

SRDS Parents Guild Meeting

Thursday, January 8, 2026

I. Welcome & Approval of December 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 December 2025 meeting minutes.

II. Lower School News and Upcoming Events

- Ms. Dana Stern, Head of Lower School, mentioned PreK-4 Teacher Mrs. Moore was out last month and will return to part-time teaching next week, co-teaching with our new PreK-4 teacher Miss Madonna.
- Mentioned the Lower School Snowball Dance for Pre K through 2nd grade is February 5th at 5-7pm.
- Third and fourth graders will visit Sky Zone on February 4th; parents are required to attend and are encouraged to sign waivers before the event to avoid delays. Information about the Sky Zone event will be sent out via email. This is a social opportunity for 3rd and 4th grade students to interact outside of school.
- The Lower School has been working on developing a mindfulness program to help students and parents cope with emotional and social challenges. Daniel Larson from Rise Yoga and Mindfulness will conduct an assembly for PreK 4 through 4th grade, followed by professional development for teachers.
- The Seeing Eye Institute visit is scheduled for Monday, where fourth graders will "adopt" puppies and raise money for their care.
- February is Dental Awareness Month and Dr. Parmer will visit PreK 3 through Kindergarten classes at the end of January to promote dental awareness.
- The Lower School Talent Show for grades 1st through 4th will be held on February 11th with Miss Raska running the event.
- Parents are reminded to label students' belongings (hats, gloves, coats, ...) to prevent loss during colder weather.

III. Parents Guild Love and Kindness Week

- Dina Terranova and Noelle Mihalinec are co-chairs of Love & Kindness Week. Dina talked about Love and Kindness Week, where parent volunteers send in individually-wrapped treats for teachers and staff as an appreciation for all their hard work. Throughout the week the co-chairs restock three Heart Carts - one in each building - with food and drink donations from parents.
- There is a link in the weekly PG emails to sign up for donations. Send in about 30 individual treats of

their choice by February 6th at the guard house; the week will kick off on February 9th. All food items and treats should be nut-free to accommodate food allergies. Even if you don't sign up, you can still drop off everything at the gatehouse with your name on it.

IV. Upper School News and Upcoming Events

- Dr. Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School, provided updates on Upper School activities
- Upper School students have their annual trip to Quebec, Canada today. Next week we have our annual ski trip. The Model UN Team and Debate Team have trips this month.
- Last weekend the SRDS Robo Rebels won their competition and became the top three teams in the state. Best wishes to make it to the world championships.
- The first semester will end Jan 23rd and students can go over their grades next month. Students are encouraged to start planning for course selection for the next school year, and teachers are reminded to discuss student interests with them.

V. SRDS Global, NAIS Updates & Student Involvement

- Dr. Kevin Merges, Chief Global Impact Officer, and Upper School students Sri and Emmanuel discussed their presentation at the NAIS AI symposium in December 2025.
- The project involves creating a website and AI models for the NAS School in Nigeria to help with limited internet access and teacher availability. The AI models are being fine-tuned to run offline and provide educational support.

VI. SRDS Annual Career Day

- Mr. Robert Kettlewell, Dean of Students for 11th and 12th grade, announced SRDS Career Day will be on March 4th, where students will visit career offices off-campus in small groups. What is different and exciting about Career Day this year is that we are taking students off campus to the career offices so they can see the environments associated with each profession.
- We are in need of a few more places and looking for businesses and organizations to host groups of 8th-12th grade students in order to create more opportunities for the students. So if you or someone you know, in the broader tri-state area, would be willing to open up their space to 10 to 15 students for a day on March 4th, please let us know. We can travel to NYC.

VII. Community Engagement at SRDS

- Presented by Ms. Heather Holder, Co-President of the Parents Guild on behalf of Ms. Chris Lebovits, Director of Community Engagement and Assistant Director of LS Admissions.

- Reminded everyone to sign up for a new session of Mahjong for February 3, 10th, 24th, and March 3rd.
- The upcoming book club will be January 21th, reading “My Friends” by Frederik Backman.

VIII. Parents Guild Lower School Snowball Dance

- Ms. Brittany Baker, one of the Lower School Division Reps and Snowball Dance Co-Chairs, mentioned the need for parent volunteers for the Lower School Snowball Dance on Thursday, February 5th for setup and cleanup.
- The dance will feature a DJ, face painting, food, and fun decorations.
- The Middle School will host the Winter Dance for 5th-7th grade dance the following day, so LS Dance will require only minimal cleanup. Requests for parent volunteers will go out shortly.

IX. Middle School News and Upcoming Events

- Ms. Anastasia Kelly, Head of Middle School, discussed the start of the New Year at Middle School, talking to the students about their resolutions and about setting goals and the opportunity to start something new, something that they're excited about.
- We have three new middle schoolers who joined us on Monday January 5th, and one more coming at the end of the month.
- First semester is about to end on January 23rd. Advisors and teachers have been reminding students to reflect on the interim comments and encouraging students to finish the first semester strong.
- Upcoming Middle School Parent Coffees are next week. Also next week 7th graders have a field trip to the Broadway show “The Outsiders.” There is a spelling bee for fifth and sixth graders on January 15th.
- The AMC math competition is also coming up on January 22nd. It is voluntary, with spots still open for interested Middle School students.
- CIE bootcamp will be January 24th; registration will be open next week. Also, Liberty Science Center is coming to SRDS to run two Science workshops on January 27th, during N-Block and afterschool.
- Middle School Musical Audition will be January 27th and an email with audition materials and sign-up is going out next week.
- The Middle School Advisory Cup Challenge is in progress which includes a door decorating competition right before the winter dance. This year students are engaging in a competition every month after receiving overwhelming support and enthusiasm from students for the program.

Middle School Winter Social (Dance) will be Friday February 6th, for 5th-7th graders; volunteers needed to set up and for clean up.

- The 8th Grade Sleep-In will be January 29th. This is a tradition at SRDS where 8th graders spend the night on campus. It is really fun and a great bonding experience.

X. Athletics Update

- Presented by Dr. Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School, on behalf of Mr. PJ Petrow, SRDS Athletic Director, provided an update on winter sports, including boys and girls basketball, indoor track, fencing, and wrestling.
- The middle school athletic program is growing as well, providing more competitive experiences for students.
- Chef Mark's bowling team has crossed over 20 students. That is the biggest it's ever been, and it just keeps growing. They just had their golf interest meeting for the spring.
- Last year we started wrestling as a pilot program. This year, we have almost 10 kids. We have a wonderful new coach. He is young, ambitious and committed to training the kids.

XI. Parent Guild Update and Save the Dates

- Parents are invited to a PG coffee meeting at Panera (Tice's Corner) next Monday, January 12th @ 8:30am after drop off.
- Head of School, Mr. Desai is hosting an event called "Cocktails and Connections" on Tuesday, January 27 at 7pm in the PAC. It's a casual event to talk about some of the new things that are going on at the school, and things that you can do to get involved.
- The Parents Guild has started planning the 2026 Gala "Limitless. One Big Party" on April 17th. The event this year is different than previous years as it truly is one big party filled with continuous, freshly prepared foods, music and entertainment. There will be a live and silent auction as in the past but at a higher level of luxury. Please consider making donations or asking friends and family with connections to unique experiences for donations to the auctions. We encourage everyone to attend and support our school as we continue to break records and boundaries as we educate the next generation of leaders and thinkers.
- The next PG Meeting will be on Thursday, February 5th @ 8:30am in Alford Hall - PAC.
- Closed the meeting with Motion to Adjourn and wished everyone a wonderful January