



Superintendent's Report September 22, 2021

School Opening

After hosting multiple Town Hall events and sending out many communications in preparation for a safe return to school, we welcomed all staff at my annual Convocation Ceremony on September 1, and successfully opened schools for all students on September 9. I would like to thank our administrative team for their hard work - with a special thanks to our facilities staff.

As many of you know, for the first two days back to school, the district focused on the mental health of our students and ensuring that our children return to a nurturing and safe environment. I personally want to thank our school administration as well as our wonderful teachers and staff who were creative and supportive in this important initiative. This year's "Return to School" was like no other and it was a collaborative effort that included our parents and students. After visiting each school, I am very optimistic for this new school year. For the recent media coverage we received regarding this initiative, please see page 5 of this report.

COVID-19 Update

In partnership with Holy Name Medical Center, the District held several summer vaccination clinics at The Richard Rodda Center. Additionally, we have partnered to arrange for weekly COVID testing for all of our unvaccinated staff. This service began on Thursday, September 9, but staff are not required to get testing through Holy Name. Unvaccinated (or not fully vaccinated) staff must submit their weekly testing results by Sunday.

It is important to note that since we have opened our schools, we have had several isolated cases of COVID throughout the district. Communications have been sent home to direct contacts; but we were also requiring siblings from other schools (not directly related to the positive case in any way) to quarantine. Moving forward, only direct contacts will need to quarantine for the designated period of time. However, siblings of positive cases must also quarantine. In fact, I want to remind all families that if your child tests positive, then all of the unvaccinated children in your home should also stay home and get tested. Please do not send your children to school if you know you have a positive case in your household.

Beginning tomorrow, we will now be collecting vaccination status of our students to help minimize the total number of students who need to quarantine. Sharing this information with us is voluntary and will be kept confidential with the school nurses. Look for an email from me on Thursday and if you are interested in providing this information to your respective school nurse, you will need to complete the form and upload a photo of the vaccination card.

Additionally, we are announcing this evening that we will be moving Back to School Nights to a fully remote/virtual environment. At this time, we will proceed with student activities/clubs taking place before and after school, but we will continue to monitor and make decisions as necessary.

Lastly, if your child is required to quarantine, we want to make sure that they still have the opportunity to receive a free lunch. To this end, all direct contacts or siblings required to quarantine - no matter which school - will be able to pick up a free lunch at BFMS from 1:30 - 2:15 pm (side cafeteria on Taft Road).

FYI: Our COVID-19 protocols and Frequently Asked Questions (for parents/guardians) are posted on the district website under the COVID-19 icon. Protocols for staff can be found under the Human Resources section.

BA Named BCASBO President

We are proud to announce that Ms. Melissa Simmons, Teaneck's Business Administrator/Board Secretary, has been selected to be the 2021-2022 President of Bergen County Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO).

BCASBO's 100 members are School Business Officials representing all districts in Bergen County, New Jersey. This organization meets monthly to provide continuing education (CPE credits) and important information to school business officials in order for its members to share ideas, to remain relevant, and to have critical information to assist the district and school board in making good decisions for all district stakeholders.

Ms. Simmons, who has 16 years as a School Business Administrator including 4 in Teaneck, will be the first Black woman to serve in this prestigious role. As a result of her leadership position, Teaneck Public Schools will be awarded a \$2,000 scholarship for one of its students for the school year ending June 2022. It is customary that this scholarship be awarded to a student that will be studying business in college.

Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 - October 15 is Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month. President Biden's 2021 proclamation including the following excerpts: "During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize that Hispanic heritage is American heritage. It is an important reminder of how much strength we draw as a Nation from our immigrant roots and our values as a Nation of immigrants. We also recognize that America cannot succeed unless Hispanic families and communities succeed, sharing equally in the benefits of our recovery and our investments."

As you will see in this report - which is also posted on our district website each month under the Board page under District/Superintendent's Messages: [BOE Monthly Reports](#) - many of our schools are already planning ways to celebrate and recognize our Latinx community. The district has also posted a special banner on our website and Facebook cover in recognition of this annual celebration.

Curriculum & Instruction

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction welcomes you to visit our revamped website on the Teaneckschools.org. Visiting the [website](#), you will find resources for the district's Gifted and Talented Program, English learners programming and be able to access the New Jersey Student Learning Standards, which govern the instruction of all content areas throughout the state of New Jersey.

