

Darien High School Parents Association  
Meeting Minutes  
February 8, 2011

Co-Chairs Barbara Alter and Wanda Forlivo welcomed members and called the meeting to order. There were approximately 60 attendees.

Principal Report – Dan Haron

Principal Dan Haron explained that DHS is undergoing their decennial accreditation self study with NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) and that DHS has not had enough response to the parent survey. The short anonymous survey can be taken on the website [www.endicottresearchcenter.net](http://www.endicottresearchcenter.net). Please input the following survey code: P3135805.

Mr. Haron also mentioned the January DHSPA meeting when the proposed School Resource Officer (SRO) was discussed. He reminded parents to look at the DHS website to see the meeting video if they missed the meeting. Mr. Haron said he has spoken with faculty and has a meeting with students tomorrow. Once Mr. Haron has had a chance to get feedback from various groups, he will bring his findings to the Board of Education.

Mr. Haron thanked Donna Russo and all of the volunteers that helped to make the volunteer fair a success. Last Friday DHS had an extended lunch period and the volunteer fair had an unbelievable level of attendance. Mr. Haron reminded parents to check out the volunteer website and bulletin board by College and Career Center for volunteer opportunities.

Questions :

Q: How many schools with SRO's also have campus monitors? Do we need both?

Mr. Haron: The campus monitor and SRO would serve different roles in the school. There might be some overlap but they will serve different purposes and have different responsibilities. Susan Lattimer mentioned that the SRO funding would come out of Darien Police budget and not BOE budget.

Guidance Report – Paul Ribeiro

Paul announced that registration began yesterday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, and the students had a special schedule to allow them to go to every class. The first step is to get teacher recommendations for placement next year. Students will still have to meet with counselor to discuss schedule.

DHS was selected to participate in NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress). NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. 30 seniors were randomly selected to take an exam sometime next week. Letters have gone out so your student will know if they have been selected. The school does not ever see the results; the exam is used to compare the US to other countries.

CAPT tests for sophomore and juniors who have not met graduation requirements will start on March 7<sup>th</sup>. The remaining students will have shortened school days. On Thursday March 10<sup>th</sup>, the freshmen will be taking a practice CAPT.

Juniors should be scheduling their counselor meetings to begin planning for the next 1 ½ years and post DHS future.

Guidance is available to seniors if they need assistance contacting colleges they are waiting to hear from or if they need help with decisions.

Q: When do the students get the PSAT results?

A: The sophomores and juniors who sat for the PSAT in the fall were asked to stop by their guidance counselor for the PSAT results. If the student did not stop by, they were mailed home. Guidance is hoping to have the results posted on Naviance this week.

Q: Are mid-year grades automatically sent to schools the senior's have applied to.

A: Yes. Should be sent this week if they have already set up the request earlier

#### Co-Chair Report – Barbara Alter and Wanda Forlivo

Thank you to Brianna Schneider and Mary Flynn, our CDSP budget reps, for their hard work during the budget process. Brianna spoke last Thursday night on behalf of DHS and we really appreciate all of the time Brianna and Mary have put in during another very difficult budget year. We ask you today to email the BOE members and ask that they fund the additional guidance counselor and the technology expenditures for the high school. Recent DPN announcements include the BOE contact information.

We would like to thank Chrissie Osborn and Laura Wilcox and the nominating committee for doing a great job filling up our DHSPA slate for next year. There are only a few spots left open so we are in great shape for next year. Please look on the back page of the agenda for remaining open positions.

Thank you to all our parent volunteers that helped to make the Volunteer Fair a huge success. The Fair took place last Friday and was really well attended. Please follow up with your students to see if they found any interesting volunteer opportunities.

Thank you to all of the parents who took the time to answer the NEASC survey. There is still time to take the survey; your input is greatly appreciated. Please refer the back page of the agenda or last week's DPN's to get to the link to the survey.

A big thank you to Susan Lattimer, Carolyn Kyrtiz and Anne-Lise Brown for putting together this program today.

The DHSPA will be hosting the **END OF YEAR GRADUATION CELEBRATION for this year's seniors...** This year the DHSPA Graduation celebration for the Class of 2011 will be a beach party. This was the overwhelming favorite in a questionnaire that was sent to all seniors in December. It will take place on the afternoon BEFORE graduation from 2:00 - 4.30 pm. The afternoon will consist of a live DJ, raffle draws and a wide range of games. Invitation to follow once the final day of school has been determined but please bear this event in mind as you start your summer planning. We are planning to raffle prizes throughout the event so if anyone has any ideas for prizes or would like to make a donation please contact Jo-Ann Sawitsky, [jsawitsky@yahoo.com](mailto:jsawitsky@yahoo.com)

Parent Awareness is holding follow-up discussions about the film, The Race to Nowhere. For more information including dates, times and locations for the meetings are listed on the back of the agenda.

We would like to announce new positions that the DHSPA is adding to the slate. We will be voting on these positions and presenting the 2011-2012 slate at the March 8<sup>th</sup> DHSPA meeting.

NEW: Senior internship program - Two volunteers needed. Volunteers will be working with DHS English Teacher, Mrs. Gretchen Webster, coordinating Senior Internships.

NEW: Volunteer website coordinators. Two volunteers will be responsible for updating the volunteer website with volunteer opportunities for students.

#### Treasurer Report – Elizabeth Cortright

Our financials look good. Cash position is good. We have made more money than we expected and have spent a little more than we expected but most spending has been on appropriations to the school which is a good thing. Please submit any receipts that you may have.

#### Committee Reports

Student Life – Felicia Rubenstein announced that Community Council is planning a Student/Faculty Basketball game. Felicia also mentioned that Community Council is concerned about the trash in the cafeteria and would like the parents to remind their children to please pick up after themselves.

#### Program – Meaningful Summer Options for Teenagers and College Bound High Schoolers

Laura Rumbough from Tips on Trips and Camps was joined by Sail Caribbean, Visions Service Adventures, and Center for Creative Youth to discuss summer opportunities. Trip and camp opportunities range from community service, internships, language programs, exotic and adventure travel, college campus academic study programs.

For more information there is a Summer Opportunities Fair on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1-3:30 in DHS Cafeteria.

Q: How long are Vision programs and where are they located?

A: 3-4 weeks. Service programs take place in Athabasca, Alaska; Big Feet, Montana; Mississippi; British Virgin Islands; Dominican Republic; Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru.

Q: Is there any contact with home during the time away?

A: Sail Caribbean – once a week, parents can always contact program leaders.

Vision Service Adventures – once a week, parents can always contact program leaders.

Center for Creative Youth – cell phones allowed in dorm rooms at night.

Q: Is there a community service component to the Sail Caribbean programs?

A: Yes. There are 20-30 hours of community service which varies by trip. There are beach clean ups, work with local youth, work with marine life, coral reef watches.

For additional information you can visit the websites and look for Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) or talk to Laura Rumbough with Tip on Trips and Camps (203) 563-9964.

DHS Guidance Counselor, Joan Flaherty, discussed the summer option of students attaining a summer job. She mentioned that colleges like to see students work and be responsible. Students could also consider talking summer classes at NCC, Silvermine, UConn Stamford or NYC. Another option to consider is community service activities. Mrs. Flaherty also recommended that juniors should work on writing their college essay over the summer.

Andrea McDonough, DHS Volunteer Website coordinator, shared the website and suggested that parents navigate the website to give students some suggestions for volunteer opportunities. The website will soon include a google calendar that will highlight volunteer opportunities that are currently available in the community.