

**SHS PTO
General Meeting
November 18, 2016
Minutes**

Co-president Donna Miller called the meeting to order at 9:03

For Treasurer, Stacey Supran, Donna addressed the **PTO budget**: we are financially sound. The biggest expenditure of money will be the pilot grant program for teachers for which 10-15 applications have been received.

Principal's Report from Mrs. Grimaldi

We have a busy weekend (and it's been a busy month)

- ***You Can't Take It With You*** – a great show, very funny
- Playoff **football** game tonight – sectional finals 7:00
- Chris Heckleman running in **Meet of Champions** run Saturday in Holmdel
- **Challenge Day** coming up on December 7

- Tuesday night, 11/22, is Hallway Decorating – **Hallapalooza** – 4:00 – 10:00 p.m. Themes for decorating include, Through the Ages, Olympics, Hawaiian Tropical, and Elf
- Wednesday afternoon, 11/23: **Powder Puff football**, juniors vs seniors.

Report cards going in mail today. Will include notification that District is switching to **Honeywell Notification system**. Each family must register and then set up your preferences.

Staff Dress Down today thru Summit Education Association – proceeds to SEA's scholarship program.

Virtual HS Courses offering for Spring – email was sent last night, 11/17.

Online courses for which there will be 25 seats for second semester. Course listings also mailed home. Examples: Criminology, pre-vet medicine, and, American popular music. Courses run Jan-May (or early June) 2.5 credits per course. These courses are not for everybody. Self-paced courses and are in addition to regular course load. Some courses get honors weight as well. Application due to Guidance 12/9.

Q: hours /week?

A: 6-8 per week, about an hour a day. AP courses, more. Some are putting in 10 hours for those.

Q: Can they stuff the work time into the weekend?

A: That is not recommended – consistent presence online is needed thru the week.

Q: Students in program from outside district are having the benefit of the virtual HS course work during school day, in place of a class period. Can SHS do that?

A: Such an option may be considered at another time – this year is considered a pilot.

12/12 an **Interview Program**. Open to Sophomores, Juniors & Seniors. Mock interviews with resumes. Students receive feedback from Summit Leadership (Principals & Board staff as well as leaders from other districts.) Resumes submitted ahead of time.

Happy Thanksgiving! I am grateful to be working in Summit Schools with support from the staff, parents, and supervisors.

Department Supervisors Panel Presentation

Mr. Corey Walsh, English Supervisor

Mr. Walsh addressed the aspect of scheduling that involves Honors & AP and application process for all departments:

The process officially begins in late January with data of 2 marking periods and mid-term exam. We start early so that students can be thoughtful about scheduling. Last year, we initiated online applications for these courses. It helped the staff manage the process more efficiently. It will be announced to students via school email account. There will be a several week window. Please encourage students to not reply right away – should think about what they're doing and confer with parents, counselors, teachers, and guidance. They should understand what the workload is for each course. Those already on track with the appropriate grade would qualify. Prep level course A- in January would qualify.

Many students may be on edge of qualifying and therefore, they can appeal a decision(s). Work thru 3rd marking period is then considered. Decisions provided in April.

Communication is key. Parents: feel free to reach out with questions.

Mr. Jim Woods, Social Studies Supervisor

Mr. Woods addressed course offerings for all departments:

There is a lot of excellent instruction happening at all levels

- College prep level
- Honors level, including AP
- And modified college level to build skills
- We are trying to reach all of students.
- There are opportunities to move around levels.

New electives, Macroeconomics and Holocaust courses have been well-received.

Mr. Don Tobey, Mathematics Supervisor

New course this year: Integrated Algebra. It is good for those who have completed Algebra I and Geometry, but who are not ready for Algebra II. This course fulfills the requirement for 3rd year of math.

We are considering a course for incoming students who are in advanced Algebra in 8th grade for whom it may make sense to take another course freshman year if on-track for pre-calculus.

Our college prep courses are rigorous. They are strong courses at all levels. Flexibility at all levels – want to closely examine if a student would like to shift. Students should commit at least to first quarter before moving to standard class. We talk to students about how to excel/set goals to be in higher level courses. Feel free to speak with us about course options and encourage your student(s) to do so.

Mr. Tom Dowd, Science Supervisor

We are supportive and encouraging of students to step up for higher level courses. Be sure that they are ready to commit. Pick & choose what courses make sense. Guidance is instrumental, but we need parents to be a part of the process as well.

Changes in Science courses as required by next generation science standards; however, there are 3 year science requirements, but 4 years of standards with respect to content. Physics, Biology, Chemistry offerings.

In response to this and the rigors of the courses, we will offer an Honors Chem course in Junior year beginning in September.

