W+H Parent Association (WHPA)
General Parent Association Meeting Minutes

November 5, 2026; Attendees 37 members.

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The meeting was led by WHPA President Nirmala Devi, who welcomed attendees and introduced the evening's updates from school administration, division representatives and parent organizations.

2. School and Community Announcements

- **Thanksgiving Pie Sale:** Orders are being accepted through GiveSmart. Three varieties are available, with pickup scheduled for Monday, Nov. 23.
- **Common Ground Speaks:** The November 10 program will address social media use and addiction. A reception and light dinner begin at 6:00 p.m., followed by the presentation at 7:00 p.m.
- **Masquerade Gala:** The annual Gala will take place November 14 and will include a silent auction, photo booth, mystery box raffle, wine pull, live saxophone, and sketches.
- **Upper School Production:** *Little Shop of Horrors* will be performed November 6 at 7:30 p.m. and November 7 at 3:00 p.m. The production is recommended for ages 13 and older.

3. School Safety and Security Update

Marc Spivak and Erin Maciorowski presented an overview of the school's safety and security measures.

Campus Security and Infrastructure

- The school's Crisis Management Policy is reviewed and updated annually. The 2026–27 policy has recently been revised.
- The Crisis Management Team meets monthly to review incidents, assess procedures, and identify improvements.
- More than 100 security cameras have been installed across campus, supported by an advanced recording and playback system.
- Additional fencing and signage have been installed to restrict unauthorized access to campus and athletic fields.

- Doors have been upgraded with automated locking schedules, card-access systems, and alarms to prevent doors from being propped open.
- Window numbering has been implemented to help emergency responders identify rooms quickly.
- Security walks are conducted twice daily to identify potential hazards and unusual activity.
- The school maintains a strong working relationship with local police and has also consulted state authorities regarding security improvements.

Emergency Preparedness and Communication

- Emergency communication systems include campus-wide PA announcements, phone alerts, text notifications, and walkie-talkies.
- AED equipment has been updated, with additional units provided for coaches.
- Classroom emergency go-bags contain class lists, emergency contact information, flashlights, basic medical supplies, and other essential items.
- Safety training videos are provided to faculty, substitutes, coaches, and new staff to explain emergency procedures and alarm signals.
- The school conducts the state-required monthly fire drill and one additional emergency drill each month. Other scenarios, including lockdowns, severe weather, and other emergencies, are also practiced.
- Shelter-in-place procedures are used when an incident requires students and staff to remain in classrooms while emergency personnel respond.
- Fire evacuation procedures are continually reviewed to improve evacuation times and ensure everyone is accounted for.
- Lockdown buttons are available in classrooms and other areas. In a lockdown, doors are secured immediately, and administrators review camera footage while emergency responders are contacted.
- Emergency drills and incidents are followed by debriefings to identify opportunities for improvement.

Upcoming Safety Improvements

- A new fire alarm system will be implemented in December.
- Smoke detectors and related equipment have been upgraded to the latest technology.
- Future phases include moving toward a voice-based alarm system that provides clear instructions during fire and lockdown emergencies.
- The school continues to pursue grants to fund additional security and infrastructure improvements.

Parent Questions and Responses

- Calling 911: Teachers can call 911 directly from classroom phones or personal phones. Staff are encouraged to call whenever they believe emergency assistance is needed, including medical emergencies, without waiting for permission.
- Classroom Lockdown: Teachers can initiate a lockdown using classroom buttons. The buttons require two simultaneous actions to prevent accidental activation.
- Emergency on Athletic Fields: In an emergency on the fields, students and staff would evacuate off campus rather than re-enter a building. Designated locations and communication procedures are in place.
- Parent Notifications: Emergency updates will be communicated through the school's Public Information Officer, Mr. Rudy Brandl, once information has been cleared for release by the appropriate authorities.
- Bus Evacuation: Bus evacuation drills are required by law and are coordinated by the bus companies.
- Lower School Parking Safety: A parent raised concerns about vehicles potentially crossing the sidewalk and reaching classroom windows in the Lower School parking area. The suggestion to consider installing protective bollards was acknowledged and will be added to the school's list of safety considerations, subject to available funding.

