

SHS PTO
Coffee with The Principal
January 13, 2017
Notes

Co-president Alex Queripel opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m.
50 parents in attendance as well as Director of Counseling Laura Kaplan

Alex reported:

The PTO has initiated a **pilot program for grants** to teachers – **\$8,100 is being awarded** to 13 different teachers for various programs at SHS.

January 21 **SHS PTO Parent Social** at The Elks – this is a fun event and a fundraiser.

Next Coffee is March 15 at 7:00 p.m. as parents have asked for meetings in the evening.

Alex expressed gratitude to Mrs. Grimaldi for all of her support of the PTO.

Questions will be welcome from those in attendance, but first Mrs. Grimaldi will respond to the questions submitted in advance.

Principal Stacy Grimaldi:

Report of Information

Midterm exams coming up on Thurs 1/22, Fri 1/23, Mon 1/26, Tues 1/27. There will be 2 sessions per day and each will be 2 hours in length.

The Administration listened to students & faculty and wrapped mid-terms exams around a weekend. We'll do that so long as the calendar allows.

On Exam Days, food will be available at 10:00 in cafeteria.

Tuesday & Wednesday prior to mid-terms are review days.

Semi-formal on Friday, January 26

Single session on that day, dismissal at 12:06. All students attending the semi-formal must be in school for the day.

Each student to purchase his/her own ticket. Sales are Tuesday 1/17 and Wednesday 1/18. A permission slip is required.

All students must arrive by 8:00 p.m. Students are required to stay until 10:00 p.m.

Typically a Sadie Hawkins tradition – girls ask boys – but, it is certainly okay for students to go with a group of friends.

Students will be checked upon arrival at Mayfair Farms.

Letter will be sent home on all of the above.

AP & Honors Applications

Email with link to application sent to all students today.

Application closes on Friday, January 27.

Students must submit the application – not parents.

When considering options, please keep in mind: balance, balance, balance!

Mrs. Kaplan added: Another thing to keep in mind ... even if your student is in Honors or AP level at this time, he/she must still apply for such classes for next year.

The only subject level that has a forced choice is English, because it is different content for AP and Honors.

Be sure to read the prerequisites – the program of studies has the prereqs listed.

Honeywell Instant Alert

You must register. This will be used exclusively for communication from SHS.

Everyone is in the system, but registering allows you to select how you want the information delivered

Go to district website <http://www.summit.k12.nj.us> to get link to Honeywell.

The upcoming **In-Service Day** on March 15th is all about technology.

The Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday before Spring Break and the Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday after Spring Break will be delayed openings for **PARCC**.

NEW Segment for Coffee with The Principal ... FACT OR FICTION

Stacy clears-up some rumors ...

This is the last year for the Semi-Formal. **FICTION.**

SHS is banning leggings. **FICTION.**

The rumor that Mr. Steffner is against leggings is *not* true

Mr. Steffner sent letter home to all girls about the dress code. **FICTION.**

Female dress code violation from the first week of January

The rumors are *not* true: the student who was sent to the Office was *not* publicly humiliated, expelled, or sent home.

The following day, many students took a stand in solidarity/protest and because Mr. Steffner was out of the building on that day, rumors about his opinions on dress code circulated.

Mr. Steffner is against off-the-shoulder clothing is *not* true.

If your child comes home with something that doesn't sound right, it may not be true, please pick up the phone and call me and ask me about it.
If you're venting on social media, please think twice about it as reputations can be hurt by that.

90% of our conversations about dress code are with boys about hats, pants, inappropriate shirts.

Dress code conversations with female students are handled with Principal Grimaldi or Assistant Principal Dolan.

*We are changing the dress code next year: **FICTION.***

One change that I anticipate making is about flip flops – the policy will be modified except for labs, wood shop, and other classes where flip flops would be unsafe.

*The paperwork for PE Independent Study is really not required: **FICTION.***

The documentation must be submitted – it is required by the State.
Certificated teacher must sign it. Not all coaches are certificated teachers.
Instructions are clear. There is a clear due date. Several submit late, but we must hold students accountable.

