taxpayers in Ridgewood do not have students in the high school and yet RHS requires a significant portion of the school budget each year. The Refrigerator will allow everyone to see what our students are accomplishing.

Thanks to the RHS HSA, 5 Smart Boards have been purchased in the last few weeks. Smart Board is an interactive white board that is attached to a computer. Smart Boards are a versatile teaching tool that can be used as a document camera or as an “overhead projector”. Anything on your computer can be displayed for the entire class to see on the Smart Board.

This technology allows our children to be critical thinkers...they have the opportunity to create new knowledge.

Interdisciplinary Programs at RHS/RHAP, ALISA, America Studies – Jeff Nyhuis

RHS has three interdisciplinary programs that freshmen have an opportunity to apply to as they register for their sophomore classes. The freshman students have many tracks to choose from. They could select English 10 and U.S. History I, or English 10 Honors and U.S. History I Honors, or English A.P and U.S. History I A.P. or any combination of the English and U.S. History options. Or the students have the opportunity to apply to the interdisciplinary programs which are the RHAP, ALISA, and American Studies. The current freshman class is given an overview of all the class options available to them in Freshman Focus. They are made aware of which courses require an application be submitted and what the deadlines are. In addition, announcements are made in school about meetings being held for those freshman students interested in the specific programs. The students then have an opportunity to meet with the teachers associated with each of the programs to learn more of the specifics of the application process, the class format and curriculum.

American Studies is a two year program with the English and History taught in back to back classes and coordinated to be covering the same time period. For instance, if the class is studying the Salem Witch Trials in history, the kids may be reading The Crucible in English. The course includes field trips to Gettysburg, Boston and Washington D.C. Fifty to fifty-five kids are selected for the American Studies program from the freshman applicants. They are divided into 2 sections and will remain with the same section for sophomore and junior year.

From the popularity of the American Studies program the ALISA program evolved. The ALISA program integrates the Performing Arts with study of English and American History. The students in this program learn about works of art including fine arts and performing arts. ALISA is a two year program that has about twenty seven students per grade.

The most recent interdisciplinary program added to the curriculum is RAHP/Ridgewood Academy of Health Program. RAHP is a three year program that integrates the sciences. It is taught in partnership with Valley Hospital and Bergen Community College. RAHP is an exciting program where the kids are actually doing things to help our community. The projects presented by the Seniors as a culmination of their studies are amazing. Many of these students go on to pursue science, health, engineering and or medicine in college. Forty students per grade level are selected for the RAHP program.

The deadlines for applications are February 12 for RAHP and February 13 for ALISA and American Studies. The freshmen are aware of these deadlines and know that a paper application must be filled out. Not all students that apply are selected. Students interested in the Honors English and or Honors U.S. History courses are recommended by their current history and English teachers.

Guidance Update - Jeff Nyhuis

The current Senior class has 424 students. The Guidance Department has sent out 2546 transcripts to date. That averages about 6 transcript requests per student, which is about the number of colleges the counselors advise their students to apply to. To date, 52 students applied Early Decision and 29 were accepted and 140 students applied Early Action and 103 were accepted.

Midterm exams begin Thursday, January 22. Wednesday, January 21 is a review day. The midterm schedule is printed in the Booster calendar. The SAT's are being offered on January 24 as are the SAT II subject tests. The ACT's are being offered on February 7. These test dates are also noted in the Booster calendar.

There will be an 8th grade parent meeting next Wednesday, January 21 at 7:30 in the Campus Center. On February 12 there will be an 11th grade parent "College Kickoff" meeting at 7:30 in the Campus Center. The parents will be given an overview of the college application process and then have an opportunity to break out to meet with their child's guidance counselor.

Teacher's Report - Ruth Parks

The teachers are very grateful for the contribution of the Smart Boards. The upgrades in technology at RHS have made tremendous improvements in communication and teaching. Emailing and the use of Black Board have been a wonderful way for students to communicate with teachers and vice-versa.

Teacher's Report – Donna Antonellis

The RHS library is open during mid-terms for quiet study. Please encourage your students to take advantage of the library during the stressful mid-term period.

Board of Education – Joseph Vallerini

The announcement of Thirty-eight Bloustein Distinguished Scholars was made at the BOE meeting. This is a tremendous tribute to those students and RHS.

As most of you are aware, the Ridgewood Public Schools' budget is facing excessive cuts. The reductions will be painful and will be made in all areas of education across our district. A \$2 million cut will need to be made. Despite the extraordinary cutbacks that are impending, the instruction of all of our students is still the BOE's highest priority. The BOE welcomes input from taxpayers including suggestions as to how to make wise cuts.

The BOE is looking at a \$50 million Referendum. RHS would be the recipient of approximately 20% of that amount which would cover repairs and upgrades to the facility. If the BOE so

chooses, September 2009 would be the date the Referendum would be put before the voters. The BOE has some serious and very difficult decisions to make in the next few months. Residents are encouraged to utilize the BOE website to stay informed.

An Open Communications Forum hosted by the Board of Education will be held on March 3 at 7:30 p.m. at the Ed Center on Cottage Place. All are invited to attend. The BOE is eager to get feedback on what it is doing well and what needs to be improved in its efforts to keep an open line of communication with the public.

President's Report – Elizabeth Resnick

Federated Update - Dr. Fishbein discussed the severity of the cuts that will need to be made to the school budget in order to cover the \$2 million cutback from the State. Profits from the Wizards game will be applied to needs in the district schools in light of the budget cuts.

Nominating Committee – The HSA Nominating Committee is beginning to gather names for the 2009/2010 School Year HSA slate. If you are interested in any of the HSA positions or would like to nominate someone, please contact Patty Mullen, Carol Rapaport or Elizabeth Resnick.

