

FALL 2023

ISSUE 1

# GAZETTE

RIVERDALE KINGSBRIDGE ACADEMY

GREAT KICKOFF TO OUR  
EVENTS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

DID YOU KNOW  
ABOUT SOME OF RKA'S  
NEW STAFF?



READ ABOUT THE  
BEGINNINGS OF RKA

HOW SUCCESSFUL  
WERE OUR FALL  
SPORTS THIS YEAR?

HOT TAKES ON THE NEW PHONE  
POUCHES AND GYM CLASS

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# EVENTS



## 8th Graders Sail Around the Big Apple

By Oliver Henan

This Fall 8th-grade students embarked on their first field trip of the year, a boat trip that sailed around Manhattan known as Lions Circle. I spoke with two students who participated in the experience and who emphasized the importance of such field trips for future students.

The boat trip offered a fresh perspective on their surroundings, allowing them to sail past local points of interest and witness the natural beauty of New York City.

One student described the trip as "pretty cool." They continued, "I mean it was a little cold but I still think it was a good trip." Another student shared a similar sentiment, highlighting the value of experiences like this.

One complaint was that it was "a bit boring" and a little cold, but this can be improved for next year.

"I loved the boat trip because I was able to just relax," the student said. "We had the chance to explore interesting places and discover," said the student.

The trip left a lasting impact on the 8th-grade students. This underscores the importance of continuing such field trips in the future, providing students with opportunities to explore and learn outside of the classroom.

In conclusion, the boat trip was a prime example of the type of educational field trips that should be encouraged for the future. It blended adventure and learning, allowing students to gain a deeper appreciation for their city and the world beyond the classroom. These experiences serve as a reminder that education can be exciting and engaging when connected to real-world exploration.



# The Spookiest Wedding of the Year

By Jasmine Chaitkin

RKA hosted our own Halloween dance on Thursday, October 26 in the cafeteria with spooky decorations populating the space and energetic costumed-students dancing their hearts out.

Scarily appropriate yet spirited music corralled most, if not all, the students into dancing like no one was watching. Spanish music and Ice Spice had the crowd screaming and inviting others to dance with them.

A popular student at the dance was senior Alvin Ruiz who went as Red Hood (a Batman character), but I confused him for a Power Ranger. Two other costumes that stood out were seniors Melody Baez and Deanne Scott as Dr. Phil and Steve Harvey respectively. Melody stayed in character all night, giving advice to all who come into contact with her.

The faculty also came dressed in their Halloween best. Students were obsessed with Mr. Devery's pope costume, and Ms. Swartz and Mrs. Sussman got the crowd excited leading the Cotton-Eyed Joe dance.

Overall, it was a great dance with a great response from students who came. The 11th grade student body president, Jessica Gonzalez, said, "I am very happy with the outcome of the dance. I was excited to see the haunted wedding theme come to life. I'm very proud of the student government; we all worked so hard, and I am beyond thankful for them."

The dance would not have been the same without Jessica and Brigid Coffey's (sophomore vice president) suggestion for the haunted wedding theme.

The Halloween dance gave students a chance to step out of their comfort zone and let loose with their friends. We thank the student government for organizing this wonderful event.





# Seniors Chow Down in Hartsdale

By Rebecca Johnson

On November 13, 2023, the class of 2024 attended their first big senior event, the senior dinner, a tradition at RKA. Students ate Japanese hibachi at Banzai in Hartsdale, NY. Students and faculty shared their thoughts about the event.

Every year the graduating class experiences an abundance of things; one of those is the senior dinner. But what goes into planning it? The event has evolved from getting everyone in a room in a restaurant to experiencing hibachi. Venues, cost, attendance, and transportation are things that need to be considered. Mr. Edmond, the senior activities director, is the mind behind it all. Even with all the work he has to put into planning this, he has never regretted taking a class. "It's important that students get to go for the experience." For many seniors this is their first experience with hibachi.

Students who went had a lot of positive things to say about it. Emma Solis, a senior on the soccer team, said, "The senior dinner was fun. It was nice to see everyone together having a good time."

