

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL  
GLENBROOK NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

To: Dr. Mike Riggle

From: Paul Pryma

Re: Repurposing Aquianas Stipend Funding

Date: August 30, 2012

Attached is a letter from Dr. Tarjan, Assistant Principal for Student Activities, requesting the repurposing of the differential responsibility funding designated for the Swim Show Director and Assistant Director to further support the Variety Show which has grown substantially over the last few years. Discretionary monies from the building budget have been allocated for the Variety Show, but Dr. Tarjan wants to activate these resources to support further growth in the Student Activities Program as he articulates in the attached. I fully support the repurposing of these funds. If you have questions, please call upon me.

PP:rp



# Glenbrook North High School

## Student Activities

2300 Shermer Rd., Northbrook, IL 60062-6700 • Phone: 847-509-2671 • Fax 847-509-2411

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August 30, 2012

Dear Mr. Pryma,

As you know after years of participation decline, Aquianas was eliminated last year. I ask that we repurpose the funding comprised of the Aquianas stipends that are currently on the differential scale listed as Swim Show Director and Assistant Director. My hope is to repurpose those stipends to help support the staffing of our Variety Show (mirroring the way GBS uses these stipends). By making this shift, we free up the equivalent funds in our discretionary account currently used for Variety Show stipends. Repurposing this money would afford us the opportunity to compensate sponsors of existing clubs who have volunteered their service for 2+ years without a stipend, as well as strengthen some extra-curricular activity areas that continue to grow as we increase student participation.

Repurposing Aquianas stipends will affect numerous students as we continue to grow in Student Activities. Our Variety Show continues to attract more participants, while the clubs that continue to develop are thriving with 30 plus students. In addition, we have found new ways to use the Drama Room for small productions giving more opportunities for students interested in performance and Individual Events to develop and grow. Due to reductions in the building budgets, it has been difficult to increase discretionary monies. This repurposing will allow the continual growth in student engagement through activities.

Thank you for reviewing this request. I have attached letters from this past fall that explain the decline of the Aquianas Club. If there are any questions that I could answer please ask.

Sincerely,

Michael Tarjan, Ed.D  
Assistant Principal for Student Activities



# Glenbrook North High School-Student Activities

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September 8, 2011

Mr. Pryma,

I am writing this letter to help clarify the conversations we have had leading up to the decision to cut the Aquianas program at Glenbrook North.

My knowledge of Aquianas and the rich tradition that brought it over 50 years of performance in our pool comes from some of our alum as well as staff members. I'd like to highlight the history on how Aquianas operated:

- In the 70's, Aquianas would attract 75-100 students on a regular basis and the program would keep approximately 50 in the program.
- In the late 80's and 90's the numbers stayed strong but ranged more around 50-75 for auditions.
- During those years, rehearsals began in September and ran twice a week for a total of 4-5 hrs per week up through December. The proceeding months up to the shows in April, practices ran twice a week totaling 10 hrs. per week.

Over the last several years Aquianas has had a major decline:

- We start with apx. 20 students interested and end up with 12-15 students (2006-2011).
- In 2007-2008 we cancelled the show because of a lack of commitment and numbers
- 2008-2009 we shortened practices, as well as the season, to 1-2 practices per week totaling 3-4 hrs from September to December and only had one night for a show
- Because of numbers our shows over the last three to five years are apx. 20-40 min. long
- A few years back some of our alum began a YMCA program hoping to help rejuvenate Aquianas. Approximately 8 sixth and seventh graders participate.

Throughout the last 5-6 years I have had multiple conversations with the different coaches and Aquianas Alum concerning the lack of numbers and commitment of the program. We have tried several different ways to recruit and maintain the numbers (YMCA feeder, shortened season, alum reach out). I tremendously respect the 50+ year-old tradition of Aquianas, but feel that the Aquianas of today does not reflect the spirited thriving program it was years ago. Our current salary schedule calls for a Head and Assistant Coach to max out their pay at \$15,365. In a time of money saving, I do not feel we can justify spending that money on such a small program.

