

# Ridge High School

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

I recently made a decision to cancel a Pep Rally as a result of several disruptions by students – mostly seniors.

Each year a spirit week provided by the Student Government and administration occurs during homecoming week with different themes provided for each day. This year the themes included” twins” day, favorite college apparel day and favorite sports team apparel day. Spirit week concludes on Friday with classes wearing their designated colors and a Pep Rally is held at the end of the day.

The senior class leadership had decided that they would provide for their own “alternative” spirit week with themes and activities certainly not approved by the student government or the administration. These themes included, “Business Dress” Monday, “Tennis” Tuesday, “Wet” Wednesday and “Trailer Trash” Thursday. I find the latter the most disturbing.

Each day Monday through Wednesday included a disruption as they provided for a congregation in the atrium by a large group of students, once again, mostly seniors. Monday was a “Business meeting” where the students dressed in their business attire gathered in the atrium. Though disruptive, the students were quickly dispersed by administration. I had learned the themes of the other days at this point and some further disruptive plans by the students.

Tennis Tuesday would include racquets and tennis balls along with a “match” in the atrium during the day. Students were met at the door and tennis racquets and balls were confiscated. The disruption would come in the form of stretching exercises in the atrium that took a little longer to break up. This caused many students to be late for class and significantly disrupted instruction.

Wet Wednesday had huge potential for disruption and my fears were realized when more than one hundred seniors congregated in the atrium and participated in what became a very dangerous situation involving the squirting of water. Administrators engaged the students but were unable to gain control quickly. Students who witnessed this display agreed that they had crossed the line.

On Monday, I discovered the themes and activities planned by the seniors, I quickly met with the student government officers and communicated to them that these disruptive

activities would not be tolerated. I asked for their help in tamping these plans to not include the atrium gatherings. I wanted to balance the spirit of the senior class with the needs of the school. I strongly voiced my disapproval of “Trailer Trash” Thursday.

During the senior class picture I took the opportunity to speak with the entire senior class warning them that these disruptions would not be tolerated and that they should subscribe to the original spirit week activities. The senior class advisors spoke with the senior class officers to further emphasize that these disruptions should not occur. Following the Tuesday disruption the administrative staff spoke with many informal leaders of the senior class to express concerns over the day’s disruption but also to forewarn them that “Wet” Wednesday had potential for a larger and more dangerous disruption.

On Wednesday morning administrators met students at the door in an effort to confiscate nuisance items and to direct students to conform to the dress code as many students were dressed inappropriately for school. Once again a warning was given – this time with much more assertiveness.

Wednesday’s display was extremely dangerous and disruptive. The mob mentality that began with the seniors had spread to underclassmen that refused to move when instructed by administration and staff.

I immediately met with my administrative staff and the decision to cancel the Pep Rally was made.

It is extremely important that I trust the students to behave properly when allowing activities such as a Pep Rally to be held as the potential for issues to arise are much greater when students (almost 1800 of them) congregate in numbers. Many schools have eliminated these activities all together due to the lack of trust in the student body. RHS no longer allows for a “Powder puff” football game due to past poor behavior by the participants.

I believe that the administration and staff at RHS did everything reasonable to dissuade the disruptive activities this week. It is also my belief that the students feel that a line was crossed and that consequences need to be enforced. A lack of trust and a need for consequences are the two factors considered in canceling the Pep Rally.

It is unfortunate that this decision affects all students but I feel that a clear message needs to be sent that this type of behavior will not be tolerated.

It is my hope that this is a lesson learned.

Sincerely,