Responses to Questions Received in Advance:

Yearbook cost is \$100. SHS works with Jostens to produce the yearbook. It's not a fundraiser. It's costly because the whole book is in full color.
We've had a very good experience working with Jostens.
They've foregone shipping costs for the last several years.
About every 3-4 years, we review the Jostens contract and proposals from other vendors.

Study Hall in Auditorium

Study Hall takes place in the cafeteria, but in the Winter, the cafeteria is needed for wrestling so Study Hall must be moved to Auditorium since set-up each day for wrestling must take place after lunch.

Parents have complained that there are no writing surfaces available. Mrs. Grimaldi said that she can add tables in some areas of the Auditorium and we have done that in the past. Some students can get into library if there is a space, but there is a greater demand for the library when classes have research paper assignments, so seats for Study Hall are limited.

Questions from Parents Present

Q: is Tues-Wed mid-term review days a rule? It does not seem to be.

Mrs. Grimaldi: It is not a rule, but we can look at it and address it as needed.

Q: Do teachers know that the exam is 2 hours?

Mrs. Grimaldi and Laura Kaplan: That has been made very clear.

Q: During mid-term exams, do students have to be in school for the time when they'd have PE/Study Hall?

Mrs. Grimaldi: No – they are welcome here though, particularly if transportation timing is an issue. There will be spaces available where students can study.

Q: Are you considering bringing back PE exemption program for non-athletes?

Mrs. Grimaldi: PE exemption for grades 10-12 for those in school athletic program or an approved program outside of school. We had reviewed some of the non-athletic programs, but they do not meet core requirements.

Q: Is it acceptable that students are given a quiz during the week of mid-terms?

Mrs. Grimaldi: I'd rather they not; let's speak afterwards.

Q: If students are doing an out-of-school sport in Spring, how do they apply for the PE Exemption?

Mrs. Grimaldi: Same application and same process as the past. We make a phone call to verify the program and the student's participation.

Q: Why are Freshmen not permitted to apply for a PE Exemption?

Mrs. Grimaldi: Much of freshman year is team-building so we want all of the freshmen to be present in PE class.

Q: 6-8/hours/week of walking and marching are required for SHS Marching Band, why can they not be exempt. It's a requirement for a class. And, it's choreography. In the month of September, the time commitment exceeds 135 hours.

Mrs. Grimaldi: We have to look at the CPIs (Course Proficiency Indicators) when considering the programs that could qualify for exemption. Marching Band does not fit the Option 2 categories.

Q: What is policy of teachers posting homework online?

Mrs. Grimaldi: This came up at the last Coffee we had – in October, I addressed the faculty and department supervisors about it soon thereafter.

Q: What is the time cut-off for posting homework online?

Mrs. Grimaldi: I have directed the faculty that students need to know their homework assignment when they leave the classroom at the end of class.

This is the first time I'm hearing this since I addressed the faculty about it – I did not know it is still an issue.

Mrs. Kaplan: The best thing you can do, when the policy is violated, is to communicate immediately with the teacher and department supervisor.

Q: For mid-terms, I heard a rumor that they might go away. Is that true?

Mrs. Grimaldi: Last year, we reviewed doing away with mid-terms and will again review this year. Many schools who have also switched to block scheduling have switched to quarterly assessments. SHS will not be making a change until we have multiple years to review since block scheduling.

Every year we consider whatever may need to be changed – how do we stay current? Some of the departmental time on the in-service day on Friday, January 27th will be discussing how mid-terms went.

Comment from parent: the mid-term days take away learning time from AP preparation

Mrs. Grimaldi: I agree, but while AP prep is stressful, we notice a great reduction of stress after mid-terms.

We've actually reached out to our colleagues from other districts – ask what are you doing in your school? And we bring that info back to inform our decision-making.

Q : The word is that if you have a problem with a teacher, no parent should contact teacher, but instead go to Guidance ... there are repercussions to the student if a parent contacts the teacher.

Mrs. Kaplan: at this level, the student must approach the teacher first. Guidance can facilitate, but can not be in the middle of sorting out the issue to resolution – it's not practical.

Mrs. Grimaldi: if a student has a problem with a teacher, we applaud self-advocating. If that doesn't work, as a parent, you need to reach-out to the teacher – not in an accusatory manner, but as a respectful "let's talk" approach.

