

**SRDS Parents Guild Meeting –
Thursday, January 9, 2025**

- I. **Welcome & Approval of December 2024 Minutes** – the January 2025 Parents Guild meeting commenced with a welcome to all parents / guardians from the PG’s Co-Presidents, Heather Holder and Jacqueline Vasquez and the approval of the past meeting's minutes.
- II. **Welcome and Update from the Head of School**
 - **Mr. Jalaj Desai, Head of School**, provided the following updates:
 - New Building Update:
 - Construction is proceeding according to the plan – we recently have received approval from Saddle River town for the zoning permits; next permit will focus on the county, for the road in front of the school.
 - Our timeline is critical, with a Spring 2026 target. We have selected a construction company.
 - We are on track with the financial pledges assigned to this project.
 - Upcoming: Indian Cultural Day on January 26, 2025, and the SRDS Gala will take place on April 26, 2025.
 - We have hired an academic advisor who will work with the 9th and 10th grade students – starting on July 1, 2025. The objective is to help students with the Upper School journey, research opportunities and internships.
 - New: Agreement with Steve Harvey, Inspo Academy. The five-day session will take place from April 22nd through April 27th.
 - Most importantly, a tremendous thank you to the teachers who work tirelessly to provide great experiences for students.
- III. **College Counseling News and Update**
 - **Karen Ferretti, Director of College Counseling**
 - Every year we have 100% of our seniors attend a 4-year university.
 - This year we have 52 students in our senior class. The early decision round 1 concluded with 18 students who have been accepted at prestigious universities. The next important dates are January 15th and February 1st.
 - Preparation is the key component of the college process:
 - We start the college preparation discussions in Sophomore and Junior years and take an individualized approach with each family and student.
 - We provide an initial list of universities based on the student’s interest, with the expectation that this will shape change over time.
 - Juniors have weekly application and career discussions. By July, students have completed their college essays.
 - For the Freshman and Sophomore students, we discuss their interests, the prerequisites for the major, and create a plan.
- IV. **Morgan’s Message: Teacher vs. Students Basketball Game**
 - **Sadie D. and Summer K., SRDS US Students**

- Sadie and Summer's goal is to raise money from ticket sales to donate to the Morgan's Message Foundation and bring our school closer together as a community, while helping to break any stigma regarding mental health. They will raise funds with a Teacher and Student Basketball Game.

V. Student Videography and Technology Project Presentation

- **Laura Hollis, Director of Technology**
- **Videography Level I, II and III Students Presentation**
- Students previewed their project of working in Studio at SRDS collaborating with all levels of students in Videography to foster knowledge sharing and learning.
- The project included working and learning about the green screen, camera, SD card and how to use the news desk.
- They previewed their videos, and we can see their work was a tremendous success.

VI. Admissions Update

- **Geoffrey Bowman, Director of Admissions**
- Reminder: January 15, 2025, is the FAST deadline. Reenrollments contracts will be sent on January 22/23 and due back at the beginning of February.
- Today we have a student visit day.
- Student ambassadors have been excellent at welcoming the new, incoming students.
- There will be events for new families in February.

VII. Lower School News and Upcoming Events

- **Dana Stern, Head of Lower School**, provided the following updates:
- Rebels with a Cause in the Lower School will invite the Seeing Eye Institute to SRDS to raise awareness and funds for the puppies. This will be Project Based Learning (PBL) for the students.
- Upcoming trips and events include: an aquarium visit, Sky Zone, the Snowball Dance on February 6th, Talent Show on February 12th and Dr. Palmer for Dental Health awareness in February.

VIII. Lower School Student Spotlight

- **Elle T., Dancer at Infinite Motion Performing Arts Academy**
- Elle shared her dance company experience, and what it takes to compete and some of her important dance routines. She currently competes with Infinite Motion Performing Arts Academy and is on the Juniors team. She is truly a professional and we were so happy to have Elle perform for us.

IX. Middle School News and Upcoming Events

- **Heather Holder provided the update for Anastasia Kelly, Head of Middle School**
- Welcome to Brooke Braunstein, who will join the Middle School team as part of the Learning Support Department.

- We are three weeks away from the end of the semester. Let's take this time to finish strong – students should check in with their teachers, finish all assignments, use the study hall time wisely to seek any help on class work.
- We will have our look ahead coffees and summaries will be provided in case you cannot attend.
- STEM Honors – students will have several opportunities to increase their hour requirements with various trips, CIE bootcamp, etc.
- Advisory Updates: In January, our advisory program is all about "New Year, New You" Vision Boards. We're also continuing our Win at Social Lessons and spicing things up with a winter-themed door decorating contest! This activity will hopefully bring advisees closer together and brighten the halls just in time for the Winter Dance on February 7th.
- Check the MS Happenings Doc for the up-to-the-minute information - changes are reflected during the week.

X. Upper School News and Upcoming Events

- **Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School**
- Events and happenings include a trip to Quebec, the Ski Trip, Debate tournament on February 22nd, a visit to the Guggenheim Museum and the Packathon on March 1st.
- If students would like to show off their talents in a showcase, contact Ms. Meyers for the Rebel Lounge Event on January 30th.
- This spring the US musical will be Mamma Mia on March 6-8.
- Look ahead meeting for the 11th grade will be scheduled shortly. For 8th grade students, the look ahead will take place before spring break.
- Check the Upper School Happenings Doc for all events.

XI. Community Engagement at SRDS

- **Geoffrey Bowman provided the update on behalf of Chris Lebovits**
- There are many events for parents, such as the Book Club. Please look for emails with the details and at the front table of this meeting.

XII. Parents Guild "Love & Kindness Week," Annual SRDS Gala and Upcoming Events

- **Heather Holder and Jacqueline Vasquez, Co-Presidents of the Parents Guild**
- Last Call for the Ladies' Nashville Trip on April 4-6, 2025, at the Four Seasons and many fun activities to enjoy.
- Our Gala planning is underway, and this year's theme is "Off to the Races" which will take place on April 26, 2025.
- Love & Kindness week will be February 2nd through February 10th. Check your Weekly Envelope for the volunteer sign-up sheet link and more information.

XIII. Motion to Adjourn – Join us for the next meeting on February 6, 2025, in Alford Hall, PAC.