

SRDS Parents Guild Meeting

Thursday, December 4, 2025

I. Welcome & Approval of October 2025 Minutes

- Alana Murphy and Heather Holder, Co-Presidents of the Parents Guild, welcomed attendees and started this month's Parents Guild meeting with the approval of the November 2025 meeting minutes.
- Thanked everyone for all of their support for Ladies' Night Out. It was a great community event and everyone had a fabulous evening out.

II. Update from SRDS Head of School

- Mr. Jalaj Desai, SRDS Head of School, welcomed parents and explained school policy on snow days including the many factors that go into determining school start delays and closures. He thanked parents and administration for being patient and understanding.
- Announced that SRDS is planning to offer Saturday classes in the spring for students from K-12 in a variety of subjects not traditionally taught in school (ie cryptocurrency, etc). Parents will receive an email in January about the program and course options.
- Mr. Desai thanked everyone in the SRDS community for making the holiday season at SRDS so exciting and recognized the many people behind the scenes. He highlighted that the SRDS community is continuing to grow, especially in the last 4-5 years and thanked parents for all their help and support, as well as the SRDS Admission Team and Parents Guild that keep the community connected. It's an exciting time to be a REBEL!

III. Upper School News and Upcoming Events

- Dr. Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School, encouraged parents to remind students to stay on top of school work before winter break and not to let any assignments linger into the last week, so hopefully no one has any challenges coming up. The first semester ends on January 23 and deadlines are quickly approaching.
- There are a few trips coming up for US students including the Math Competition at Harvard, the first Robotic Competition, and the Debate Team's trip to NYC.
- Student reviews of Mini Courses showed more than a 90% positivity of the program making it an exciting program moving forward as new opportunities for next year are explored.
- SRDS US Robotics team achieved high rankings in state and world competitions. Right before Thanksgiving, Robo Rebels had a competition, and one of SRDS robots finished in first place, and now holds the top four highest scores in the state and ranked 16th in the world.
- A group of faculty and students are going to NAIS, National Association of Independent Schools, first AI symposium in Houston, Texas, and both the students and the teachers are going to be presenting. The students are working on a program that helps Nigeria with students, to help them develop an online

school.

- Additional US events include the annual ski trip January 16-18th to Gore Mountain for 8th through 12th graders, and the annual Quebec trip also will be in January. Advisory Door Decorating, 11-12th grade gingerbread design competition, and the January Lounge Talent Show are all coming up before Winter Break.
- The US Winter Concert is scheduled for December 17th.

IV. Athletics Update

- Presented by Dr. Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School, on behalf of Mr. PJ Petrow, SRDS Athletic Director, mentioned that winter sports have already started. Teams are settling into the routines and the basketball court gym is being used in different ways.
- Encouraged students to wear the SRDS gear at practices and training sessions. Attendance, communication, and punctuality are important as the season begins; so ask parents to make sure to let coaches know if a student can't make it to an event through the GroupSpot app as soon as possible.

V. Admissions Update and The Contract Process

- Mr. Geoffrey Bowman, Head of Admissions, provided an update on Admissions and the contract process for new families as well as families moving to a new division (ie MS to US). Contracts for new families applying to SRDS are being reviewed and will be sent out next week for Early Decision Program. Contracts for families that are moving to a new division. Contracts for current fifth graders and current eighth graders will go out next week as well.
- Two big Admissions events are coming up: Middle School visit day, new students coming to visit with current fifth grade, sixth grade, and seventh grade. The Upper School visit day is also coming up.
- Look Ahead Coffees for the Lower School will be held the first week back in January. Check your Happenings Doc.
- Thanked everyone who helped and supported the Admissions Team throughout the year.

VI. Gateway Diploma Opportunity

- Mr. Joe McMenamin, Dean of Faculty and Gateway Diploma Coordinator, provided information about the Gateway Diploma Program in Upper School.
- Gateway in the Upper School is the Honors diploma track. Students take more advanced classes, complete a self-directed research project and complete work outside of school with a mentor in a field of interest. They also participate in clubs beyond what they're required to do for a normal diploma at SRDS. Every spring we host "Gateway Night" when students present their projects to a panel of industry leaders and their peers.
- He encouraged parents to reach out to him for more information and to encourage their freshman students to apply for the Gateway Diploma Program in the upcoming months.