4. Division Updates

Lower School

- Thanked parent volunteers for supporting the Halloween Parade.
- Introduced the senior buddy program, with the first student meeting completed.
- Announced Friendsgiving for November 24, with grade-level serving times. Families were asked to RSVP to Kiara Cerda.
- Confirmed the November 24 half-day schedule and school closure November 25–27, with classes resuming November 30.

Middle School

- Grade 7 and 8 field trips are scheduled for November 11–13; required paperwork is due November 5.
- Winter sports are scheduled to begin December 1.
- Announced the Middle School production of *The Descendants*, with public performances November 21.
- Grade 8 parent breakfast is scheduled for November 20, followed by student visits to the Upper School on November 24.
- School will dismiss at noon on November 24 and reopen November 30.

Upper School

- On-campus college visits conclude November 6.
- Cross Country Senior Night is November 6 at 4:00 p.m.
- *Little Shop of Horrors* performances are November 6 and 7.
- Diwali celebration is scheduled for November 8.
- Upper School Parent Social is planned for November 20, from 7:00–9:00 p.m., in the Oakwood Room. Additional details will follow.

5. WHPA Treasurer's Update

- WHPA and the Booster Club plan to contribute toward the purchase of a shared industrial printer.
- Faculty mini-grants will begin in January.
- WHPA contributed toward auction items for the upcoming Gala.
- The WHPA Silent Auction is scheduled for January 27–February 5, 2027.

The WHPA President thanked families for their support of the Fall Fair, which helped strengthen the Association's ability to support planned school contributions and initiatives.

6. Booster Club Update

Kerry O'Neill thanked families and volunteers for their support of the Fall Fair and shared recent athletic accomplishments:

- Girls' tennis doubles team won the state championship.
- Boys soccer won the Gold Division championship.
- Girls cross country won the Blue Division championship, with Shaina Patel earning the individual Blue Division title.
- Girls' volleyball advanced to the semifinal on November 6.
- Boys' and girls' soccer concluded their seasons in the quarterfinals.

The Booster Club also supports senior banners and championship jackets for winning teams and coaches. The Winter Games are scheduled for January 8, 2027, and will include activities for Lower and Middle School students, basketball games, a swim meet, and alumni basketball.

Parents were encouraged to participate in and support the Booster Club.

7. WHPA Volunteer Engagement

The WHPA discussed strengthening volunteer engagement and continuity by encouraging shared responsibilities and multiple volunteers for key roles.

The President introduced the idea of a parent WhatsApp group to communicate short-term and one-time volunteer opportunities, including RAM Shop coverage, pie deliveries, and event assistance. Parent feedback and participation were welcomed.

8. Admissions and Enrollment Update

Gerard Gonnella, Director of Enrollment Management, Financial Aid and International Student Program, shared upcoming admissions and community events:

- November 6: Upper School Preview
- November 11: Virtual Admission Information Session
- November 13 and 20: Prospective-family coffee events
- November 18: International Parents and Homestay Guardians Coffee
- December 3: Gingerbread Festival
- January 11, 2027: Community Information Event at Metuchen Library
- January 16, 2027: All-Grades Open House

Current families were encouraged to serve as school ambassadors and share admissions events with prospective families.

The Clarity financial aid application process is open. Returning applicants should use the same email address as in prior years to retain their application history and previously submitted information.

Grade 5 and Grade 8 families will have opportunities to learn about the next division on November 20, with student visits scheduled for November 24. Families with questions were encouraged to contact Gerard.

9. Closing

The WHPA President thanked the presenters, division representatives, Executive Board members, Booster Club volunteers, and parents for their time and continued support. The meeting concluded at approximately 8:00 p.m.