- **CogAT Assessment Update**: On September 22nd - 24th, fifth grade students will participate in the districtwide CogAT assessment. The CogAT assesses students' learned reasoning abilities as they relate to problem solving via three batteries of tests. The verbal battery evaluates verbal inductive reasoning, problem solving, and verbal comprehension abilities. The quantitative

battery measures general abstract reasoning skills, particularly inductive reasoning and specific mathematical reasoning skills. The nonverbal battery assesses inductive reasoning skills used to solve special and figural problems. The CogAT is just one important piece of data that school staff will review as a component of multiple criterias used to enhance and enrich the overall educational programing offered to Teaneck students and foster personalized learning pathways. Administering this assessment to a greater number of students is a part of the Superintendent's goal towards growing the district's Gifted and Talented programming

- **Summer Impact Academy Update:** The following is a summary of the 2021 Summer Impact Academy:
 - 203 Students Total: (First through Ninth Grade)
 - The students who participated in the K-8 program were students who were identified by teachers as needing strong support.
 - The students who participated in the incoming ninth and fifth grade program were students who ***elected*** to participate in order to meet their grade-level, and building level peers.
 - **Curriculum for Elementary Students:**
 - IXL - a personalized learning program was used to facilitate small-group instruction. While some students participated in online learning, other students met in small group instruction for targeted instruction.
 - STEM Projects: The STEM activities were based on the Innovation Exploration Kit: Elevate Series that included Camp Invention Flight Lab. Students earned their wings as they took apart and customized a high-tech flight simulation robot; followed step-by-step instructions to investigate the inner workings of their robot; and experimented with principles of flight such as lift and thrust.
 - Students received supplies to create superhero disguises and gadgets, including a device that picks up toxic sludge (SLIME!); unboxed a high-tech agricultural robot named Bot ANN-E, and all the tools they needed to complete fun challenges; and created step-by-step instructions to CODE their robot to plant seeds and navigate landscapes that they created.
 - Incoming 9th grade students received an introduction to Global History, 3D Printing opportunities, a course on research skills and reading strategies through the novel Persepolis and project-based mathematics instruction.

We are thankful for another great summer of learning and we look forward to offering additional opportunities during this school year.

School Counseling Department

- **Partnership with Drew University and The Center on Religion, Culture and Conflict:** Teaneck High School students participate in a Community-Based Learning program facilitated by Drew University's Center on Religion, Culture and Conflict, and funded with generous support of the Russell Berrie Foundation. In addition to Teaneck High School students, program participants include high school students at The Idea School at the Kaplen JCC on the Palisades, and Drew University undergraduate students.

This fall, Drew undergraduates and Teaneck-area high school students will work to identify specific community needs and develop their own ideas for the service projects. Students will also participate in a series of workshops designed to cultivate skills in communication and conflict transformation, as well as training in anti-racism, community organizing and activism. Activities are designed to prepare the next generation of leaders and changemakers with the

skills and knowledge needed to build lasting and productive relationships with people of all backgrounds.

- Fairleigh Dickinson Partnership Update-
 - FDU will continue the Saturday Programs virtually for the 2021-2022 school year. Teaneck students will have the opportunity to participate in GEE (8th Grade girls), TEOP, CSEOP, and META. Program descriptions are located on the "[College Partnership](#)" tab.
- The Mental Health Initiative - Students and families in grades k-8 have access to licensed mental health clinicians. Telehealth sessions are conducted utilizing Google Meets. Parents can access these services by contacting their child's counselor or sending an email to counseling@teaneckschools.org Spanish-speaking counselors are available.
- Teaneck High School- 24 students enrolled in the FDU Summer Middle College Program earning 3 college credits in courses taught by THS Staff. Ms. Pitre- Introduction to Psychology, Mr. Rodda- Creative Writing, Mr. Hannon- Financial Planning and Ms. Mayers- World Cultures. These students will be recognized at the October Regular Board Meeting.
- Communication
 - Please visit the School Counseling Department website for information and resources
 - "THS Connections" Newsletter - THS Counseling Department a monthly newsletter is available on the school website "School Counseling" tab. <https://www.teaneckschools.org/SchoolCounseling.aspx>
 - YouTube Channel- All webinars will be posted for viewing. (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDw7prx6aDcxJmeyAo5sgQw>)
 - Follow @TeaneckSchoolCounseling on Instagram and Facebook

Special Services

New Jersey Inclusive Education Technical Assistance Project - K-12 Systematic Change Facilitation

On September 7, 2021, Teaneck Public School District was awarded the New Jersey Inclusive Education Technical Assistance (NJETA) Systematic Change Facilitation grant (non-monetary).