VII. Middle School News and Upcoming Events

- Ms. Anastasia Kelly, Head of Middle School, thanked parents for their support and encouraged parents to discuss interim comments with their students. Advisors will work on helping the students understand the interim comments and setting goals for self-awareness and character growth.
- Middle School sports will begin using the GroupSpot app for communication from the coaches including practice/game schedule. Please make sure to communicate any missed practices/games through the app.
- The Schoology Portal Workshop for parents was held in November and provided a tutorial on how to understand Schoology and how to find student assignments. If anyone missed that and wants a recap please contact Ms. Kelly directly.
- The National STEM Honor Society has grown to include ninth graders this year, so there are three NSTEM groups. In January, there will be a special CIE Boot Camp for 8th and 9th graders who are in the NSTEM program to help them reach their enrichment hours. There is still time if a student is interested in joining the National STEM Honor Society.
- Mentioned Holiday Market; so many Middle School entrepreneurs involved selling their products.
- Middle School concert coming up on December 16th with many Middle Schoolers involved.
- Pancake Breakfast for Middle School coming up and students can wear their pajamas to school.
- The upcoming MS events include the 8th Grade Sleepover, NSTEM field trip, and some workshops on campus, which will be open to other students interested in STEM even if they're not part of the NSTEM Honor Society.

VIII. Lower School News and Upcoming Events

- Presented by Ms. Heather Holder, Co-Presidents of the Parents Guild on behalf of Ms. Dana Stern, Head of Lower School.
- LS parents will be receiving a letter talking about what Holiday Market is, as well as stickers or labels. Asking parents to help the kids decide who will be buying for at the Holiday Market and put the names on stickers to help our parent volunteer gift wrappers.
- Mentioned Pancake Breakfast on December 19th; the Lower School will be going 7:45-8:25am. LS parents are invited to join for pancake breakfast. Students also receive a pizza lunch that day.

IX. Community Engagement at SRDS

- Presented by Ms. Alana Murphy, Co-Presidents of the Parents Guild on behalf of Ms. Chris Lebovits, Director of Community Engagement and Assistant Director of LS Admissions.
- Mentioned December Book Club to discuss "The Usual Desire to Kill." Also the next book is Fredrick Backman's "My Friends" which will be discussed at next month's meeting on January 21.
- The Master Mahjong Class was so popular that a second one will be running February 3rd, 10th, 24th, and March 3rd. Make sure that you can attend all four events before you register because it relies on the full amount of people being there.

- The Mitten Tree is up in North Hall and students can bring in mittens, gloves, scarves and hats to donate. The deadline is December 17th and donations go to St Joseph's Hospital.
- Career Day is coming up; this year students will be going to employer's places of business for Career Day. So instead of the people coming to campus, our students will actually get to see parents in their professional fields during a work day. Looking for businesses and organizations to host groups of 8th-12th grade students.

X. Parent Guild Update and Announcements

- Holiday Market: Lower School and Middle School will attend the Holiday Market. Parent volunteers are still needed. The schedule and QR code was provided for those who would like to volunteer. Each class gets 20 minutes to shop from a wide variety of items priced from \$1 to \$10. This is a cash only event. Ten MS student entrepreneurs will also sell their own items at the event.
- Thanked Claudia Sasso and Rosanna Young for co-chairing and running the LNO event and everyone who attended Ladies Night Out.
- Ladies Trip to Mirbeau Inn & Spa (Rhinebeck, NY) on January 23-24: only a few seats left; provided the QR code to sign up for it and mentioned top eight reasons to join the Ladies Trip.
- The next PG Meeting will be on Thursday, January 8th @ 8:30am in Alford Hall - PAC.
- Closed the meeting with Motion to Adjourn and wished everyone a happy and healthy holiday season and New Year.