AP Senior Level Physics Course – AP 1 and 2

1 will be mechanics - it is a more accessible course as it splits it up

We've instituted a Science Help Center that is open every period of the day. We've heard many comments and questions about hiring tutors – the Help Center is a great resource. Please encourage your student(s) to take advantage of it.

Mr. Tom Maliszewski Fine, Practical and Performing Arts Supervisor

When asked, do they support the arts in Summit? I respond, No – they demand it!

At every single level – the breadth of the program is tremendous. Instrumental is a little harder to start fresh in 9th grade, but not impossible.

New courses in the works for this department are Family Consumer Science and a Culinary Arts program. The latter is on the Board of Ed agenda – the Board has sent out architectural plans for bid.

2 AP courses. 6-7 students each.

We depend on everybody in order to achieve success. The Arts Program lives or dies on scheduling. Summit parents, community, administration, and staff are the best. And, Mrs. Poyner is a force of nature!

I must also mention that we have a strong Speech & Debate co-curricular program and we are significantly supported by SPARC and SMPA.

Questions

Comment from Mrs. Grimaldi about new courses being proposed: Process is that they are submitted to Board of Ed, first are considered with Education Committee and then to budgeting.

Q. Why not Honors English?

A: Change made 7 years ago – for a number of reasons, we felt that we wanted to give all students the opportunity to show their abilities. The Honors course at freshman year, did not have the outcomes that we'd hoped for. We have:

- 5 sections of Sophomore Honors, 2 of Junior Honors, and 1 of Senior Honors
- 2 sections of AP language and

- 2 largest sections of AP courses in the school in English and scores have gone up over the years from where they were before we made the change.

The number of students who move from standard freshman class to Honors & AP is higher. Therefore, we are having much more success overall than we were previously. It is a dramatic difference in numbers – and really opens up the students' ability to transition in freshman year and do well to move forward.

Q. Why not Honors Biology?

A: Honors Physics has approximately 100-110 students. We used to have Honors Bio for freshman, but the differentiation in enrollment between Honors and AP, was minimal AP Bio has about same number as sophomores as it did previously.

We far exceed the standards compared with other schools.

We review this decision every year. At this point, the test allows it – students are successful.

Q: Homework. What's your opinion on graded vs. simply checked homework?

Mr. Tobey took question first as it applies frequently to math courses:

- Some teachers may have a policy to collect homework assignments in order to get feedback on how this is going. Early in year, some teachers may check work in order to assess and teach students that they may need to check work.
- Teachers may give pop quizzes to assess homework.

Mr. Woods: It may be collected/checked in Social Studies/History courses in order to set stage for going forward with material.

Q: If a student doesn't have a study hall or time after school, when can he/she get extra help?

Mr. Walsh: Block scheduling has been helpful for this – there is often office hours availability at that time. Or, on a case by case basis – communicate with teacher to set it up.

Wrap-up of Panel Discussion

Donna Miller: all of your questions will be answered – we will submit the remainder of the questions to the supervisors and then share all responses via e-blast (see addendum attached). Please send new questions via last Sunday's (11/13) blast.

There is no PTO meeting in December.

January 13 – coffee with Mrs. Grimaldi

January 9 – Freshman Parent Coffee

Q for Stacey: are there plans for new labs? A: Mrs. G: we invest in new equipment each year. Renovations to SHS labs were done in 2001.

COMMENT: minutes from Coffee w Stacey were excellent.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 am.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Maureen Prout Alvidrez
November 27, 2016

ADDENDUM

The Following Questions Were Submitted and Answered After the Meeting by Mrs. Grimaldi

1) Are there any plans to offer Honors level English for freshmen? If no, why?

We are not currently looking to add Honors level English for freshmen. Mr. Walsh already addressed this at the meeting on the 18th.

2) Now that both honors and AP classes are available for Chemistry do you think we should reconsider the weight of the grade? (i.e. should an A in honors level be given the same weight as an A in AP level?)

We have established a weighting system that is universal for all AP and Honors courses. We could not change the weight just for Chemistry. The advantages of being in AP is apparent to anyone examining the transcript and need not be reflected in the GPA.

3) Could you offer Chorus as a 1/2 year class or after school activity? Those kids interested in performing arts have a hard time getting study hall and fulfilling all elective requirements, especially tough if they participate in the plays.

We are convinced that full year study is the best option, not only for individual students, but also the program as a whole. Joining or leaving the group right before a concert is problematic and just one of the reasons.

The same idea for after school/club activities. Students can't duplicate the training and instruction they receive from almost 4 hours of weekly study with a few meetings a month. from a club or after school meeting.