- This is a collaborative effort between the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education (OSE), the Montclair University Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health (CAECMH), and the New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE).
- Systemic Change Facilitation is a three-to-five-year partnership between the identified school and an Inclusion Facilitator provided through the NJETA project. During the partnership, the school will develop or utilize an existing team to lead the effort.
- The Inclusion Facilitator and school administration shall provide quarterly updates to district leadership on action plan progress and any implementation challenges.

Upcoming Events

The Teaneck Special Education Advisory Group (SEPAG)

On September 22, 2021, the Special Education Advisory Group (SEPAG) will hold its first monthly meeting for the 2020-2021 school year. SEPAG meetings will be held each month during the school year. The meetings will be a mix of executive meetings (reporting meetings for SEPAG representatives and district personnel), parent information/training meetings, and parent/SEPAG input meetings. Updates and meeting information will be located on the TPS website

Social Emotional Learning/Executive Functioning Initiative

For the 2021-2022 School year, the Teaneck Department of Educational Services is committed to increasing teachers' abilities to embed executive functioning skills into daily instruction. The

augmentation of the teaching staff's skill set in executive functioning will facilitate the social, emotional and learning needs of our special education and general education students who are at-risk of identification and classification. Therefore, improving our students' ability to find educational success in their least restrictive environment.

The Department is looking to secure a vendor who will:

- Position school and district leaders to guide teachers in making connections between SEL and other district initiatives. Provide leaders with the ability to build a culture of professional learning among teachers and support staff
- Enroll educators in the online, self-paced, professional learning experiences Create a culture of professional learning prioritizing building Executive Functioning skills in students
- Provide job-embedded professional learning for leaders, teachers, and support staff.

Communications & Community Relations

District & School Websites & Mobile Apps

The District has successfully launched our newly designed district and school websites. A "How to Use/Find" tutorial is available on our YouTube page: [Navigating the New Website](#). Additionally, we have announced the launch of our new mobile app. For more information on how to download this helpful communications tool (with translation features), go to: [Mobile App Download](#)

Teaneck in the News

The district's back-to-school focus on mental health resulted in two positive media stories:

- **Teaneck Schools Prioritize Mental Health As Students Return, September 10, 2021** (*Teaneck Patch*): <https://patch.com/new-jersey/teaneck/teaneck-schools-prioritize-mental-health-students-return>
- **NJ district focusing on mental health as students return to class, September 9, 2021** (*ABC7 New York*): <https://abc7ny.com/teaneck-public-schools-mental-health-covid-19-stress-coronavirus-anxiety/11011100>

Community Education - CAMP K & SACC

We want to thank our Camp K staff who successfully ran a safe and fun summer camp program for over 100 campers.

The District will reopen its before and after school childcare program (SACC) beginning Monday, September 27. We have been facing several staffing challenges and continue to hire (see tonight's Board agenda). We currently have 240 children registered for the program but needed to close registration due to staffing shortages.

Technology Department

During the summer months, the Technology Department worked on preparing the new laptop deployment. In order to prepare for the deployment, they configured our new antivirus and management software. These new additions will help keep the district secure as cyber security threats continue. During September, the Technology Department scheduled deployments at each school and were able to distribute the laptops to the staff. As we continue through the first weeks of school, the technical staff will also prepare and assist our students during the Start Strong assessment.

Additionally, we want to thank everyone for their patience with any technical issues as our Technology Staff continue to work through any problems. Please continue to use the help desk ticketing system to enter any technical requests. <https://helpdesk.teaneckschools.org/>

Bryant School

- Bryant School held Meet and Greet Mondays with Mr. Deubel on July 19, 26 and August 9. Staff, students and families had the opportunity to meet their new principal prior to the start of the school year.
- Bryant School held a successful Virtual Town Hall meeting on August 31 for parents and community members that included information about our return to in-person learning.
- On Friday, September 3, Bryant School staff staff hosted a Meet & Greet School Supply Drop-off event on Friday, September 3. Parents and students were able to see the building, visit classrooms, meet their teacher, drop off supplies and pick up student walker/carpool and backpack tags.
- The Bryant School Back to School Night is scheduled for Thursday, September 30, 2021 at 6:30pm.

