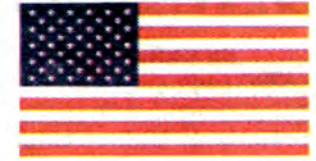


riverdale **REVIEW**.



Volume XIV • Number 47 • Sept. 27 - Oct. 3, 2007

Quack principal waddles back into controversy

By **CANDICE M. GIOVE**

Some students at the Bronx High School of Science stuck handmade "quack" stickers on their shirts. Others adhered the black-lettered message on poles near the school. Some slapped them onto the pages of library books.

But they couldn't wear them for long. Teachers and deans at the school confiscated them or demanded that students donning the handmade "quack" stickers peel them from their T-shirts. Only remnants remained of the stickers slapped on poles. It's unclear what happened to the library books.

The word "quack" at the prestigious school might be akin to cursing at the top of your lungs in the hallway, or some other form of insult. It refers to the "No Quack" campaign created by the Committee for a Better Bronx Science in 2005 that criticized Principal Valerie Reidy



JUST DUCKY - Valerie Reidy

for attaching a "Dr." prefix to her name, though she received only an honorary degree from her alma mater, The College of Mount Saint Vincent. That cam-

paign also called to question her policies and the environment she created at the school.

On September 21, a group of seniors revived the campaign during "Freshman Friday," a tradition at the school where seniors invent things to do for the day. A group of seniors wanted the underclassmen to understand and pass along the no quack campaign.

"As seniors we all decided to bring back the quack theory which happened our freshman year," said Chelsea Crowe, 17.

"We wanted to bring it back because we wanted to keep the younger generation informed so that it wouldn't die," she said.

The students crafted various messages, most with the word "quack," and hand-lettered them with black marker on plain label sheets. They passed them out to freshman and others to wear.

Outside of the school on a recent afternoon, many students discussed the campaign, and all but one chose to remain anonymous,

fearing that any attribution could lead to punishment or a less-than-stellar college recommendation.

"These are mine," one girl offered. The phrases "Do you wanna duck?," "Does it Quack?" and "of course she Quacks" were written on label sheets.

"We also had stickers that said, 'I've never seen Reidy's face,' because she doesn't put herself out there. In the beginning of the year she'll give you a speech, she'll tell you all that you need to do, but she'll never actually follow through," one girl said.

While the seniors flooded the student body with stickers, some underclassmen allegedly were questioned regarding the tags, according to senior students.

One student said that she was happy to pass the meaning of the no quack campaign to the new students who were not around during its creation. The campaign created so much animosity between Reidy and Dr. Bob Drake, a chemistry teacher with over 30

years of teaching experience who passed out "No Quack" flyers, which led to his firing.

"It was our freshman year, so no one really knew about it," the student explained. "It wasn't a joke. We're serious. We really believe in it and we should be allowed to make stickers that say that."

In secret the students plan to reprint "No Quack" flyers handed out in 2005 by Dr. Drake.

They said that since the firing incident with the well-liked teacher, things at the school became really bad. "She realized that people were figuring her out, that she wasn't the real thing," one student offered.

Some students also said that the no quack campaign and the Dr. Drake firing left many of their teachers too intimidated to speak up.

"Since Dr. Drake, the teachers really noticed how much power she had as a principal," one student said.