4) My child is not doing as well as he would like to do in Computer Science AP. He does go in every 2nd lunch and study hall for extra help. Being that there is only one computer science teacher at SHS, are there additional resources that my child can look to for assistance (website? or graduated students offering assistance?)

The AP Computer Science course is indeed a highly specialized curriculum. My suggestion would be for the student to ask Mr. Weinfeld if he is aware of additional resources. There may be online courses and tutorials that a student can access. In terms of graduated students offering assistance - I suspect that most are currently attending college and are not available. At this time I am not aware of many people offering to tutor a student taking the AP Computer Science course. I do have a colleague who teaches the AP Computer Science course at Governor Livingston who may/may not tutor - any parent can contact me if they would like to consider this option. I will discuss this concern with Mr. Weinfeld.

5) Geometry used to be offered at the middle school. Is there a way to bring that back?

There are ongoing discussions regarding the advantages and challenges of offering a more accelerated middle school mathematics experience.

6) Last year there were some students signed up to take Honors Pre-Calculus, then they were told if they wanted to take BC Calculus senior year they needed to switch to Honors Intro to Analysis. Why is Honors Intro to Analysis a precursor to BC Calculus but not Honors Pre-Calculus?

In order to successfully complete the entire curriculum for the AP Calculus BC course, we begin the formal study of Calculus during Quarter 4 of the Honors Introduction to Analysis course. The students will typically study the first three chapters of the AP Calculus BC course during Quarter 4. This also means that the Honors Introduction to Analysis course will complete the Honors Precalculus curriculum in Quarters 1, 2, and 3. A student enrolled in the Honors Precalculus course will not have had the opportunity to experience the accelerated rigor of the Honors Introduction to Analysis course and will not have studied the first three chapters of Calculus. The Honors Precalculus course will prepare the student to take AP Calculus AB. Any student who has met the criteria to take the Honors Introduction to Analysis course should have a discussion with the school counselor regarding his/her goals for the following year. If the goal is to take AP Calculus BC, the student must be enrolled in the Honors Introduction to Analysis course.

7) If the student does not have a study hall is there another way they can take advantage of the science help center?

This answer would go for the Math and writing center as well. There is no easy way to access these help centers without a study hall. We have helped student coming out of study skills and students who take advantage of the gym exemption can use those time frames. The lunch block does allow some access but because of labs, science teachers are less available than most other teachers during the lunch block. Science teacher are early arrivers and late leavers for the most part. Check with your teacher and see when they are available.

8) My son is interested in quitting band to take up another instrument like piano or guitar. Are there any courses or co-curricular clubs that might enhance his learning and enable him to continue playing corporately with those instruments?

I always recommend Chorus (like the example I used in my talk). When the student is ready to accompany the group on guitar or piano, her is right there. The choral training improves all musicians, and we routinely push our most talented instrumentalist to take chorus as well as band/orchestra. Many have come back from Collegiate Conservatory study and remarked that is was the best thing that they did to enhance their musical training.

9) If a student is keeping a high GPA in college prep classes without honors or AP, is it frowned upon for him to not apply for honors/AP classes if he feels confident and challenged enough in those classes? Or is the point of his high school degree to challenge him past his comfort level even if it means his grades drop significantly in those classes?

This should be a discussion with the school counselor. We encourage students to challenge themselves and to increase their rigor when appropriate. Depending on the student's post-secondary plans, we would be able to discuss appropriate options. General advice, if the student is performing very well in a CP class, they may want to consider picking a subject they excel in or are especially interested in and pursue an honors/AP class.

10) I'd like to know if the math department could provide the kids a schedule of which teachers will be staffing the math help center during each period so they can use that to help decide when to go for help. My child is not learning from his teacher and would like to get help from someone else in the department.

This was announced at the last "Coffee with the Principal". All help center assignments (math, writing, and science) are available in each study hall, and in each counselors' office. The teacher schedule for the Math Help Center is also posted on the Mathematics Department website.

11) If so many students are in Honors classes for a particular subject should the criteria for admittance be raised?

No, our goals as a district are to empower all students, through engaging and challenging curricula, to reach their potential. Raising the criteria for admittance into honors and AP courses, simply to decrease the numbers, would be arbitrary, unnecessary, and not in the interest of that goal or the students themselves. This is especially true given that the performance on AP exams has been at or above the scores for these courses when the enrollment was much smaller, which would mean we would be pushing out students who could be doing well on the exams.

The criteria to qualify for honors and AP is challenging and fair as it is. One of the reasons there are so many students in honors and AP classes is because there are more and more students feeling pressured or obligated to take as many honors and AP classes as they can fit in their schedule. It would be wise for parents and students, in discussion with counselors during scheduling, to consider the work load and expectations that come with taking 4-5 honors and AP classes at a time.