

HIGH SCHOOL PTA MEETING
OCTOBER 4, 2011
(draft)

1. Meeting called to order at 9:25 by Beth Kramer – HS PTA director

2. HS PTA Director Remarks

- Beth welcomed everyone and encouraged all to volunteer in some way. Encouraged all to review the sign-up sheets and get involved. Beth also encouraged all to view the PTA website at www.gardencitypta.org. The website will contain relevant dates, events, and important committee report summaries. Beth also highlighted important dates at the high school which were handed out and also will be highlighted on the PTA website.
- Beth acknowledged and thanked all curriculum coordinators for attending the PTA meeting - Mr. Giacalone – World Language, Ms. Balantic – Social Studies, Dr. Cascio – Science, Dr. Prasso – Music, Mrs. Arnone – English, Mr. Dods - Math. Beth informed parents that the coordinators are a great resource to parents and students – please feel free to contact them if a question or concern arises.
- Beth introduced and thanked Ms. Cuttitta, Mr. Perrotta and Mr. Steingruebner for attending the meeting and for all their help throughout the year.
- Beth thanked her HS Board and introduced all committee members. All pertinent committee reports were given (listed below). Beth informed all that one representative for the Health and Safety Committee is still needed and Publicity could use one more representative.
- School Spirit Day is on Friday, October 14th – All schools are participating – All parents and students encouraged to wear Maroon and Gray. Beth encourages all students to enter the poster contest. Would like to create a greater awareness of Homecoming Weekend and hope to build this over the next couple of years. There is a parade at noon on Saturday, October 15th and the Homecoming football game is at 2pm.
- October 12th is School Unity Day – this is a campaign to stop cyber-bullying . Everyone is encouraged to wear orange on this day.
- October 12th there is an important Board of Education meeting regarding the 2% Tax Cap. Beth encouraged all parents to attend this meeting and get more educated on the proposed tax cap and what it will mean for our school district. The meeting was relocated and will now take place at the HS.

- Freshman BBQ – Was a huge success with over 200 freshman students participating. Every student went home with a raffle prize. Beth thanked the entire BBQ committee for their time and effort – Tricia Sproat, Linda Crapotta, Nancy Carpenter, Patty Burke, Jean Eschmann, Laura Donovan, Sue Furey and Nicole Nolan. Also thanked amazing vendors who donated food and supplies and asked all parents to patronize their stores. Towne Meat Market donated all the hamburgers, hot dogs and buns, Gold’s Pure Foods donated all the condiments, Associated Food Market in Floral Park donated all the water. Thanks to all for a successful event for our incoming freshman class.

3. Committee Reports

- **Membership** – Maria Fealey – PTA membership dues fund many programs and help to address pertinent issues. Looking for 100% participation at the HS level – currently at 25%. Parents can join the PTA at the membership table that is here today or by downloading a form from the PTA website. There was an early-bird incentive for families who joined by September 10th – raffle winner was picked – the winner was Julie Germano who won a \$100 giftcard.
- **Sportswear** – Joann Schwendemann, Denise Eilbeck and Laura Ventre – Sportswear on sale at the HS PTA meeting. Will be on sale at all PTA meeting throughout the district and all back to school nights. Please support this fundraiser – all money raised goes directly back to schools in the form of grants.
- **PTA Dinner** – Carolyn Giumenta – The PTA dinner will be held on March 8th. Catalina Mueller is already collecting any and all items for raffle prize baskets. Please donate any new items. She can be contacted at catmueller28@hotmail.com.
- **Health and Safety** – Julie Germano – Looking for a co-rep. Julie informed the group that she is always looking for ideas. Please contact her at Julie@optonline.net with any ideas. Some programs she is currently working to bring to the HS are: Texting while driving and social health issues such as time management and impacts of social networking.
- **Reflections** – Linda Crapotta – The theme for 2011 is Diversity Means .. George Peterson explained the contest to everyone and hopes that more entries are submitted this year. The deadline for all submissions is October 28th. George also let everyone know that two categories within the Reflections contest have very few entries. They are film and choreography – keep this in mind as there is much opportunity in these areas. He also announced that the deadline to come up with the theme for next year’s contest is October 8th.

