

St Mary School HSA Meeting Minutes

October 6, 2023

HSA Board Attendees:

Ann Russell, HSA Co-President

Marcy Miller & Kristy Pylypshyn, HSA Co-Vice Presidents

Janine Simon & Vera Melkonian, HSA Co-Treasurers

Meghan Newman, Room Parent Coordinator

Welcome and NEASC Updates from Rachel Ambrosio:

- Rachel opened the meeting with a prayer and discussed the upcoming NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) Accreditation.
 - Required for St Mary School to be an accredited school
 - NEASC monitors the school on an ongoing basis to ensure it is meeting the standards. Every 10 years, the school is evaluated in a more comprehensive manner in order to be re-accredited. Rachel stated that she does not foresee any issues in St Mary School being re-accredited.

- **Upcoming NEASC Visit:**
 - On November 2nd, NEASC will conduct a Foundation Visit to review the mission and operations of the school. A team consisting of one representative from NEASC and two Catholic school principals will be present. A small SMS team will welcome them when they arrive the evening before.
 - The Foundation Visit Team will evaluate 5 standards:
 1. Enrolled Students Align Appropriately with the Mission
 2. The Governing Body/Board Assures the School Remains Sustainable and True to its Mission
 3. The School's Resources Sufficiently Support Present and Prospective Operation
 4. The School's Resources Sufficiently Support Present and Prospective Operation
 5. A Proactive Culture of Health and Safety Permeates the School
 - **Parents:** Please be aware that you will see members of the NEASC team on November 2nd. It is possible that they may ask you a few quick questions at drop off.

- Rachel and several of our teachers have conducted site visits of other schools for NEASC over the years. The visits are helpful for the school seeking accreditation as the team can make suggestions for ways to improve or make changes if needed. In addition, when our staff goes on a site visit, they frequently return to SMS with new ideas and ways to improve the school or classrooms.

HSA News from Ann Russell:

- Ann thanked Andrea Wolf and Sheila Gray for chairing the Book Fair.

- Reminder that all volunteers who would like to volunteer to help with events at school must complete VIRTUS training. The training can be completed online or in person. To view upcoming trainings and to schedule go to <https://www.virtusonline.org>. Please contact Monica Harron in the office with any additional questions.
- Monica Massucci, Charitable Liaison, will be meeting with Rachel next week to review her plan for charitable projects for the year. Monica added that if any parents or students have charities or projects that they feel strongly about, to please contact her.
- Upcoming Events:
 - 10/10 Senior Luncheon hosted by the 7th grade
 - 10/12 Parent Social at Gallo Restaurant in Ridgefield
 - 10/27 Trunk or Treat and Classroom Halloween Parties
 - 1/19/2024 Father/Daughter Dance
 - Please note that this is earlier than previous years
 - Snow Date is 2/2/2024
 - 2/2024 or 3/2024 Mother/Son Event (Date is still being determined)
 - Marcy Miller and Meghan Newman, co-chairs, are working on the details of the event. The Boys and Girls Club recently completed an addition to their building which will allow for more space and new activities.
 - 4/8/2024 Spring Book Fair
 - 5/4/2024 Gala at Hotel Zero in Danbury
 - The theme this year is Ciao Bella. Much more information to come.
 - 5/6/2024 Teacher Appreciation Week
 - 5/20/2024 Golf Outing
 - 5/27/2024 Memorial Day Parade

Q&A:

- A question was raised about **Halloween Parties** and what they entail. Meghan Newman, Room Parent Coordinator, explained that class parents will plan a party in the classroom. The parties are typically from 1-2pm and consist of some snacks and a craft or other activity. Class parents will send out an email before the event to request donations of food or paper goods for the party.
- A second question regarding **the purpose of the HSA and HSA Meetings** was also asked. The HSA enriches the school experience by providing events throughout the year. These events help to promote a cohesive community that also provides support and appreciation for the teachers and staff at SMS. The HSA also sponsors activities, such as the Gala and Golf Outing, which generate funds for improvements to the school. In addition, the HSA promotes communication between parents and staff and encourages parental involvement at school functions. HSA Meetings are a valuable source of information from Rachel Ambrosio and Amy Dowding, who both provide school updates and discuss any other pertinent information parents should know. The meetings also provide an opportunity to further explain new programs or technology. For example, last year, Jeanette Campo presented information regarding changes to the reading and writing

curriculum at the elementary level and allowed time for parents in attendance to ask questions. In the spring, middle school teachers provided a demonstration of the new View Boards that were purchased for the classrooms. Money from HSA events assisted in paying for these boards.

****Our next HSA Meeting will be held on Friday, November 3, 2023.****