If conversations don't go well, as a teacher – as a professional - it is not appropriate for there to be repercussions for the student for a parent calling a teacher to express concerns. If that happens, I need to know.

Comment from parent: My overwhelming experience communicating with teachers has been nothing but positive. I know that all results are not the same, but the teachers who I've been fortunate to speak to, have always been respectful and helpful in answering questions and addressing concerns.

Mrs. Grimaldi: Thank you – that's helpful because we wouldn't be in the job we're in if we didn't care about the students, but it has to be all working for the benefit of the student.

Q: It seems there is a push for more group study work ... is there a school-wide policy for grading this type of work?

Mrs. Grimaldi: There is no school-wide policy. It varies class by class. Some assignments are graded for both individual and group work.

Q: Are teachers required to be very clear about the assignments?

Mrs. Grimaldi: Yes – it must be communicated in some way, but it may not be verbally – it may just be on website and/or calendar on website. Some may put it only on paper.

Q: There is a mandatory language test on the week of mid-terms?

Mrs. Grimaldi: it is not happening. The parent is referring to the The Seal of Bi-literacy test which may certify that you are proficient in 2 languages – native and another language. There are dates on which we are required to submit the papers. We requested an extension from the State and so the test will be given at a later date.

Q: Is there a school policy that tests may not go home w a student?

Mrs. Grimaldi: No – it depends on the teacher.

Comment from parent: Some teachers are not reviewing the test until long after it's been taken. Multiple teachers not handing tests back until all students have taken it. They are getting quizzes back, but not tests

Mrs. Grimaldi: The policy on this varies – it depends on the situation.

But, I am a big believer in issuing multiple versions of tests within a class. I also understand the need to keep a test private. But, if a child or you, parent want to look at test, there should be an opportunity.

Review packets should reflect work that will be required on the test and the work done on the review packet should inform what a student knows and doesn't know.

Parent suggested that student could ask to bring a test home for the night to review and then return.

Q: Is there an option for students to receive a reduced fee on a semi ticket?

Mrs. Grimaldi: Yes. Arrangements are made discreetly – such arrangements may be that the student pays in installments or simply at a reduced rate. The Nathan Parker Fund, established by Dr. Parker upon his retirement to support students who may need financial assistance in order to be able to take part in a school-related experience.

Laura Kaplan: A student's Counselor can also facilitate and support the process.

Comment from Mrs. Grimaldi: A Summit resident just contacted me to offer a room in her home to anyone who may need. This is a wonderful community!

Comment from Parent: following up on question asked at last PTO Meeting about homework being graded ... even though Mr. Tobey said it is not graded, it most certainly

is. If you learned material one day and can't understand the homework but try it and get an F – it's de-moralizing.

Another parent offered: on the flip-side, no grade on homework, and student feels confident about material, but when quizzes come getting Fs because don't really get it but student was unaware.

Mrs. Grimaldi: I will speak with Mr. Tobey and then he can address the department.

Q: Can we have an update on the college process and acceptances?

Mrs. Kaplan: There will be a full report in June. But, anecdotally, it's been very positive: both the process and the acceptances. Over 70% of students had applications out by November 1st and 75% by November 15th.

Please tell Seniors to stay in touch with Guidance – don't forget about us!

Mrs. Grimaldi: To parents of Seniors. Don't forget the teacher who wrote the recommendations – please follow-up.

Parent commented: they truly appreciate hearing from the Seniors.

Mrs. Kaplan: Amy Herber is coordinating the Parent Wellness Series Event #3: *Encouraging Your Child: Home & School Solutions* Thursday, February 2nd at 7:00pm. The Speaker will be Dr. Brian C. Chu, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Director, Youth Anxiety and Depression Clinic, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University. There will also be a program for 11th and 12th grade students during the day.

Q: NJ Scholars and The Governor's School came out late ... why?

Mrs. Kaplan: Yes, we acknowledge that and we are sorry. The person who was receiving it is no longer here. We have made a note on our calendar to look for it so that it does not happen again in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Maureen Prout Alvidrez
January 15, 2017