

SRDS Parents Guild Meeting

Thursday, April 8, 2026

I. Welcome & Approval of March 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 March 2026 meeting minutes.

II. Academic Courses & Registration Update

- Ms. Deirdre Angrick, Academic Dean, introduced herself and outlined the course selection process for the next school year.
- Students and advisors will review and complete course request documents during the advisory period. Students will complete forms during advisory, but have until next Friday to submit. The portal for course requests is user-friendly, with a course request tab for easy navigation.
- Course recommendations are provided and students can appeal for higher-level courses by indicating their intent in the student comment box. The appeal process involves students writing in the student comment box and meeting with their grade-level Dean. Students must set up a meeting with their current teacher to create a personalized plan for the appeal. The appeal decisions are made after final exams and emails are sent out by the department chair.
- Exceptions in course requests are handled by writing in the student comment box and specifying the course they are actually taking.
- New courses include AP and Honors Latin, Honors Research Seminar in the science department, and an Honors Computer Graphics and Game Development.
- Course descriptions and prerequisites are available by clicking on the "i" icon in the course request documents.
- The new AP Business and Personal Finance course will replace the current Business I class. Honors Introduction to Mathematical Proofs is a new post-AP course in the math department.

III. Community Engagement at SRDS

- Ms. Chris Lebovits, Director of Community Engagement and Assistant Director of Lower School Admissions, thanked everyone for Career Day and listed the businesses visited by students.
- New Family Ambassadors are needed to mentor new families and she provided a QR code for sign-up.
- The next Book Club includes the book "Small Things Like These" on May 6th, 2026.

IV. Lower School News and Upcoming Events

- Presented by Ms. Chris Lebovits, Director of Community Engagement and Assistant Director of LS Admissions, on behalf of Ms. Dana Stern, Head of Lower School.
- Danielle Larson from a local yoga and mindfulness company is conducting sessions for Lower School students.
- The Health Barn is providing programming on healthy eating habits for kindergarten and first-grade students.
- Fourth graders are participating in community service projects including Jump Rope for Heart which is kicking off today.
- MAP testing for students in second to fourth grade will take place from April 27 to May 1.
- The Early Childhood Program will be celebrating Earth Day on April 22 and is partnering with a local farm.

V. Update from Head of School

- Mr. Jalaj Desai, Head of School, thanked everyone who showed up yesterday for the Gateway presentations. Gateway Honors Diploma track is about students picking a specific track and creating projects starting in ninth grade.
- The dress code will change for middle school and high school kids for the next school year. The admin team is going to try to make it as simple as possible.
- With the direction of the Head of School and the Board of Trustees, SRDS has formed a food committee that is working very hard to enhance the food options for next year for the students, providing more healthy, organic options, as well as more food choices. The food committee involves different people from different divisions, and Ms. Lynn McCormick is leading the effort.
- Invited everyone to the AI Forum, which is being led by students, faculty and administration. It's about how SRDS uses AI in school, and what we think AI is and where it's going.
- In the Middle School cell phones are not allowed during the day. An addendum will be added to the SRDS handbook about the consequences for using cell phones in the school.
- SRDS have done research on how much tech time is used in the Lower School and the middle school classes, by teacher, by grade, and data will be shared with the SRDS community.
- Dr Robinson is starting an additional research program in the science department with Columbia University that will start in the New Building Labs starting August.
- The new business and entrepreneurship track that has been modified to offer more courses and will include Bloomberg Financials where students will be able to use the Bloomberg financial terminals and become certified.
- There will be changes to the spring break schedule due to athletic conflicts; more details to follow..

VI. Middle School News and Upcoming Events

- Presented by Ms. Amanda Bieglecki, Middle School Dean of Students, on behalf of Ms. Anastasia Kelly, Head of Middle School.
- The dress code is being updated in order to emphasize the importance of wearing appropriate attire for students.
- The Odyssey of the Minds teams competed in the regional competition, with both seventh and eighth-grade teams placing in the New Jersey State Finals.
- Upcoming field trips including NSTEM to the water treatment plant and a Boston field trip for 7th graders.

Last CIE Bootcamp of this school year will be this Saturday. Thank you to all who participated.

- Middle School recess is now tech-free so students can improve their social skills. Cell phones and smart watches are collected at the start of each period to reduce distractions in the class. Parents are encouraged to not text or call their student(s) during the school day in order to reduce distractions.

VII. Upper School News and Upcoming Events

- Dr. Shai Zacaraev, Head of Upper School, congratulated the robotics team and MathCON team for their achievements.
- The school is moving back to a four-day class schedule for full-time classes next year.
- Course sign-ups are happening and the appeals process begins with students meeting with their deans.
- The TEDx event, Upper School concert, Gala, and Prom are upcoming events.

VIII. Admissions Update & Exchange Student Opportunities

- Mr. Geoffrey Bowman, Head of Admissions, provided updates on the admissions process and the new partnership with Spanish exchange students.
- Two Spanish exchange students are currently attending the school and have been involved in various activities.
- Interested families are invited to host exchange students, with a stipend of \$1,500 a month provided by the agency.
- Videos of the exchange students were shared, highlighting their backgrounds and interests. Anyone interested in hosting should contact Geoffrey Bowman.
- Kristin Myers shared her experience hosting students from Spain including the cultural exchange between host family and student.

IX. Athletics Update

- Mr. PJ Petrow, SRDS Athletic Director, provides updates on spring sports, including the start of meets, matches, and games.
- Registration for fall sports will be available soon but we are exploring other registration platforms.
- Asked for volunteers for the Booster Club and information about the spring and upper school banquet and thanked the community for their support and participation in athletic events.

X. Parent Guild Updates

- PG co-presidents discussed the upcoming Gala event, emphasizing the need for ticket sales as the event is only a week away. Contributions made by families and the entire SRDS community were highlighted and are appreciated.
- Details about the live and silent auction items were shared, including exclusive experiences and items donated by community members.
- The food offerings for the Gala includes a variety of options to please all tastes.
- Announced three raffle items: 10 carat diamonds, \$1,000 cash, and a mystery item. The importance of attending the Gala to participate in the live auction and enjoy the event is emphasized.
- The next PG Meeting will be on Thursday, May 7th, 2026 @8:30am in Alford Hall - PAC.
- Closed the meeting with Motion to Adjourn and wished everyone a great weekend.