Some adults who went also shared their thoughts on the dinner. Ms Payne said, "I had a really good experience. Being new, I got to get to know more students and teachers outside of the ones I see daily. I wish more students would have gone." While the event was a success, it does not mean there aren't things that could be improved. A lot of people said that if the school provided transportation more students would have gone.

Similar to last year, RKA returned to Banzai hibachi and students loved it. Students could use their chocolate box money to pay for this trip. As long as future seniors want it, the event will continue.



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# THE RKARCHIVES

By Jessica Gonzalez & Issac Chen

November 18, 2023 marked 67 years since RKA's founding. Over the years, the home of the Tigers has gained its fame from its academic standards, wide range of extracurriculars, sports, diverse study body, and welcoming environment to all.

After surveying 10 students at random on their knowledge about RKA's history, the results showed that none of them knew the origins of our school.



## How It All Started

During the 1950s, Riverdalians fought the city in regards to the need for a new school. David A. Stein, a reporter for The Riverdale Press, was one of the many fighting for this cause. At the time in New York City, students would attend elementary school up until the 8th grade.

With Riverdale's population growth, PS. 24 became overcrowded; they needed a junior high school. The goal was to have a school to serve grades seven through nine. On June 30th, 1955, the land for our school was purchased, and construction began in 1956. In addition to our school, the city approved the construction for a school on Marble Hill, today known as Intech Academy.



## How We Got Our Name

Originally, our school was going to be named the Adrian van der Donck School. Van der Donck was a Dutch landowner whose lands extended north of Spuyten Duyvil Creek into Westchester. Parents found this name difficult to pronounce, so they settled on Junior High School 141.

As the years went on, JHS 141 flourished. Its population grew significantly. Students from around the Bronx enrolled in JHS 141.

Our school defines resilience and hard work. Riverdale parents fought hard from the start to get our school to where it is today. Since David A. Stein was a significant contributor to the founding of our school, when he passed away in 1982, JHS 141 was renamed David A. Stein Riverdale Junior High School 141.

## Becoming A High School

In 1997, parents fought to expand David A. Stein Riverdale Junior High School 141 into a high school. After a community dispute, the plan for a high school was approved in 1999 and was set to be ready by the 2000-2001 school year. In 2002, a new wing was added onto the building to provide more space for the additional high school students.

Today, RKA strives towards many more years of success, and being a home to many successful students and faculty.



# FALL SPORTS



## Girl's Soccer Victorious Season

By Naila Montoya

The RKA Girls Varsity Soccer team had a victorious 2023 season, as they went undefeated and only lost in the semifinals of the playoffs. The girls stayed persistent all season practicing and conquering the field.

Emma Solis, a captain on the team said, “The highlight of this season was definitely striving to become the best team in the division with a new coach. It was a big change for the team, and we had to come together to bring back the bond we have always shared with each other.”

Samantha Solis, another captain, said, “The highlight of the season was in the playoffs during Quarterfinals. The team really came together to pull out a victorious game.”

The season felt short due to numerous forfeits from other teams in the league.

Overall, the girls were 5th in the city. They brought home the title of PSAL Semifinalists for the second year in a row.

## Girl's Volleyball Bump Their Way to Playoffs

By Naila Montoya

The RKA Girls Varsity Volleyball team has been killing it on the court. They ended with a record of 9-1 for the 2023-2024 season and made it as far as the second round of the playoffs.

Scarlisha Fernandez, a senior, said, “The highlight of this season was definitely senior night. It was filled with memories I will never forget, as this was my last year playing for the team.”

Coach Purdy said, “Going to Brooklyn in the first round of playoffs was definitely the highlight of the season. We had to go to their home court [as] the lower [seed] in that round, which intimidated us at first. But as the game went on, [our] defense and communication became better, leading to our victory.”

The season ended during the second round of playoffs against Francis Lewis.