- **Parent Volunteer Corp (PVC)** – Karen Bingham, Tricia Sproat – Have 40 parent volunteers signed up. Great way to get involved - have already logged 80 woman hours this school year helping guidance office put packets together for summer mailings . Have a lot of fun and a lot of laughs and is a great support to the school.
- **Curriculum** – Angel D’Antonio, Mary McCarraher, Nancy Basel – This committee handles all curriculum concerns at the HS level. Any questions or concerns regarding curriculum should be directed to these reps. They present their concerns at monthly meetings held with Ms. Cuttitta and the curriculum coordinators. It is a great way for the school to hear the concerns of parents. The PTA committee gets this information, gets answers and brings information back to the parents. All curriculum minutes are posted on the PTA website. The committee also meets with administration. The committee has 5/6 meetings with the HS and also 5/6 meetings with the administration.
- **Photography** – Patti Norberto, Linda Revithas, Nora Heavy – Photography was a huge success this year – changed to on-line service . The photo re-take day for the HS is **October 18th**.
- **Publicity** – Ronda D’Antonio - Ronda is in charge of all publicity – taking pictures of HS events and getting all PTA events into the paper. She is looking for help if anyone is interested.
- There are other committees that are not active at this time – updates for these committees will be announced at future PTA meetings.

4. Presentation by Mr. Giacalone – World Language Coordinator

Beth introduced Mr. Giacalone. She also informed all parents that the PTA donated a language lab at the HS in the form of a grant for \$30,000 this past Spring. The language lab will benefit all children in the district. The lab is up and running and the feedback is extremely positive.

Mr. Giacalone thanked the PTA and told all that getting the language lab was a “dream come true” for the language department. The lab is up and running and being utilized. All teachers had a full day of training on Sept 1st. The students love going to the lab – they are not intimidated to speak while in the lab.

There was a complete review of the language curriculum last year. AP language courses being offered at the HS are equivalent to a 3rd year college course. Many students taking AP language are also taking many other AP courses and the workload is overwhelming. AP language is usually the AP that is dropped. District wanted to offer an alternative. Last year the district used a St. John’s University college language course for Italian – enrollment went from 12 students to 26 students. Mr. Giacalone read notes he received from 2 students telling him how well prepared for college they were

after taking the college level course while in HS. A decision was made by the district to switch all languages from AP to St. John's University course for the 2012/2013 year. Spanish students this year have a choice and currently have 73 students enrolled in the college level course. The St. John's option is weighted the same as an AP at 1.06. The 9,10, 11 curriculum has been revamped to go along with the college level language course. Next year German, French and Latin will only be offered at the college course level.

5. Presentation by Ms. Christel – Director of Guidance

Ms. Christel welcomed all parents and told everyone the guidance department had been busy over the summer. She highlighted some points:

- College Interview Workshops – Will be held on Nov 21st and 22nd for all seniors - college reps or alumni reps will interview selected students – during school in the classroom. Will perform mock interviews and review interviewing skills with the students. The college interview is an important tool to get to know the applicant and a way for the applicant to show interest in the college. Juniors will also get this experience but will have to wait until the spring. Going forward the College Interview Workshops will be held Junior year.
- College Major Night – Will be held on October 17th at 7:30pm. Everyone is welcome to attend – parents and children. It will be an evening to learn about different college majors. Will have a panel with representatives/deans from Hofstra, Fordham, CW Post, and Adelphi. Career trends in employment will be discussed as well as the amount of education that is needed for different careers (do you need a masters). Will have a Q&A session and will also break up into small groups to get more information on the different professional areas.
- Financial Aid Night - Will be held on November 28th – Will have the same speaker as last year who makes the topic very funny and engaging.
- Guidance Plan – A video was shown to all parents highlighting guidance happenings throughout the year. Guidance is in the process of formulating a Guidance Plan which will be an 85 page document outlining guidance procedures.
- Cyber-bullying – Ms. Christel addressed this important issue and role guidance plays in combating cyber-bullying. There will be staff development to help all guidance counselors deal with student problems.

Some parents had some questions as follows:

- **How are college rep visits conveyed to parents?** There are daily announcements made to all students of the colleges that are coming. All announcements can be viewed by parents daily on the HS website. Also a list of college reps who will be visiting is on the Guidance page of the website. There are also 4 college fairs that students can attend that have over 100 reps present.

- **In the past, there was a college fair held at night for parents and students. Can we get this back?** Ms. Christel and Ms. Cuttitta explained that the night fair was very expensive. Have to host all the reps for dinner which became very costly. They suggested going to the outside fairs that are hosted in the fall.

