

SHS PTO Coffee with Mrs. Grimaldi General Meeting
Thursday, October 20, 2016
9am/Library
RECAP

Attendance: Mrs. Grimaldi, Principal; Lorena Dolan and Nicholas Steffner, Asst. Principals; Laura Kaplan, Director of School Counseling; 58 Attendees

9:00 Call to Order

- Donna Miller opened the meeting for the PTO and set ground rules based on feedback and input from last year's parent survey:
 - Hold questions until after Mrs. Grimaldi's recap
 - Ask questions that have broad impact// questions about individual students and individual classroom situations are better served by speaking with the appropriate teacher, a department head or Mrs. Grimaldi.
 - Parking lot concept will be used. To ensure no one topic takes too much time during the meeting we will "park" any topic that takes over 5 minutes of time.

Mrs. Grimaldi Update

- October 24-October 28// Red Ribbon Week
 - National week created to raise awareness about treating your body well—call to protect self from drugs, alcohol, violence.
 - Varied student activities throughout the week including but not limited to:
 - PSA based art projects.
 - Art contest: Select students will Rotary Luncheon to present artwork
 - Mikey Fallon Assembly for grades 9/10: One man show that touches on difficult topics on treating self and each other well.
 - Amy Herber working on other programs later in the year from grades 11-12.
- Nov. 2// SHS College Night
 - Over 175 colleges represented this year
- Nov 4 // First Marking Period Ends
 - Quarterly report cards always mailed home
 - FYI: Progress reports (mid-marking period reports) are only mailed home if family requests them to be. Progress reports were mailed

home last week. Form to request mailed reports was enclosed in that mailer.

- Nov. 17 Fall Play// You Can't Take it With You.
- Upcoming fun/spirit building student activities:
 - Halloween Assembly:
 - Students actually dress for Halloween at SHS!
 - No clowns this year, please.
 - During assembly students are invited to march across stage. There is a "talent" contest. All costumes and "talent" acts are previewed by the administration prior to the assembly. Kids love this activity.
 - Nov. 22//Hallapalooza
 - Tradition at SHS. Great way for students to feel school spirit and have fun. ALL ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND!
 - Each grade gets a hall to decorate in a specific theme after school and in the evening. Classes are currently discussing themes for their hallways. On decorating day, pizza is ordered for all. Class parents may reach out and ask for parent support.
 - The next day at 12noon the juniors and seniors girls play in a Powder Puff football game.

Question and Answers

What is the Attendance Policy?

Basically the same as it has been. Students have 20 excused absences per class. Family will get a letter at 16 excused absences. Students have 4 unexcused absences. Family will get a letter or a referral form after every unexcused absence. Excused absence= student sickness, MD appointment, school event, college rep visit, college touring, etc. Unexcused absence = student in school and chooses not to go class.

Chrome Books; Why can't kids use their own laptops? Isn't this a waste of money?

Students could use own device but cannot get onto the network/use school internet which would present a huge learning obstacle. The internet block was created district wide when the internet company noted the vast amount of illegal downloads that were taking place within the district. This put our access to the Internet across the district in jeopardy. To alleviate this problem, individual devices are blocked. Chrome Books have restricted access.

Furthermore, use of Chrome Books has given teachers/classrooms a UNIFORM platform through which learning can be enhanced/

Why do kids have to pay to print at school?

They don't have to. This is a rumor and simply isn't true. There is no charge for printing.

Why don't the kids use their lockers?

Nobody knows! They just don't. It's simply how the students manage themselves and, while the administration has periodically tried to influence the kids to use their lockers, they don't. The administration has bigger fish to fry ☺ The kids are happy, so be it. Some students DO use their lockers, by the way. FYI, the kids don't wear coats in the winter either. No right minded adult understands any of this.

The Geometry text book is from 1991. Why do we let the kids use such an old book?

Newer text books have online resources. Wouldn't those be better to use?

Summit reviews all curricula on a 5-year rotating basis. At that time of the review the resource tools are evaluated. If the text book being used is from 1991 this is simply because, after review, it was deemed the best tool for our kids to use. We do use online resources in classrooms (see: Chrome Books) but they may not be aligned with the text book. We do not create curriculum based on a textbook, our textbooks support the curriculum, therefore the age of the book may not be an issue.

FYI: For specific questions about textbooks and resources it is best to reach out to the subject Department Head who has more specific information about why texts are being used.

FYI: AP courses are different. SHS must only use the texts approved by The College Board for that particular AP course.

There is concern about freshman stress and the transition from LCJ. Early test grades, when poor, can discourage students. Are we trying to break the kids?

Obviously the school and teachers never intend to discourage or demoralize the students. There is no "breaking down". The district does much to ease the transition from the middle school to the high school. Having said that, there IS a jump in expectation, in the amount of work, etc.

To support students AT ALL GRADE LEVELS, students are provided varied resources

- Teacher help. Always a first course of action. Students are encouraged to advocate for self and go see teacher.
- Math Help Center
- Science Help center. New this year and right outside the cafeteria.
- World Language Help center
- Teacher office hours during lunch
- Peer tutoring program (see counselor to request a tutor)

The lunch block has helped give students “during the school day” ways to ask for support. Lunch block is an important time if student doesn’t have a study hall Go to teacher during lunch block.