## The Boys Fight to the End

By Emma Solis

The RKA Boys Varsity Soccer team had an incredible season this year. They ended their season as division champions with 11 wins and only 1 loss. The team's hard work paid off and led them back to the playoffs for a second season in a row.

Sadly on November 3, 2023, at Van Cortlandt Stadium, the season ended with a 2-0 loss in the quarter finals against East Side Community.

Rafael Esnard, a captain of the team, shared a few words about his favorite moments of the season. "I think my favorite highlight from this season was our win in the round of 16 in the playoffs. We all played really well, Leo had a hat trick, and the crowd's support was awesome. It was a great reminder that we were still one of the best teams in our division, despite how young we were." said Rafael Esnard.

Another one of the captains, Leonardo Kaplan, said, "My favorite highlight was how we were able to improve individually and collectively. After our loss early in the season, we were able to show resilience by putting in the work at practice. We got the 2nd seed in the city. We did lose to a tough team, but we fought until the end and that's what our team is all about. We never gave up and we always believed that we had a chance to win." said Leonardo Kaplan.

Both Rafael and Leo are very proud of how much the team has accomplished and improved this season. They have great confidence for next season and wish the team the best of luck. The RKA boy's varsity team will continue to dominate the competition with the remaining players after the seniors graduate.



## RKA Girls *Run* the World

By Suzana Smajlaj

A herd of senior boys graduated last year, leaving the boys team in shambles. Luckily the girls team stepped up and recruited many new amazing runners. The girls team has recruited numerous girls from all across the high school grades.

Captain Fay Mendez says, "I really enjoyed this cross country season. I got to see our team grow and succeed. I love being one of the captains because I get to motivate the girls and watch them improve. I'm thankful for all of the new friendships I've made this cross country season and I will cherish the memories as well.

In the city championship, the girls team landed 4th place behind our rivals Dewitt Clinton. This amazing

achievement should not go unnoticed. The RKA girls Cross Country is one of the strongest teams in the Bronx.

Junior Casey Gjini told us "I had so much fun in cross country this season, and I loved working with my teammates. We had our ups and downs but we worked so hard this season and I'm really happy with how we ended it. I can't wait to see our team continue to grow and improve."

Being on the cross country team is incredible because RKA is such a great community. It's a place to nurture new and existing connections, create memories, maintain physical fitness, form cohesive teams, maintain ties to the school, and reconnect with the natural world.

# OUR NEW STAFF

## RKA Adds a Voice for Students With IEPs

By: Liora Handwerger

For the 2023-2024 school year, RKA hired a new college coach and guidance counselor named Melissa Payne. Ms. Payne has years of experience working in different schools with kids from various backgrounds. Furthermore, she has connections with many admissions representatives from prestigious schools.

Ms. Payne is excited to embrace the change from her last school to this one. “There’s more stability and structure compared to where I was. The academic rigor is more prominent here, so the reputation of the school carries throughout,” she said. Ms. Payne recognizes RKA’s reputation as a school that holds its students to a higher standard. She plans to encourage more RKA students to apply to top schools that offer aid for diligent students as well as applying to CUNYs and SUNYs. “I want to bring more awareness of liberal arts schools that give really substantial amounts of money, such as Bowdoin College and Middlebury College. It’s important to have a variety of schools.”



Ms. Payne

Ms. Payne wants to let students know that they are supported at RKA; that they should feel like there are many people they can trust. “I also feel like there’s a stigma attached to kids with IEPs,” she said. Ms. Payne wants to decrease the negative stereotypes around kids with IEPs (individualized education plans). She wants the staff as well as students here at RKA to view IEPs as something that can help offer emotional support, which is a more positive outlook.

Ms. Payne is an extremely well-educated and empathetic individual. She aids many students with college and career readiness, as well as listens to personal troubles and fears that they may potentially have about life and academics. She has already contributed so much to this school, and she has only been here for a few months! Many of the students and staff here at RKA, including myself, find ourselves asking, “What would we do without her?”



## ***RKA Adds a Math Teacher***

By: Jad Assaily

Mr. Tremblay is a new math teacher here at RKA. This is his first year joining our school, so I sat down with him to help the school community get to know him.

