

SRDS Parents Guild Meeting

Thursday, February 5, 2026

I. Welcome & Approval of January 2026 Minutes

- Heather Holder and Alana Murphy, Co-Presidents of the Parents Guild, welcomed attendees and started this month's Parents Guild Meeting with the approval of the January 2025 meeting minutes.
- Mentioned the fabulous LNO Ladies Trip that happened in January and showed a preview of what to wear for the upcoming gala LIMITLESS, One Big Party.

II. Update from SRDS Head of School

- Mr. Jalaj Desai, SRDS Head of School, welcomed parents and mentioned the current winter conditions and their impact on school activities and explained the challenges of the winter, including construction and limited field space, and assured that spaces will be available by September 2026.
- Discussed the new school building and clarified that it will not increase the school population.
- Mr. Desai introduced a new pilot program called SRDS Spark Institute that will be held on Saturdays for both SRDS and the broader community in an effort to offer students additional educational topics and experiences. The pilot program will run for six weeks and will include courses for grades 3-12. There is an associated fee. Additional information will follow next week and includes classes for parents to take while waiting for their students.
- In September 2026 MS and US core subjects will return to a four-day a week schedule. There will be no Pre-AP week in August. The first day of school is Tuesday, September 1, 2026 before Labor Day Weekend with no school on Friday, September 4th to allow for a long Labor Day weekend. Fall sports begin Monday, August 17th.

III. SRDS Spark Institute and Saturday school

- Mr. Tony Mack and Ms. Anastasia Kelly are going to be leading the SRDS Spark Institute.
- Mr. Mack, introduced Spark Institute, emphasizing its innovative nature and new learning opportunities.
- Described various classes offered, including AI, financial literacy, engineering, and social skills courses.
- Highlighted the importance of understanding AI and its role in education. Mentioned specific courses like blockchains and cryptocurrency for upper school students.
- Saturday classes are going to start the weekend following the spring break, and will continue until graduation. If the pilot program goes well, next year SRDS Spark Institute will run during the three sports seasons for grades K-12.

IV. Lower School News and Upcoming Events

- Ms. Dana Stern, Head of Lower School, highlighted the success of the Sky Zone event yesterday for 3rd and 4th grade.

- Mentioned tonight's Snowball Dance for Pre-K, K, 1st, and 2nd grade, and students will have PJ day or Jersey day the next day.
- Announced the fourth grade's fundraising efforts and initiative to raise enough needed to name a puppy for the Seeing Eye Institute.
- Provided information about Love and Kindness Week, including themes and activities for Lower School students.
- Mentioned the classroom spelling bee and congratulated the winners. Class winners will be advancing to the school spelling bee on Thursday, February 12th.
- LS admin and teachers work to make sure that during recess the students get out and move. Sometimes the gym is being used for alternate times as well as hallways, but assures parents the students' physical needs are being addressed given the weather restrictions.
- Mentioned new mindfulness initiatives as part of the LS curriculum and that it will be integrated into the curriculum at least once a month to work with each class.

V. Community Engagement at SRDS

- Presented by Ms. Dana Stern, Head of Lower School, on behalf of Ms. Chris Lebovits, Director of Community Engagement and Assistant Director of LS Admissions.
- Mentioned parent yoga mindfulness workshop; information will be sent to parents once it is finalized.
- There is no book club in February, but there is one for March 19, and the book is *The Elements* by John Boyne.
- Mentioned the need for additional parent volunteers to help with Career Day, especially those who work, or know someone who works in finance. Students will visit the place of employment this year and NYC is a viable option.
- Mentioned Love and Kindness Week throughout the school and thanked all of the generous families who have been dropping off donations for the Heart Carts. Also, thanked Noel and Dina for organizing and filling the Heart Carts. There will be a cart in each of the three main buildings for all the faculty, staff, and the administration to enjoy.

VI. Middle School News and Upcoming Events

- Ms. Anastasia Kelly, Head of Middle School, mentioned the middle school door decorating competition as part of the Advisory Cup. Parents had a chance to look around and vote for the best decorated doors. She also mentioned MS Winter Dance is for grades 5-8 is on February 6th. Parent volunteers are still needed for clean up.
- Over the next few weeks in Advisory, students will reflect on academics and 1st semester grades. The advisors have been working to have one-on-ones with each of their advisees, to look at their grades and reflect on how each student can start the 2nd semester strong.
- Academic Planning about courses for next school year is going to be starting in Advisory; throughout February advisors will meet with students to talk about options that they have, specifically in seventh and eighth grade. Teachers will be sending course recommendations and placement recommendations at the end of the month, and review those with students in preparation for the conferences in March. Mentioned academic planning for next year and the process for course recommendations and placements.

