

**Glen Rock Middle School/High School HSA**  
**General Meeting Minutes**  
**May 13, 2015 – 7:30 PM**

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**Attendees (17):** Grace Cosgriff, Elaine Howe, Kathy Duggan, Donna Beldner, Sandi Stern, Anne Marie Podd, Mona Milbrodt, Ann Feige, Kristine Gifford, Donna Heller, Lorraine Liberti, Kara Stansel, Angela Vila, Ann Boyle, Pam Griffin, Janet Romano, Dina Rosen

**Administrators (2):** Brian Pepe, John Arlotta

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 PM by HSA President, Grace Cosgriff.

**Approval of March 17, 2015 Meeting Minutes:** Submitted by Anne Marie Podd. Motion to approve by Angela Vila and seconded by Mona Milbrodt.

**Principals' Reports:**

**Middle School – Mr. Pepe**

- Tonight is a homework-free night.
- 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> grade dance on March 27 was successful.
- Congratulations to Eileen Besser – Teacher of the Year!
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade Exploratory Arts performance was March 31.
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Philadelphia was April 17.
- The Middle School Talent Show was April 23.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> grade Washington D.C. trip was a success.
- Had Teacher Appreciation Week
- Mr. Thompson has visited the 5<sup>th</sup> grades at each elementary school accompanied by two 8<sup>th</sup> graders (one girl and one boy) to answer questions as part of transition to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.
- They will also have Fly Up days where 5<sup>th</sup> graders walk over to the middle school to visit. Honor students and student government members give tours.
- Spring Fling is May 15.
- Memorial Day Assembly is May 22.
- Spring Concert and Art Show is May 27.
- Civil War Day is on June 5.
- June 9 is the author visit with Todd Strasser. HSA members are welcome to attend. Times will be on the school website. There will be a lunchtime meet and greet with teachers.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Promotion is on June 16.

- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Pool Party is on June 17.
- Middle school PARCC testing is going well. Mid-year tests were problem based and performance based. End of year tests are more traditional multiple choice. They spread the testing days out this time with a break between the math and language testing days.
- Outside recess is good! Lots of positive feedback. However, over last two weeks many students have gone to the nurse with allergies.
- Gender Awareness – Per Mr. Pepe: There is a transgender student in the MS. A counselor came and spoke with all the students, staff and faculty about acceptance. Mr. Arlotta said they have a couple of transgender students in the HS too. There is even a gender-neutral bathroom. They have had staff and parent presentations. From a legal view, the student is whatever sex the student identifies with. Proactively educating the community in a thoughtful, considerate way has been the goal. All students are to feel welcome. The point is acceptance. This message is also supported through the Health curriculum, Guidance and the HS Gay/ Straight Alliance.

### **Parent Questions:**

- Are PARCC test results relevant? For example, many high school juniors did not take the test seriously and just randomly filled in answers. Many also opted out.

Mr. Arlotta is aware. Many students did also take it seriously. A determination cannot be made until all the results are in.

- Is there any follow up to Dr. Pope presentation? She came, she spoke, she was great. Now what? What are the action points/follow up from the school?

Mr. Pepe: They are going to have more homework-free nights, they are also monitoring homework levels to make sure they are not excessive and guidance is having speakers in to help students deal with stress. More outside recess has been very good and they encourage club participation.

Mr. Arlotta: Things were being done to address less stress and more life balance for the students before Dr. Pope came. Kids need time to be kids! It's a challenge in this district because all want and expect excellence. The change in schedule was part of this and it has been a real improvement. The schedule rotates and kids don't have homework in every subject every night. He meets with 10 -12 groups of random students every month to stay informed. Problem: Trying to reduce pressure in school and at home. There has been a large increase in mental health problems because of the constant push to succeed, plus there are other family issues, such as recent financial problems.

- What about teaching Executive Functioning\* skills? Learning Strategies teaches this, but it is not available to all students. Kids need to learn note taking, planning time, how to review for a test, etc. They should learn this in middle school so they are ready for high school. Knowing how to approach a project, how to break things down in segments and how to plan helps reduce stress. Can't there be a course for this?


\* *These skills enable people to plan, organize, remember things, prioritize, pay attention and get started on tasks.*

Mr. Arlotta – In high school, Guidance counselors can offer best practices. Encourage students to reach out to guidance. For example, some kids want to bite off more than they can chew and may need to consider a more realistic schedule.

### High School - Mr. Arlotta

- Spring Concert is May 20. Mrs. Sneyers is retiring. She will be missed and tough to replace.
- Staffing: Our new Vice Principal, Michael Pasciutto (from Cresskill), starts in July.
- Possible new courses: Chinese - need to find a teacher, Broadcast Media
- Repurposing the "All-purpose" room – half the space will be a fitness center. With the new schedule, physical fitness class is close to an hour, so more emphasis on fitness.
- Field lights are coming this summer. Should be done by October 1.
- Technology: Have large bandwidth WiFi, all teachers are getting new laptops this coming year, and within 2 years, each student will be issued a laptop.
- Dr. Valenti will be giving a technology update at the June 8 BOE meeting.
- Athletics: Great spring! Lots of wins and championships!
- Career/Vocational outings included:
  - Live kidney transplant,
  - anatomy program,
  - professional playwright coming in
  - partnership with the Metropolitan Opera to see a dress rehearsal.

### Treasurer's Report – Ann Feige

- Current financial report and proposed 2015-16 budget was reviewed.
- We will vote on the budget at the June meeting.
- Keep saving those **BOX TOPS!** It's free money for us! There are collection boxes in the MS/HS offices.
- We now have 20 linked accounts at Boiling Springs. Just got out first check for \$172!
- Use the [Amazon link!](#) 
- We need a fundraiser and someone to chair!

## Board of Education Report – Donna Beldner

- Science labs are being fixed this summer.
- Activity fees are being discussed
- Full-day kindergarten details being discussed.

## Committees

- Still Needed: HSA is looking for a Treasurer for next year.
- Volunteer Committee forms are available for 2015-16.

## Fundraising

- The MS/HS HSA “Direct Ask” email is under way.
- We need a fundraising event for next year and someone to chair.

## Wish List

- Granted – Richard Blanco, the United States inaugural poet, for October 2015.

## Upcoming Events

- Ann Feige – Thursday, May 28 is the Staff Appreciation Breakfast. Casseroles would be much appreciated!
- Mona Milbrodt – GREF has produced a video of its April 14 Media & Communications panel discussion event for students to learn about various broadcast media careers. Seven people from the district (and one outsider) were on the panel. (Update: The video is now available in two 40-minute segments at <https://vimeo.com/gref07452> )
- Elaine Howe – On Monday, May 26, 7:00 PM in the Media Center, there will be a book discussion led by Mrs. Walter and Mrs. Mahoney. The book is ***Where You Go is Not Who You’ll Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania*** by New York Times columnist, Frank Bruni.

## **Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 10, 2015 at 9:00 AM in the Media Center**

This is the last meeting of the school year and will include volunteer appreciation.

This meeting concluded at 9:08 PM. The motion to adjourn was made by: Anne Feige and Sandi Stern.

*Minutes respectively submitted by Anne Marie Podd.*