

DHSPA MEETING ~ MINUTES ~ SEPTEMBER 20, 2011

Wanda Forlivio called the meeting to order at 9:15am. There were approximately 80 people in attendance.

Treasurer's Report. Elizabeth Cortright presented the 2011/2012 budget, which had been reviewed and approved at the 9/8/2011 Executive Board Meeting. This budget is based upon committee expenditures from the prior year. Our goal is to spend what we make in terms of fundraising (the non-event fundraiser, the directory, and Student Wear). We have included a JOBS Office line of \$1,000 to provide a stipend to our webmaster. The Budget was approved.

Co-Chairs Report. Thanks to all the parents who have helped over the summer and during this first month to make the opening of school a success. The current Slate is posted at the DHSPA website. New volunteer opportunities will be posted via the DPN. DHSPA job descriptions are also on the website. Wanda announced that Jim Plutte will be the Darien High School Board of Education liaison.

Committee Reports.

College and Career Center. The CCC is up and running, they are looking for parents who want to be on the sub list. If you do, contact Chrissie Osborn – chrissieosborn@mac.com. Visiting colleges are listed outside the College and Career Center, appear on the plasma screens and can be found on NAVIANCE. Area college fairs are listed on the DHS website.

Communications. Directories are for sale at the back of the Auditorium. To be included on the DPN (newsletter) email list, go to the DHSPA webpage (accessible from the DHS website).

Fundraising. The non-event fundraising letters have been mailed. Thanks to all who have donated. If you did not receive a letter, contact Melissa Graves – melgraves@aol.com.

Parent Awareness. There are 4 upcoming programs which are outlined on the "Back Page." Let Tricia Conley know if you have any suggestions for future programming.

Programs. The Programs Committee is always open to suggestions for meeting content. .

Student Life. The ideas for events come from Community Council and the Student Life Committee facilitates. 350 students attended the Sophomore/Freshman Dance on 9/10. The Community Council has "Adopted-A-Spot" in town; they have chosen the Darien RR Station. On 9/21, Community Council is hosting a "Meet the CC" breakfast; if you can donate food/juice, please sign up at the back of the Auditorium. Homecoming is on 10/15, the committee is looking for 14 parent volunteers (to be on the periphery) and food donations. Again, a sign-up sheet is at the back of the Auditorium. Upcoming events: a movie night fundraiser in October, a December holiday auction, a talent show on February 9th and a dance in March. The Prom is on May 18th.

Student Wear. Student Wear is in the lobby today. The committee is looking for one or two people who want to help with Student Wear and possibly assume leadership in the future.

DEPOT Report. Janice Marzano introduced herself as the full-time Program Director at the Depot. There are new co-presidents at the Depot, Monica Billeter and Kelly Lesko. The Depot is hosting an Open House on October 11th at 9:30am for parents interested in volunteering on the Depot board or parents who are just curious as to what the Depot is like. Guest speakers will be Darien Detectives Sam Boccuzzi and Mark Capelli. There are many events going on at the Depot, keep-up-to-date at www.dariendepot.org.

Other Reports.

Music for Youth. The focus this year is on Bach, and because they have no funding, they need donations. The envelopes are at the back of the Auditorium.

Blue Wave Booster Club. The Booster Club's sole purpose is to support the sports teams at DHS and create school spirit. To become a member, fill out the brochure at the back of the Auditorium

or send a check for \$100 to PO Box 2263, Darien, CT 06820. Membership entitles you to (2) passes to all home football and boys basketball games and (2) bumper stickers.

Principal's Report. Dan Haron thanked everyone for all their help in getting the school year up and running despite Hurricane Irene. Open House was on 9/15/11 and was a great success. Dan reported on standardized test scores, which have showed tremendous improvements across the board:

AP Tests

- 50% of the students taking them received a 5 (45% last year)
- 94% of the students received a 3 or better (3 being a score that would enable college credit) (91% last year).

ACT Tests

- The number of students taking the test has tripled.
- We received the highest scores in our DHS history.