The first thing I learned is what attracted him to RKA. He told me the diversity and the wide range of extracurricular activities interested him in our school.

Mr. Tremblay has taught in three other schools before, all of which were in Queens. He said that the other schools he worked in were very competitive and that he preferred how RKA was unlike that.

Mr. Tremblay teaches high school math. He said RKA compares well to other schools he's taught in, but that RKA was more inviting and diverse.

He concluded by saying that RKA caters better to his personal teaching style than other schools he's taught in.



**Mr. Tremblay**

## **A Science Teacher Returns**

By: Koren Carter



**Ms. Sussan**

RKA welcomed a new middle and high school teacher named Ms. Sussan this year. Ms. Sussan is a veteran tiger returning to our school. She previously was a professor of Psychology but needed more student interactions.

Ms. Sussan taught for 7 years at RKA from 2005-2012 and left to teach as a college professor in Intro, Developmental, Cognitive and Educational Psychology at Barnard College until last year when she returned to RKA; she has taught for over 15 years.

There was a need for teaching in Ms. Sussan because of a great biology teacher she had when she was a student herself. Although, at the moment Ms. Sussan doesn't teach biology, she is teaching living environment which is in the same field as biology.

Ms. Sussan has been away from teaching at a high school or middle school for over a decade and has to acclimate to many new things. Ms. Sussan felt she needed a career shift because she felt disconnected from students and wanted to reconnect with them. Ms. Sussan stated, "I think it's kinda cool [to be back in a public school], because I'm not jaded and have a fresh perspective."

Ms. Sussan misses being a professor and the relaxation it afforded her but is ready to get back in the swing of things, gain new pieces of knowledge, and build new connections in her return to RKA. So far it has been three months back at RKA for her, and Ms. Sussan has already made new relationships and created a comfortable learning environment for her new students.

# STUDENT OPINIONS

## Athletes vs. Gym Class

By Rebekah Mendez

In my opinion, New York State should drop the requirement that student athletes should have to take a gym class, since these athletes complete their physical education at practices after school. Students should have to meet a certain requirement for the number of practices they go to and show commitment to the team in order to not have to take a gym class. Therefore, ineligible players would not be given this privilege.

Every gym period students are graded on participation. Gym teachers expect students to try hard in the class, which can be exhausting. For example, the pacer test is something students are required to do, which is draining and provides no benefit to our education. Oftentimes, the sports played in gym overlap with the in-season sports and this creates a lot of repetition and lack of motivation.

Student athletes go to practice straight after school which decreases their time for homework, eating and sleeping at a reasonable time. By removing gym, schools could implement a study hall where student athletes complete class work or homework.

Athletes that still want gym can choose to take it, but it should not be a requirement from New York State. Another alternative could be to decrease the number of years an athlete should have to take gym. For instance, athletes could be required to only take 2 years of gym.

By not forcing student athletes to participate in gym, gym classes could benefit. Their class size would be shrink, allowing them to have greater control over their classes. They could also have more one-on-one time with students and could implement a greater variety of sports.



# RKA'S *NEW* PHONE POLICY

## The Controversy

By: Michael Lynch

Entering the building for the 23-24' school year students face duct taped pouches on the edge of their desks. The duct tape has been slowly disintegrated from the top of the desk.

As a junior, the last thing I expected for the school to come up with was a way to actually cease phone usage. In previous years, all that was used to control the phone usage was the phrase, "At RKA it's off and away."

Before the start of the 23-24' school year, Ms. O'Mara surveyed our teachers asking them how they think the phone situation should be handled and their thoughts on the pouches. Our teachers loved the idea, suggesting minor tweaks to it as well.

The goal of the phone policy is to ease distractions in our classrooms, but how do students feel?

Senior class vice president, Jenalyn Infante, anticipated that students would try to use their phones, regardless of the policy. In some learning spaces, the policy isn't regulated. Moreover, the policy has somewhat done its job, reducing distractions in the learning environments. Even though the policy has been established, still some students refuse to follow it.