Why is there so much outside tutoring of our kids? Does the school realize that vast number of kids taking AP and Honors need outside tutoring, which costs thousands of dollars?

[Mrs. Grimaldi mentioned that her response would not make her any friends]. If a student truly requires outside tutoring to make it through an AP or Honors course then that student should not be in the AP or Honors course. While there are always places where tutoring is a good choice, the amount of tutoring might be overboard. A few years ago the school did a survey to see how much tutoring was going on and can get the % that was found at that time. It is always preferable to use the teacher and in school resources (noted earlier).

FYI: Currently have 450 students taking AP courses, the most ever.

There was a question about placement of students in Spanish 3 coming out of the middle school with a concern that students were struggling when placed into Spanish 3

The recommendation for placement comes from the middle school teacher. If there is a concern about the stress a student might feel by being placed into Spanish 3 (or level 3 of any language) please reach out to the school counselor. Students can start in level 2 at the high school. This might be most appropriate for students who are not strong language students.

What happens to students grades if they drop Honors?

The grade from honors travels with them but not the weighted grade (honors and AP classes are given a .7 weight to them). Grades are not weighted by quarter.

FYI: SHS GPA is on a 4.3 scale. No student can achieve a 5.0 because not all classes are offered a .7 weight .

FYI: Colleges recalculate GPAs given by high schools to create a number that weighs information as it is helpful for them. So, while GPA is a key indicator and important it is a good idea to focus on getting good grades and not overthinking GPA.

Why do some teachers wait until late at night to assign homework?

That’s not fair. Homework must be assigned during class. The expectation will be set that teachers must do so.

Is there a max/min homework policy at the high school?

No, maximums and minimums are not set in policy.

Homework grades? In a perfect world shouldn't homework simply be a reinforcement tool?

Yes. Homework that is not a quiz-type assignment shouldn't "ding" a student. Nor should a student who went in early for teacher help get a zero for a homework. Kids should reach out to teachers if there are questions about grades on HW in PowerSchool.

What is going on with SHS parking? Does everyone have a spot?

Yes, all have spots. There is no waitlist. Mrs. Dolan continues to work on the parking issues as they present themselves. All has gone well. Some students have LOST the parking privilege for various reasons (i.e, did not attend the Share the Keys Program). The BOE will not be spending 1 million on a new parking lot for the SHS. Good news is that the current senior class is the biggest (334) and the class sizes shrink from here on out, going as low as 290 in upcoming classes.

FYI: Sophomores who attended Share the Keys this year do not get any parking preference in the parking lottery when they become seniors.

FYI: Incoming seniors can join the parking lottery even if they have not yet attended the Share the Keys program. They can get a spot and keep it as long as they attend the program in their senior year.

Some schools have created school spirit by decorating parking spots? Would we ever do this?

This idea will be discussed with the Student Council to see if there is any interest here at SHS.

Some AP teachers for senior level classes don't seem to appreciate the importance of the first quarter's grades to seniors applying to college—seem overly focused on the AP exam at the end of the year.

Senior teachers have been told that the grades are important and such will be reiterated so that there is sensitivity to how important the grades are to students.

How are first time AP teachers supported?

Get full training. Then, once teaching, are supported by other teachers and the department heads

Do AP students get summer assignments?

Yes! AP students have a great deal to do over the summer.

Why were there so many exams during PSAT week?

First, remember that the PSAT is practice. Having said that, it can have an impact for some junior students (Merit Scholarship). Having too many exams during that week should be evaluated.

There is concern about some negative messages within the SHS (ie, the detention signs, the letter that went home to seniors that got a parking spot). Negativity breeds negativity. Can we make our messages more positive?

Yes. The detention signs were removed. The feedback has been heard and the school will do what it always hopes to do, which is to provide a positive environment for the students.

What is the process for detention? Where is it held, what if the detention teacher isn't there right after school?

Detentions are done in room 219 immediately after school and if the detention teacher isn't there for some reason the student should go to the Main Office to report for detention.

The Fall PE exemptions came too "late" in the season.

Next year it will be different—the process will begin sooner so that PE exemption can come earlier in the season (prior to the Oct. 1 date that occurred this year. It's noted that winter PE exemptions are coming late in the winter sport season, too. Will take a look at the process.

Why can't freshman get PE exemption?

The policy is created by the BOE and at the time that PE Exemption came into practice Board members felt that 1) Freshman teams had lesser commitments than JV or Varsity sports did and 2) that going to PE was important in the first year since there are number of class "team building" activities that occur.

Athletic paperwork process/clearance to play sports seems to need an evaluation and improvement.

Parents can give the AD a call about this. Mrs. Grimaldi will also bring parent concerns to the AD.

Would you reiterate to students that visiting college reps during the school day is important?

Yes. Some colleges do keep track of who attends in-school meetings. Moreover, visiting reps is a wonderful way to get to know about a college that you may be interested in visiting.

For past PTO meeting minutes and PTO information go to summitshspto.com

Next PTO meeting is November 18, 9am in the auditorium
Next Coffee with The Principal is January 13 in the library

10:20 Meeting Adjourned