Theodora Smiley Lacey School

- Lacey School held a successful Virtual Town Hall meeting on August 30 for parents and community members that included information about our return to in-person learning.
- Lacey School staff hosted a Meet & Greet School Supply Drop-off event on September 3. Parents and students were able to see the building, visit classrooms, meet their teacher, drop off supplies and pick up student walker/carpool and backpack tags.
- Lacey School Held our 1st PTA General Membership virtual information meeting on September 14 facilitated by NJPTA. Well attended. Next meeting taking place on October 12 @6:30pm
- Lacey held its 1st annual Lacey Day on Friday, September 17. Students learned about the accomplishments of Mrs. Theodora Smiley Lacey and how the building was named in her honor. Students also made portraits of Mrs. Lacey for her visit to their classrooms. Mrs. Lacey visited all our kindergarten classrooms.
- Lacey School will hold its Back-to-School Night event on Tuesday, October 5.
- Lacey School picture day will take place on Wednesday, October 6.
- Lacey School will participate in America's School Safety Week October 18-October 22. We will conduct bus evacuations, safety drills, and have visits from local emergency service departments.
- Fall Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held on October 21, 2021
- Lacey is currently planning our on-site pumpkin patch and character day parade.

Hawthorne Elementary School

- In conjunction with the Hawthorne PTA, Hawthorne School hosted a back to school event for our first grade students and new students on August 31. Our students were asked to come "all aboard" onto Hawthorne Airlines to receive a tour of our school by our fourth grade flight attendants. Our families were also treated to a staple of summer, ice cream!
- On September 2, our kindergarteners and their families came to visit for a meet and greet with Ms. Garcia, Hawthorne's kindergarten teacher, and Principal Pitt.

Lowell Elementary School

- Prior to the first day of school, Lowell introduced our students to their teachers, staff, and key areas of the school via a presentation video that may be accessed via this [LINK](#)

- Lowell is proud to announce the completion of the Gym Floor. Many thanks to Mr. Antony D'Angelo and his team for moving the project along throughout the summer. Please click [HERE](#) to see photos of our beautiful new gym floor
- Dr. Irving stopped by Lowell School on September 10 to Welcome Back our Lowell Family. Here is a [LINK](#) to some of the photos during the visit
- On September 17, Lowell School celebrated the students who participated and completed the Summer-Read-A-Thon Challenge. These students logged over 40 hours of reading during the summer. A video recording of the event can be found [HERE](#). Students were treated to a pizza and ice cream party for their accomplishments. Please click [HERE](#) for our Summer Read-A-Thon celebration.

Whittier Elementary School

- Whittier School held their Virtual Town Hall meeting for parents on Thursday, August 26 that included information about our return to in-person learning.
- On August 31, Whittier School held a backpack give-away for any student/family interested in receiving a free backpack filled with school supplies. Thank you to the Jewish Federation of Paramus for their generous donation to our school and families.
- Mr. LoGiudice has welcomed new families to Whittier School with personalized tours upon request.
- The opening theme at Whittier School is "All are Welcome" inspired by the book by the same title written by Alexandra Penfold and illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman. The book celebrates kindness, inclusivity and diversity. To support this opening theme beyond each grade level teachers' own activities, Ms. Coston held grade level meetings - Get Ready, Get Set and Let's Go Together-- which engaged students in recognizing similarities and differences from previous years to this new school year, sharing feelings and emotions about school readiness and how the five finger friendship challenge can teach students how to be a good friend. Additionally, Mr. Johnson created a video welcoming students to the school year which celebrates the diversity of the Whittier staff. This video can be viewed by clicking on the link. [Whittier Hello](#)
- The Whittier PTO will hold its Fall Book Fair from September 20 through September 24 in the Media Center. Students will have the opportunity to browse and purchase books.
- The First Whittier PTO meeting will be on Tuesday, September 28 at 6:30 PM via Zoom.

