

# David A. Stein Riverdale Kingsbridge Academy MS/HS 141 Principal's Newsletter



## A Message from the Principal

Dear RKA Community,

Spring parent/teacher conferences went well, and we were pleased to see so many of our parents and students in the school in the afternoon and evening. Parents were given the opportunity to pick up their Department of Education Learning Environment Surveys (the green envelope!) on the day. Those that were not picked up at conferences were distributed to students in their homerooms. Please make sure to ask your child for the survey and fill it out on paper or online, using the code provided. All surveys are anonymous, and are processed centrally. The data that's yielded by these surveys back to the school helps inform and influence future decisions and policy-making. We appreciate your taking just a few minutes out of your day to complete it. The deadline is Friday, April 1st.

Also in April, middle school students will

take the NYS ELA and math exams. There have been significant changes to this year's exam. Specifically, there are slightly fewer questions and the tests will not have a time limit for students as long as they are working productively. The New York State Department of Education has made these changes in response to educator and parent feedback. Teachers have begun test sophistication units with students and will be discussing this transition to untimed testing with the students.

RKA is also working as a school to plan for this change in logistics which will allow students the best possible conditions for success on the exams. Of course, students with testing accommodations listed in their IEPs will have those accommodations provided to them. We do expect that student lunch periods will need to be rearranged for the entire school on those testing days. High school students will be eating lunch earlier and middle school students will be

eating lunch slightly later to allow for a more continuous testing period. This means more than ever it is critical that students eat a healthy, nutritious and substantial breakfast. Our cafeteria will be open at 7:45 AM, just as it is every day, to provide free breakfast for all students.

I would also like to draw the attention of 9th-11th grade parents to our website and specifically, our [Course Guide](#). Students have begun to make their course selections for next year and are now meeting with counselors. Students looking for more rigorous college credit bearing courses should look at our Dual Enrollment model through our partnership with the College of Mount St. Vincent.

Sincerely,  
*Lori O'Mara*

## College Trips

Our juniors have recently gone on two day trips to visit college campuses as they kick into high gear in the college application process. In February, students visited the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and Rowan State in Glassboro, New Jersey. Just last week they had a big trip to SUNY Delhi and Binghamton University. Our freshmen and sophomores will also be offered the chance to visit more local college campuses in the near future. These trips are made possible with the help of State Senator Jeffrey Klein's generous BOOST grant--thanks, Senator!



11th graders tour the University of Pennsylvania

## We've Got Talent

The RCC production of "We've Got Talent" was a huge success! Over twenty talented students performed, after preparing for weeks under the tutelage of Mr. Flanagan and Ms. Morales. We'd like to thank everyone who turned out on a Saturday afternoon--students, parents, and staff members alike--to cheer them on. Bravo!



## Upcoming Dates

11th Grade College Kick Off Parent Meeting  
3/21, 6:30 PM Aud

POS begins  
3/22

School Closed-- 3/25

MS Luau Dance  
3/31, 5-8 PM

PA Meeting  
4/4, 7:00 PM Library

NYS ELA Exam  
Grades 6-8  
4/5, 4/6, 4/7

NYS Math Exam  
Grades 6-8  
4/13, 4/14, 4/15

HS Foreign Language Awards  
4/19, 8:30 AM, Aud

Are you Smarter than a 6th Grader?  
4/20, 8:30 AM, Aud

Spring Recess  
4/25-29, no school

\*\*\*Save the Date--  
Student Led Conferences  
Thursday,  
May 19, 2016

## Parent Committees

I am pleased to be working closely again this year with our Parents' Association leaders. Please join their efforts by attending their general PA meetings throughout the year (the first Monday evening of most months--see your family calendar) and consider joining the PA Executive Board, an important parent voice RKA. [RKADonate@gmail.com](mailto:RKADonate@gmail.com).

**Parents are involved in many committees at RKA.** Please see below each committee's function, and general meeting times. Please feel free to reach out to me, or to the parents on the committee to offer input for the next regularly-scheduled meeting.

**Safety Committee** - Meets the first Wednesday morning of each month. This is a joint faculty-parent committee that addresses matters of safety in the school. Angela Rodriguez, Amy Carr, and Elaine Ellison serve on the committee. The committee asks you to please avoid double and triple parking around the school, especially at arrival and dismissal times

**School Leadership Team** - Meets the third Wednesday afternoon of each month. This joint committee of administration/parents/faculty/staff/students considers long-term planning for the school, which includes researching and authoring the Comprehensive Education Plan. Members on this committee are Aida Cintron, Tracy Shelton, Claire Johnson-Hurry, Kathy Fadda, and Joanne Jurcic.

**Parents' Partnership** - Parent leaders, selected through the PA, meet with me monthly to address day-to-day issues.

No School  
March 25  
April 25-29

## SAT Pilot

Recently on SAT Day, we were so impressed with our RKA juniors! 139 students showed up early and well-rested for the exam. They had their materials and calculators and followed all of our instructions graciously and completely.

The SAT School Day operation is still a pilot program not available in most NYC high schools. Because of this, the DOE Office of Assessment sent a representative here to observe the administration of the test. He was extremely impressed with our school which is attributed as much to the staff as the students. He called our administration a "model administration of best practices." It was very nice to hear after months of prepping the school, the staff, the parents and the students. We think you should be proud of your children. They really worked hard.



## Parent Engagement Events



## POS Machines

You may have noticed that RKA teachers have been working very hard to include parents into more and more activities in the school. We hope that by inviting parents into share their own expertise or share in the accomplishments of their children, we are making RKA a more inviting place and developing relationships with each of our families. So far this year, they have designed and coordinated an International Feast, Book Club, and a Career Panel.

We also recently had our first-ever High School Social Studies Awards in March. Our distinguished Social Studies department of Mr. Flanagan, Mr. Sforza, Mr. Cushing, Mr. McGrath, and Mr. Bradshaw selected three students from each of their classes, who they felt personified the qualities of model students. Students who received awards were efficient in completing and handing in their homework, writing thoughtful essays, contributing to the discussion in the classroom, and working hard to succeed. Parents were invited, and we were very pleased at the turnout, especially for a Tuesday afternoon!

**Are You Smarter Than a Sixth Grader?** Want to find out? If you as a parent, or you as an upper-grade student would like to test your wits in math, literature, science, history, and RKA trivia(!), we would love to have you! If you would like to be a part of the audience, we'd love to have you, too! Contact ELA teacher Mr. LePetit either to volunteer to play, or to let us know if you would like watch (so we can be sure to have enough refreshments). [MLePetit@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:MLePetit@schools.nyc.gov). The fun takes place on Wednesday, April 20th from 8:30 - 10:00 AM. Hope to see you!



Senior Gary Cruger receives his award from Mr. Flanagan.

HS Foreign Language Awards are scheduled for April 19; invites will be distributed shortly.

On March 22nd, RKA will launch use of a new Point-of-Service (POS) system in the RKA cafeteria. Letters have been mailed home to the family of each student with a unique 6-digit PIN number that the student will use to receive school meals. Parents will now have the opportunity to put money into their child's account via the website "MySchoolBucks.com" using credit cards, debit cards, or e-checks. The letter (and email, which will be re-sent) will give complete information on how to create an account and log in. We hope and expect this new system--which is currently being rolled out in public schools across the city--will make paying for meals easier and more convenient for parents, and make operations run even more smoothly when we serve our students their meals. If you have any questions, please contact [JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:JPrince4@schools.nyc.gov).