Wabbit season? No, it's duck season at Bronx Science

By ANDREW WOLF

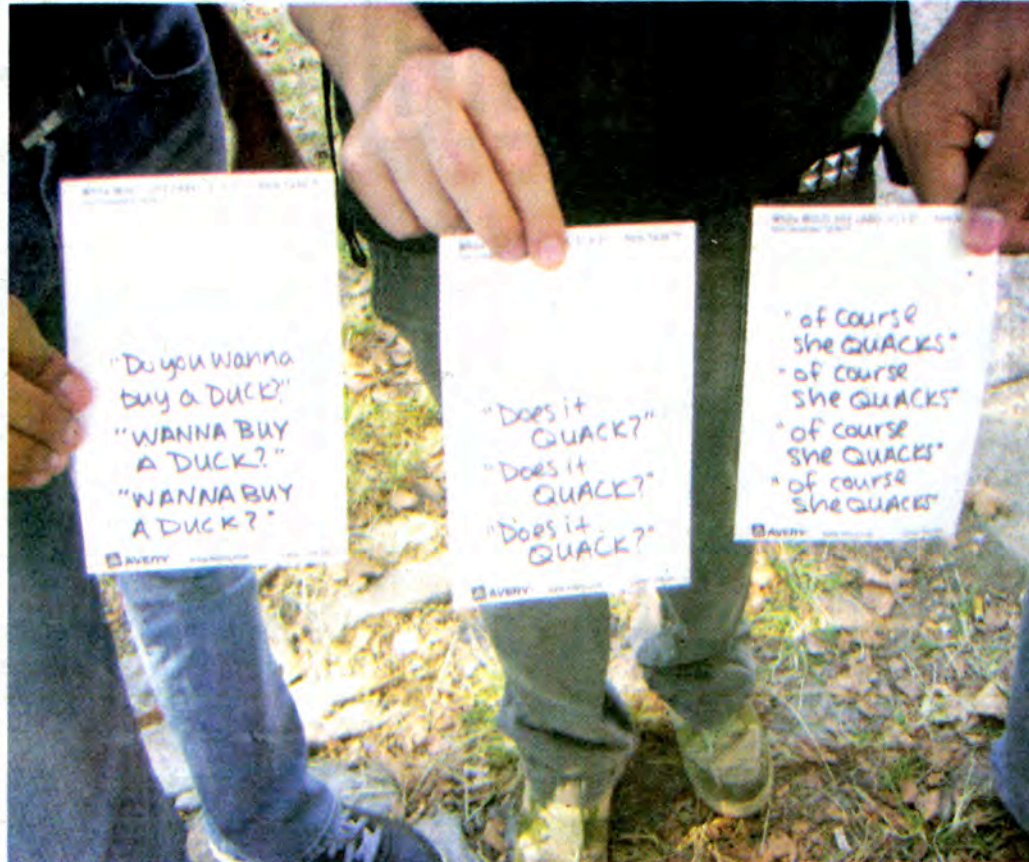
Valerie Reidy, the principal of the Bronx High School of Science is at it again. Since becoming the “accidental principal” of the school some seven years ago, she has consolidated her power by imposing a humorless reign of terror on the legendary school. Meanwhile, the reputation of the school has suffered.

Fine and caring teachers and guidance counselors have been driven from the school simply because Ms. Reidy felt that they didn't express the blind loyalty she demands from her staff, even when that loyalty means a betrayal of the students and the core mission of the school.

Somehow, she managed to offend a major ethnic group at Bronx Science, Korean Americans, who donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the school. We chronicled the events surrounding this flap last year, which spurred an official investigation of Reidy. While the report found that Ms. Reidy didn't steal the money, she clearly didn't use it for the purpose it was intended for either, and the huge sum was returned, lost to the school and the students forever.

To say that Ms. Reidy is not a beloved or respected figure at the school is a fair statement. Her insistence on being referred to as “Doctor” Reidy, even though she only possesses an honorary degree, conferred on her by her alma mater, the College of Mount St. Vincent, became an Achilles heel that her enemies are only too happy to exploit.

It is considered by some to be bad form for those with honorary degrees to actually refer to themselves as “doctor,” particularly in a school when a number of



faculty members possess real, earned doctorates. So clever students and faculty members seized on this and began referring to her as a “quack.” The quack campaign spread faster than water can roll off a duck's back.

A bigger person might have seized on this with a bit of self-deprecating humor and solidify support. But Ms. Reidy is not that smart. As a result the quack movement has taken a life of its own, but Ms. Reidy still doesn't get it.

cartoon figure. She should recognize that at the Bronx High School of Science, it is those wascally wabbits, the students and teachers, who will always have the upper hand. As much as she would like to declare that “wabbit hunting” season has begun, as long as she is there, the duck season will never end.

Mr. Wolf, the editor and publisher of The Riverdale Review, is a graduate of the Bronx High School of Science.

Last week, following a school tradition, “Freshman Friday” was held, an event where upperclassmen can make newcomers do silly things. This year it was decided that the freshmen would be forced to wear “quack” stickers, imprinted with quacky sayings. The goal was to impart the quack tradition to the new students who may not know about their principal's history. This was too much for Ms. Reidy who dispatched a SWAT team of deans to rip the stickers off the shirts of the hundreds sporting them. Once again, Valerie Reidy took a small incident, which she could have diffused by simply laughing with the students, and made it a major incident.

Yes, the students are showing her disrespect. But it is well-deserved. Her lack of humor, her tactics and her ego once again have proven to be her undoing. The linkage between the word “quack” and Ms. Reidy is now indelibly burned into the minds of yet another class of Bronx Science students.

Perhaps she should realize that she has outlived her usefulness at the school, and take her retirement now, before things get even worse. Valerie Reidy has become a joke, a