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

- The BFPTO sponsored a 5th/6th Grade Orientation and Picnic for families of our 5th and 6th grade learners. The event included an assembly, building tour, and a picnic where families and staff had an opportunity to meet.
- Benjamin Franklin Middle School (BFMS) welcomed our new and returning staff this year with "grab and go" breakfast treats. During our first staff meeting, the staff engaged in SEL check-ins prior to working to prepare their classroom.
- BFMS accepted a gift of a baby grand piano to support music therapy initiatives throughout the school. The piano is located in the front lobby outside of the auditorium. An additional piano will be donated to place in the school cafeteria in the coming weeks.
- BFMS launched a "Chalk the Walk" activity where staff members used chalk to write welcoming messages to our learners on the sidewalks in the front and back of the school.
- Social Emotional Learning highlighted our return to school for learners as the entire school community engaged in SEL Stations around the outdoor area of the school:

- **Learn Your Leader** - The BFMS circled up with learners in their cohort to introduce themselves and exchange other information about each group.
- **Pictionary Station** -Learners engaged in a fun drawing activity between teams of learners to activate engagement in our BFMS Outdoor Classroom
- **Counseling Station** - was organized by our School Counselors to look at commonalities between our diverse learners and staff members.
- **Listening Station** -Challenged learners ability to listen activity to directions (blindfolded) as they navigate a maze.
- **Coping Skills Station** -Establish two teams of students who would selection a leader among each team. The goal was to introduce strategies to manage stress in a positive and productive manner.
- **Line Up Station** -Introduced learners to ways they can communicate non-verbally. Students later debriefed by assessing the difficulties of this form of communication.
- BFMS was awarded a grant by Whole Foods called the Whole Kids Grant to support nutrition education and promote healthy eating.
- BFMS received support from Donors Chose to enhance our garden and learning space at the school. The BFMS Pollinator Garden Expansion will allow us to continue to expand learning beyond the building and attract birds to our school's garden.
- LatinX/Hispanic Heritage Month was launched on September 15 and will include events throughout the month and beyond to honor the accomplishments of our LatinX families and students.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

- TJMS's first and second day back to school the faculty and staff incorporated SEL activities in the classes in efforts to support our student population. TJMS held a "Let's Move" event to create an exciting new school year environment.
- On September 14 our PTA held their first meeting of the school year at 7pm via Zoom.
- During the month of September 15-October 15, TJMS will celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month by incorporating special activities, lessons or showcases dedicated to this month.
- On September 18, The Zeta Phi Beta Sorority held a Backpack Drive at TJMS from 9am-3pm to support students and families who may need backpacks or school supplies.
- On September 23, TJMS will hold Picture Day as the staff and students smile for the 2021-22 school year.

Teaneck High School

- Open to 1200 plus students on September 9
- Picture Day held for underclassman on September 13 and 14, make-up date is September 27
- Senior pictures will be taken October 12 and 14
- Fall Employment Enrichment Workshops run through the FORUM:
 - "Redefine Yourself" - Tuesday, October 19, 2021 from 3:00pm - 5:00pm
 - "Interviewing Skills" - Wednesday, October 20, 2021 from 3:00pm - 5:00pm
 - "Budgeting for Teens" - Thursday, October 21, 2021 from 3:00pm - 5:00pm
- Fall sports are well under way.
- Clubs and activities will start on September 27, 2021
- BQMT Meetings second Monday of every month starting 10-11-2021 @ 6:00pm
- PTO Meetings second Monday of every month starting 10-11-2021 @ 7:00pm
- Homeroom representatives have been elected and in process of holding elections for grade level student cabinets.

Human Resource Management –

Staff Vacancy Updates – see attached document



VACANCIES as of 09.17.2021

DISTRICT



Manager, Human Resources & Compliance



General Mechanic III/Electrician (O&M)



Technology Support Specialist I (Part-time)



General Mechanic (O&M)



Groundsman I (O&M)



Safety & Attendance Officer (2)



Coordinator of Institutional Advancement & Grant Procurement



Early Childhood Secretary/Registrar

TEANECK HIGH



Computer Science Teacher



Chemistry Teacher



Mathematics Teacher



Theater Teacher



Special Education (Mathematics) Teacher (2)



FORUM Student Support Counselor

LACEY



12M D Secretary

LOWELL



Special Education Teacher