Respectfully,

Michael Tarjan, Ed.D  
Assistant Principal



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September 13, 2011

Mr. Pryma,

As a follow up to the previous letter I wrote, I have continued to spend some time talking with students and staff regarding Aquianas. In efforts to clarify misunderstandings of the decision to cancel Aquianas I thought these conversations would be helpful.

Over the summer, when the decision was made, I made an effort to reach out to the students through their coaches as well as one of the student leaders (Ellen Dempsey, who I later found out was not in town). My hope was to meet with the students so I could explain the decision. After speaking with the current coaches, they explained that they had reached out to every returning Aquianas member and there seemed to be an understanding and the meeting I had in mind was not needed. The students were disappointed but seemed to understand.

Upon the return to school, we unfortunately lost the life of the original Aquianas sponsor and at the same time, I began receiving a few phone calls (2) and heard rumblings amongst the senior students involved in the program. I recently met with four seniors (Erin Helgeland, Ellen Dempsey, Kelsey Hasmonck, and Eleanor Nolan). The meeting was very helpful. The students got a better understanding of the financial reasons we dropped the program, as well as the understanding of diminishing participation numbers. They reassured me that the conversations I have been having twice a year (sometimes more) over the past 5-6 years with the coaches in regard to the decline in student participation and the existence of the club had been relayed to them and they understood that there was a concern. The flexibility of the program and its time commitment was also explained to me from their perspective. It became more obvious to me that the commitment on the students part has changed more and more each year. For example, one of the students explained that students were missing Aquinas rehearsals during tech week in order to participate in other activities and it made it difficult for Aquianas. They also talked about the scheduling of practices. They tried to be more flexible and work around people's schedules, but even then, not all students showed up every practice.

My conversation with the students really made me see that our decision is the right decision. We have struggled for years to get a commitment from students and even with our flexibility we still lack numbers. We hold a spot in the pool for 8-15 students and they don't all show up when they are asked to be there. In my conversation with the students, I expressed my concern as these types of conversations arose.

After I met with the students, I followed up with last years' assistant coach Lilian Gomez. She confirmed the attendance inconsistencies that the students had mentioned and reaffirmed that she was part of conversations with the students throughout last school year concerning participation numbers. When looking at the history of Aquianas we both agreed that the expectations, time commitment, and participation is no where near that of the past nor is it where it needs to be to continue under the agreed upon structure set forth by the GEA contract.

We currently have a small number of boisterous students (4) that are concerned about the future of Aquianas. Of the four that I met with, all of them are involved in at least two other activities at GBN. I am very confident they will have a great year being involved during their senior year without the performance of Aquianas. My suggestion for the other students is to think about possibly joining with the small program at the YMCA to help further develop that program within the community (similar to the ice skating program).

Respectfully,

Michael Tarjan, Ed.D  
Assistant Principal



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September 27, 2011

Mr. Pryma,

As a follow up to the Aquianas program situation, I'd like to inform you of what has transpired over the past week or two.

Yesterday, I put closure to the program as I spoke to the senior leaders in Aquianas. I explained to them that we for sure will no longer support the program. I was happy to know that the kids who seemed most concerned about the situation all had some connection with our school through other clubs or organizations. They also understood why Aquianas no longer could continue. With that being said, I directed them to work with Frank Lenardi from the YMCA if they were interested in continuing with synchronized swimming. In conversations with him, he has agreed to do his best to find a fit for those girls still interested in synchronized swimming. The YMCA's current program does not cater to high school students, but more to the 7-10 junior high students that are currently in the program. He has spoken with the coaches and said they will do their best to accommodate high school kids if need be. As another option, Frank suggested the YMCA in Des Plaines.

I have also followed up with Mrs. Schwandner. She seems to have a better understanding now of why we were bringing closure to the Aquianas program. She also was appreciative that we have reached out to the YMCA to try to keep our kids involved with synchronized swimming if they still wish to do so. I also offered to work with her freshman that is thriving in swimming. I offered to help get her involved in another activity to help connect her more to the school. I gave the same offering for her sixth grader when she arrives in a few years.

Respectfully,

Michael Tarjan, Ed.D  
Assistant Principal