- Announced Middle School Love and Kindness Week, including dress themes and events to encourage kindness and empathy. Miss. Pooley has been working with Ms. Myers and Mr. Rodriguez on Kindness Week student events.
- MS introduced Tech-Free Fridays to reduce device use during lunch and recess. On Friday, during recess, students can't use their computers or laptops. They actually have to talk to each other or play games, and it seems they're excited about it. Ms. Kelly will explore expanding the number of Tech-Free Days.

VII. Upper School News and Upcoming Events

- Dr. Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School, provided updates on Upper School activities and discussed Black History Month activities, including assemblies and student-led projects. US students are celebrating Black History Month this month, and a lot of students in different classes put together a bunch of flyers. Chef Mark traditionally hosts the music building poetry in honor of Black History Month.
- Mentioned US trips this year, most of them are related to a school activity. US students just came back from a Special Olympics trip where students supported the Special Olympics for the Winter Games. US students are raising awareness of cancer and working with the American Cancer Society.
- The robotics team has advanced to the World Championships. They almost made it last year and are hoping to make it this year. A section of the CIE is dedicated to just the robotics space.
- SRDS will host a second debate tournament this year. Mr. Glasser and Mr. Baer led it last year, and this year Mr. Baer has taken charge,
- Mentioned course placement for next year. Parents will be getting an email to come to either a zoom or in person meeting to talk about all the options for next year. Students will participate in an assembly on February 26th, where deans will present the options and the same slides will be shared with parents.
- Provided details about meeting with 9th graders in the spring to review students academic performance, next year plans, summer programs, volunteering or any extracurriculars, and everything in between to make sure that they feel supported.
- Mentioned PJs for Prom fundraising which helps support the students for prom.

VIII. Admissions Update

- Mr. Geoffrey Bowman, Head of Admissions, provided updates on application reviews, contract deadlines, and upcoming events like Visit Day and the New Parent Receptions.
- Mentioned that current SRDS contracts are due February 9th and encouraged parents to sign in order to reserve their space; new decisions will be sent out once the Admissions Office gets an idea of everyone returning.

- On February 25th SRDS will have a Visit Day for accepted students to come back and spend a day on campus and to celebrate them and their acceptance and make them feel a part of the community. February 26th will be a new parent reception.
- Announced a school-wide switch to Final Site Billing for a more streamlined experience.

IX. Athletics Update

- Mr. PJ Petrow, SRDS Athletic Director, discussed the revival of the REBEL Athletic Club (RAC) and updates on winter sports, including bowling, basketball, indoor track, wrestling, fencing, and swimming.
- Mentioned the athletics program is growing quickly and there is a steady increase in more athletics offerings. A majority of SRDS students participate in at least once sport a year. PJ thanked parents in advance for any help that they can offer as the programs grow. The REBEL Athletic Club was revived from several years ago to support the athletics department, student athletes and their parents. The executive committee met and appointed several parent volunteers - Jodi Ramasamy, President; Jonah Siegel, VP; Jen Toboroff, Secretary; and Sammy Hung, Treasurer.
- Provided an update on winter sports. For the first time, SRDS has a full girls bowling team. Boys bowling is 10-3. The girls basketball team is in the quarter-finals of the county tournament for the 10th time in a row. The boys basketball team played in the first round of the county tournament and won the first game; unfortunately, they lost the second round game, but they're moving forward. Indoor track is thriving with several wins. The wrestling team got off the ground this year for the first time in over a decade with 10 wrestlers, and participated in the county tournament for the first time. The fencing club is up and running. Swim club was launched and running. The goal with both fencing and swimming is to get enough numbers by next year and launch full programs.
- Announced spring sports will start for both Upper School and Middle School on March 9th and registration will begin next week. Sports that are being offered this spring for Middle School are golf, tennis, girls and boys lacrosse, and middle school track. For the Upper School we will offer rowing crew, boys tennis, boys and girls lacrosse, baseball, track and field, boys and girls golf, and softball. Adding Middle School and Upper School Boys Volleyball this spring.

X. Parent Guild Updates, Nomination Process and Save the Dates

- PG co-presidents provided information about the Parent Guild, including nominations for executive board positions and committee chairs.
- Announced the theme for the upcoming Gala, "Limitless. One Big Party" on April 17th, and explained some details about the event, including sponsorship opportunities and ways to support.
- Encouraged parents to donate items for the silent and live auction to raise funds for innovation and technology.
- Parents are invited to a PG Coffee Meeting at Panera (Tice's Corner) Tuesday, February 10th @ 8:30am after drop off.
- The next PG Meeting will be on Thursday, March 5th, 2026 @ 8:30am in Alford Hall - PAC.
- Closed the meeting with Motion to Adjourn and thanked everyone for their continued support.