SAT Tests

- Average Scores: 589 Reading (573 last year), 604 Writing (596 last year), and 616 Math (611 last year). Postscript: These are the highest scores in the state.

CAPT Tests

- Improvement in all disciplines.

Dan acknowledged that standardized test scores are only one measure of a school but it is nice! Two big initiatives for the school this year are:

- To finalize our NEASC self-study (which happens once every 10 years). Our self-study culminates with a 4-day visit from 15 educators in April of 2012. They review and determine whether to accredit us. The process itself is a valuable opportunity to examine and find areas of improvement.
- Beginning this school year, DHS has established PLCs which are Professional Learning Communities. These are small groups of teachers from the same department (at least this year) who are charged with establishing an objective to enhance student learning and then finding a way to achieve it by June. At the end of the year, each PLC must have a tangible product *which will improve student learning*. They will meet 8 times, six of them during 90-minute delayed opening days which have been built into the calendar. The other 2 meetings are during CAPT testing week and midterm week. The 90 minutes of delayed opening time is made up by extending the school dismissal time from 2:17p to 2:20p. The goal is to improve collaboration, teacher dialog and consistency within departments. Example: a geometry PLC whose goal is to integrate more technology into their lessons. At the end of the year they will disseminate to other geometry teachers and evaluate how it improves student learning.

There are three Assistant Principals at DHS: Dan Sullivan is responsible for students with last names beginning with the letters A-G, Ellen Spark (welcome!) is responsible for students with last names beginning with the letters H-N, and Ellen Dunn is responsible for students with last names beginning with the letters O-Z. Dan introduced Ellen Spark, our newest Assistant Principal.

DHS has many clubs and activities. Dan asked parents to encourage kids to join and participate. It helps them to feel like they belong. To that end, there is an activity fair on Friday, 9/23 and they have recently aired a Blue Wave News segment on clubs.

The China Exchange delegation arrives on September 28th; it is the 10th anniversary of the program.

Homecoming is the week of October 10th. There will be 4 spirit days, a pep rally, the football game and dance.

Dan reported that the three days missed at the beginning of the school year will be made up in June, they have been added to the calendar and graduation has been adjusted accordingly.

Guidance Director's Report. Paul Ribeiro announced that freshman students are meeting with their counselors, individually, to get to know each other. It is hoped that all meetings will have taken place by the end of September. Juniors and sophomores should be aware that the PSATs will be offered on Saturday, October 15th, at DHS, doors open at 7:30am. The PSAT is essentially a practice SAT test. Juniors' scores can qualify them for National Merit Scholarship recognition. The results are received in December; tickets for the PSAT are being sold this week during lunch shifts (9/19-9/23). Cost is \$28.

Paul reported that the Guidance Department needs 30 days to process a transcript, so seniors should be sure that they get their requests in. Naviance will track transcript requests. He encouraged seniors to check in with their guidance counselors to go over lists of their intended colleges. During the 90-minute delayed openings, the Guidance Department is planning assemblies for students. The first one (9/23) will be for seniors and will be small groups meeting with their guidance counselors to discuss the DHS college application process.

College visits are ongoing, a schedule can be found on Naviance, outside the College and Career Center and on the plasma screens.

When asked,

- Paul advised that DHS will be an ACT test site in the winter and the spring (go to www.act.org).
- While we don't teach to the test at DHS (for CAPT and SAT Reasoning tests), our curriculum does expose the student to about 90% of what is included on an SAT subject test. Some supplementation may be necessary.
- EA transcripts will cover through junior year. It is not updated until after midterms. Paul Ribeiro suggested that – if a student wants the college to see his/her 1st quarter grades, he/she should make a copy and send to admissions counselors with a note.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25am.

NEXT DHSPA MEETINGS:

Thursday, October 20th at 7:30pm: College Panel (for students and parents).

Tuesday, October 25th at 9:15am: "Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda" (parent panel).

Submitted by Lynn Biggart

9/26/2011