Teachers naturally have a different opinion. Ms. Hope, an English and Literature teacher, loves the phone policy. She said, "Although the phones could be used for academic purposes, it's just a way to distract everybody as a whole."

The phone policy topic is a hit or miss topic throughout the school.

# EXPANDING NHS

By: Lismari Castillo

RKA school offers students many opportunities to enhance our lives, not only academically but also socially. National Honor Society is a program that gives students the opportunity to participate in community service projects, give back to the less fortunate, and open our eyes to the reality of the lives of those who are struggling.

National Honor Society hosts a multitude of events: some for entertainment, service, or education. However, it could be argued that the most important aspect of the club is the service opportunities.

Midnight Run, The Friendly Fridge, Pajama Drive, The Pat Magrath Run are some of the events RKA that the National Honors Society has hosted in the past or will host in the future in order to foster a sense of community, welcomeness, and assistance to those who are less fortunate in our school community.

As students of the National Honor Society, we are required to participate in one of these events to be inducted into the society and earn the right to wear the ribbon at graduation.

On the other hand, these events, while being voluntary, help us grow as individuals. Whether it is feeding the homeless, offering food and toys to the less fortunate, or holding fundraisers for those who have passed, we are bettering our community, making ourselves and the people around us better for the experience.

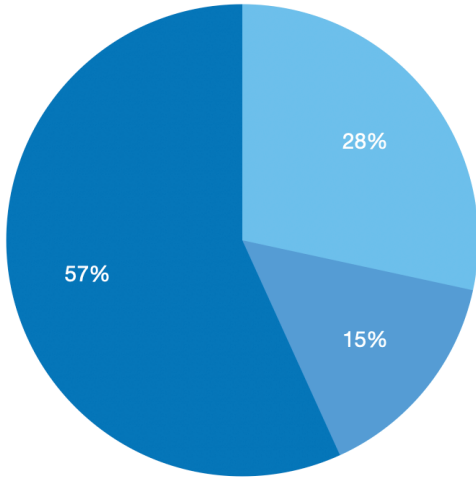


# RKA BY THE NUMBERS

By: Joshua Pressanl & Mutmaneh Algazali

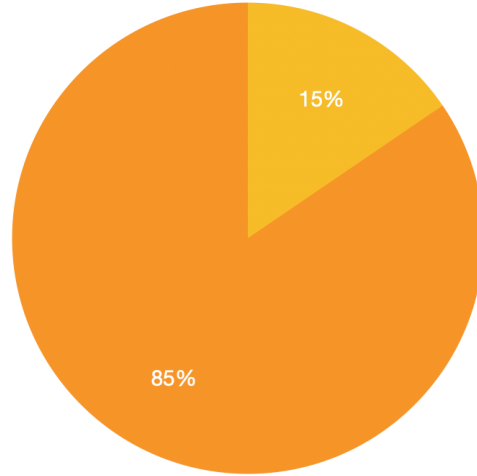
Do you prefer digital or physical assignments?

● Digital ● Physical ● Depends



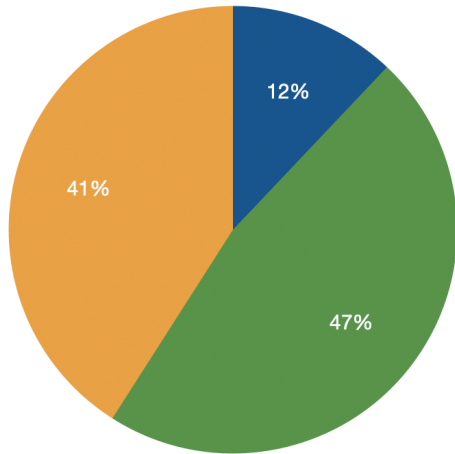
Do you prefer using a iPad or Laptop for school work?