6. Presentation by Nancy Kalafus – Director of Athletics

Ms. Kalafus welcomed all parents. She announced that 515 students are participating in sports this fall at the HS and 500 students participating in sports at the MS. Also announced that for the 6th time GCHS won the School of Distinction Award for Athletics – awarded to GC as a result of all 32 sports teams having an average GPA of 90% or above for each team. She stated that everything is connected and that athletics is an extension of the school day. All coaches stress to the students to work hard on the field and in the classroom. Ms. Kalafus also announced that GCHS already has one News 12 scholar-athlete – Alex Bruno. She expects more over the next couple of months. Ms. Kalafus gave us some stats – there are 57 High Schools in Nassau County - Garden City had 16 Conference Championships, 10 County Championships, 6 Long Island Championships and 2 State Championships – very impressive!

7. Presentation by Ms. Cuttitta – Principal of the High School

- a. Accolades - Ms. Cuttitta announced that already this fall we have one News 12 scholar athlete, 5 semi-finalists in the Merit Scholarship competition, 9 winners of the Adelphi Leadership award and many NYSSMA recipients.
- b. Construction/Changes – Will be breaking ground on the new music wing in early October – all very exciting. When the new wing is complete the HS will gain space in the old music wing. The counseling center will get a major facelift. Will create a new college and career center. The entire Guidance area will be moved to one side of the hall. The nurses office will move to the other side of the hall and be updated as well. Special Education will have added space as well. Over the next 1½ years there will be major changes to the interior of the school that will have a positive impact on all students
- c. Bus Circle – A new bus circle was constructed over the summer. In past had some buses in Merillon Ave circle and some in Rockaway circle – very confusing. Now can fit all buses on Merillon Avenue side and there is a lot less confusion for the kids and teachers are able to supervise much better. Also more convenient for parents – just ask that parents not use the circle while buses are present. Will be really nice after trees and grass are planted.
- d. Parent-Teacher conferences - Letter will be going out today to all parents explaining the procedures and dates for parent teacher conferences this Fall. All conferences at the HS are scheduled electronically. Parents have 2 weeks before the window is opened to set up an account. Instructions explaining this will be mailed and are described in detail on the HS website. If any parent is having problems establishing an account they should call the main office of the HS.

- e. Middle State Accreditation – The BOE had a meeting recently regarding Middle State Accreditation. Ms. Cuttitta spoke at this meeting – is very familiar with the process. It is a very costly process - it cost her prior district over \$10,000 in 2005 – will be much more now. Essentially it is a team of people that come into your school. They evaluate and reports outlining how well the district is meeting their goals. The only HS we compare ourselves to that is still doing the accreditation is Manhasset – probably because they are a HS/MS. It is more common now that HS's do not get accreditation. We already set very high standards for our district. Dr. Feirsen will make a recommendation to the board very soon regarding this issue.
- f. Homecoming Update – Want to make a big deal about Homecoming this year. Ms. Cuttitta very happy that all the other principals in the district will help to make this a district wide event. All schools will participate in the parade. The whole week will be spirit week with the following events scheduled: Tuesday – Comfy, Cozy day, Wed – Tye Dye Day, Thurs – Color Wars, Friday – Maroon and Gray Day
- g. Auditorium Upgrades – purchased a brand new screen and projector for the auditorium – the projector will be permanently fixed. Also major upgrade to the sound system.
- h. Special Education reorganization – Coordinator was eliminated – responsibility sprinkled around at the building level. If parents have any problems the assistant principals are a good place to start. Parents are encouraged to go the HS website to the Principal's page. There is a page for FAQ and a chart for special Ed concerns – who to talk to. Ms. Cuttitta feels things are running very smoothly – problems come to our attention faster and problems are taken care of more efficiently.
- i. Questions:
 - **There were two bomb threats last year – how is the HS going to deal with this issue going forward?** Ms. Cuttitta informed us that HS is suppose to be getting a number of video cameras installed at entrances and exits. Would like more cameras (in cafeteria and restroom entrances) but not sure if that will happen this year. As a result of the bomb scares last year, had to place monitors at the restrooms for students to sign in and out – major pain. Nobody likes it. Also had to close some bathrooms last year. We decided to start fresh this year and go back to honor system with the bathrooms. Bathrooms are checked throughout the day by our staff. Have also done away with clipboard passes. Now have passes that designate exactly where a student is going. She will keep us posted on the camera installation. Hoping that peer pressure will kick in – nobody liked the evacuations after the novelty wore off.
 - **Will we get a new sign for the High School?** The class of 2010 donated a beautiful sign. We are still waiting for it to be installed.
 - **Will decision not to seek accreditation hurt our HS rating with colleges?**

Ms. Cuttitta and Ms. Christel both feel our HS rating will not be affected by lack of accreditation. They feel our school profile and history of our school are the most important things a college looks for in a high school