Vice-President's Report – Rola Baddoura

The HSA committee that is reviewing the RHS HSA Constitution and By-Laws will be meeting again on January 15 at 1 pm at Rola's home. Anyone interested in attending is welcome. The revisions to the Constitution and By-Laws will be finalized by the end of February and will be posted on the RHS website. The revised By-Laws will be presented to the HSA in March and voted on for approval at this General Membership Meeting.

Development Committee – Theresa Callaghan

Five Smart Boards have been ordered and will be delivered at the end of January. To date 225 families have contributed to the Development Fund. "Save the Date" of March 6 for the RHS Parents Social at the Elks Club for a low key, inexpensive, fun night with all proceeds benefiting the Development Fund. Invitations are being sent out shortly.

Curriculum Communication Committee – Maryam Alsop and Cheryl Sabath

The Committee met the new Director of Curriculum, Dr. Jessica Anspach. At the meeting Regina Botsford, Assistant Superintendant, discussed the search for math textbooks for the middle school Math Programs. For those who are interested in learning more about the Ridgewood Curriculum Committee's goals and planning the information is available on the Ridgewood Public Schools website.

Jamboree – Dixie Taylor

The show is put on by parents of RHS students. It is an incredible collaboration of talent and effort by countless parents. The Jamboree shows this year are February 4, 5, 6 and 7. All the money raised is put towards need based scholarships for graduating seniors. Advertisements are being sold for the Jamboree Program. Please come watch the show! Tickets and advertisements can be purchased on the website. www.RHSJamboree.com

Legacy Book Program – Linda Diorio

Most of the library budget at RHS goes towards updating the data base, leaving little money to purchase new books. The Legacy Book Program was initiated by Project Graduation so that parents had an opportunity to honor their graduating senior and the graduating class by purchasing a book for the RHS Library. This program has been so popular that it is now available for all RHS families to participate in.

With your donation, you may select a book from the Library Wish List, or you can leave it to the discretion of the committee to choose a book that would enhance the collection. The books on the Wish List compliment the RHS curriculum. The contributions to the Legacy Book Program are phenomenal because they make available books that could not be purchased with the current school budget shortfalls.

Forms to participate in this very worthwhile program are available in the RHS Library or can be downloaded from the RHS website.

Ridgewood Education Foundation – Liz Gordon

The REF has been in existence for 19 years. It was founded by citizens of Ridgewood to foster new programs at all the Ridgewood schools. Teachers at the Ridgewood schools have an opportunity to submit Grant requests.

The REF helps to fund the College Speaker Series that is hosted at RHS each year. The REF raises all its money through membership donations. If you are interested in becoming an REF member or if you would like to make a donation to the REF to honor a teacher, you can visit the REF website which is www.RidgewoodEducationFoundation.org

Safety Committee – Rose Boniello

The Committee is very concerned with pedestrian safety as the students cross Ridgewood Avenue. They are also addressing the current vehicle patterns around RHS, particularly at drop-off in the mornings. Anyone interested in helping on this Committee or anyone who has suggestions as to how to improve the safety of our students, please call Rose.

Super Science Saturday - Mel Powers

Super Science Saturday will be held at RHS on Saturday March 7. It is a “free event” that is full of “science glory”. All are encouraged to attend. Last year more than 200 students presented. This year for the first time ever NASA will be making a presentation as will the Franklin Institute. The Super Science Committee’s intent is to make science relevant and interesting to kids. They would love to make it more than a day long activity. The Committee is also working hard to bring in more high school students both as presenters and attendees. Please visit the website www.supersciencesaturday.org to learn more about this very worthwhile venture.

Ridgewood Town Council – Anne Zusy

A number of important meetings will be held in the next few weeks and the Council has been encouraging residents to attend any or all of the public sessions. The next meeting to discuss the potential expansion of Valley Hospital will be January 26 which will include reviewing the impact on traffic. On January 28 there will be a public meeting to discuss the proposal for the renovation of Graydon. Also on January 28 the Council on Affordable Housing will be making a presentation. These dates are also posted on the Village Council’s website.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m. The next HSA meeting is Tuesday, February 10, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in the RHS library. Topics that will be covered at the February meeting will include a follow up discussion on RHS sponsored dances and student behavior, re-registration of students, and a brief presentation of the RAHP, ALISA and American Studies programs by students and teachers involved in each.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Granski, HSA Secretary

In attendance:

Dixie Taylor, Carol Rapaport, Jamie Frederick, Vicky Herbert, Theresa Callaghan, Chris Meyer, Audrey Fink, Maryam Alsop, Christine Shippee, Carolyn Lothian, Kathy O’Shea, Lou Sarappo, Annalise Marcus, Arlene Sarappo, Linda Diorio, Peter Milano, Ruth Parks, Jeff Nyhuis, Jack Lorenz, Joseph Vallerini, Donna Antonellis, Jane French, Rose Boniello, Dan Schwalm, Yoomee Kwon, Susan Munhall, Suzanne Donovan, Nancy Coopersmith, Sally Thurston, Cheryl Sabath, Nancy Stewart, Amy Scher, Catherine Chriss, Patricia Garr, Ina Boylan, Nicholas Concillio, Liz Gordon, Nick Aynilian, Amy Davidson, Ann Turrin, Susan Sacks, Deborah Ou, Annie Zusy, Wendy Wong, Cathy Shea, Peggy McGinley, Lisa Gible, Sara Erwin, Rola Baddoura, Elizabeth Resnick, Terri McAteer, Linda Tarzian, Dennis Tarzian, Lynn Granski