● iPad ● Laptop

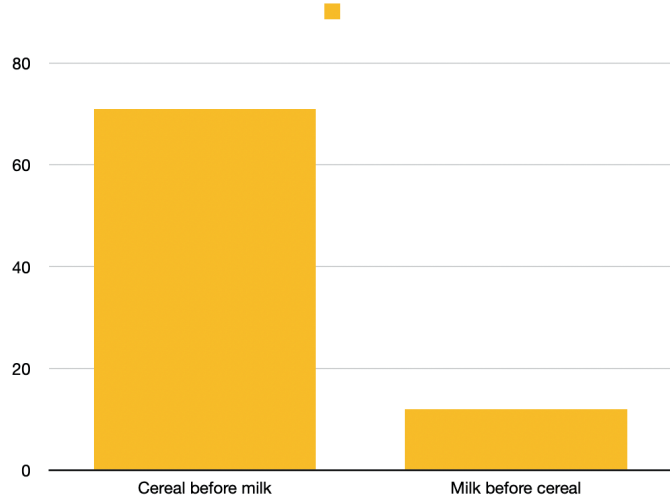


Pineapple on pizza?

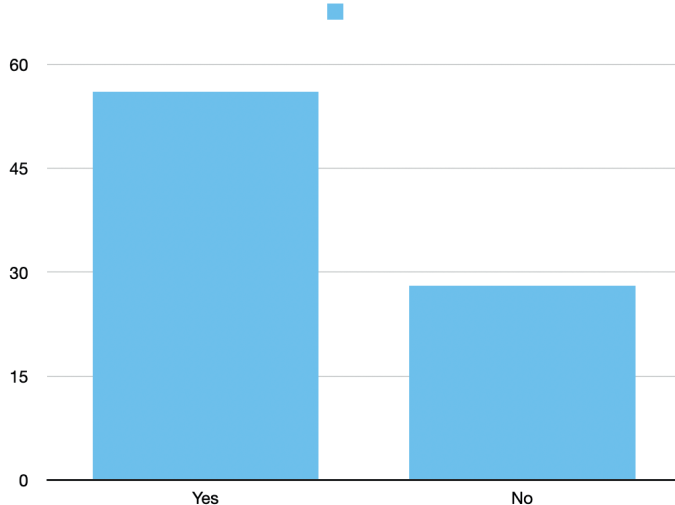
● Yes, it's the best thing ever! ● NOOO, that should be a crime  
● If it's in front of me, I will eat it



Cereal before milk or milk before cereal?



Are you part of a club?



## MAJORITY

OF RKA STUDENTS PREFER/ARE..

- Both physical and digital assignments
- Using a laptop over an iPad
- No pineapples on pizza
- Cereal before milk
- Apart of a club

# Advice From A Senior

By Jenalyn Infante

## Dear struggling student,

I know school can be very challenging and stressful. You are worrying about having fun, making friends, fitting in, and school work all at the same time. It can be difficult to manage these things along with studying and trying to be a successful student. The transition isn't always easy, but try to reach out for help! Go for tutoring, talk to your teachers during lunch or after school, and don't be shy to ask questions in class. To stay organized at home, keep a planner, learn how to manage your time, schedule yourself, and most importantly, **DON'T PROCRASTINATE!**



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## Dear Lost In Love,

High school relationships are completely normal, but things happen. Relationships don't always work out. Here are some things I have learned about relationships.

- Failure to communicate

While having personal time to yourself is important, it is also important to acknowledge your partner and to communicate with them. If you're busy or need some alone time, this should be communicated to your partner out of respect for them.

- Controlling tendencies

While stating an opinion is completely acceptable, if your partner tries to control you when you go out, what you wear, or stalks your every move, those are huge red flags. These controlling tendencies may seem innocent at first, even cute from that person you've been eyeing for months. But this behavior can become toxic and draining. Things can escalate quickly once you tell your partner "no" after complying with them so many times. So, be very cautious and look out for these signs, and remember when you're uncomfortable about something say something.





# RKA ART

## Showcase

By: Jenalyn Infante



Gischellie G.



Emira M.

## MS & HS



Milo P.



Truman W.