

Superintendent's Report



March 19, 2020

Coronavirus/COVID-19 Update

Over this past week, we have received daily guidelines from either town, county, state and/or federal officials on the status of this virus, along with additional restrictions put into place in order to limit undue pressure on our healthcare providers and to keep our community healthy and safe. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families who have lost a loved one and to those who are in critical condition.

On March 15, I issued a community-wide communication, and this evening, I would like to reiterate some of my key points. First, I know this is an extremely difficult time. Our staff, our families, and our children are hearing a lot of information; and with such uncertainty of what will come next, anxiety is running very high. We must continue to follow all preventative measures such as washing hands for at least 20 seconds, staying home if you do not feel well, and practicing social distancing. We also need to be mindful of helping each other to stay calm, and to do our very best to keep our children focused on positive learning activities.

With regard to our schools, I took the following actions:

- Effective yesterday, our school buildings will remain closed through Friday, March 27 – and this includes all before and after school/evening programs. In the **highly likely** event that we will need to close beyond this date, I will announce that by the middle of next week.
- Families in need will still be able to receive a boxed lunch Monday – Friday from 11 am – 1 pm at the Teaneck High School. Look for the “tent area” in the back of the building by the Cranford side. We are trying to follow a drive-through process but families can come up to the tent area one at a time.
- Our District Office located in the Glenpointe is closed to the public. Although we will be operating from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm, Monday through Thursday, using very minimal staff, residents and guests are strongly encouraged to contact the District Office via by phone or email (contact information for District Administration can be found on our website: <https://www.teaneckschools.org/DistrictAdministration.aspx> - simply click on the actual name. All other district emails are available through our Staff Directory <https://www.teaneckschools.org/StaffDirectory.aspx>.)
- While we are following the advice to practice social distancing, we must remember that our staff are still working and educating our children!

Finally, I want to encourage our school community to please continue to follow our updates on our district website and our district Facebook page (@TeaneckPublicSchoolDistrict). We are a strong community and we will get through this together.

NJSLA Preparation

The New Jersey Student Learning Assessments for English Language Arts and Mathematics (NJSLA-ELA/Math) measures the extent to which students are on track to being college or career ready in each of the two respective areas. This year's testing window for all assessments was scheduled for April 20 - May 29, 2020. Please note that NJSLA Science Administration had been included in this timeframe. NJSLA-Science test grades 5, 8 and 11. We will await further direction from the NJ Department of Education on the status of these assessments and will notify our families and staff as soon as possible.

Preschool and Kindergarten Update

The district received notice from the State that we will receive our final PEEA extension was approved at \$4,323,087 this is for 309 general education students (219 are in-district students and 90 allocated for providers per the State Aid Summary) for the 2020-2021 school year.

By shifting the Kindergarten classes from Bryant School to the new Theodora Smiley Lacey School, we will now have 23 pre-k (15 General Ed Pre-K classes and 8 PSD classes) at Bryant. We will also continue to have preschool seats at our Teaneck Early Learning Center at Christ Episcopal Church and at AUCC Academy. Families who are currently in our pre-k 3 program will automatically move up to pre-k 4. For the upcoming school year, we received 208 applications and we plan to notify families of their application status by the end of April 2020. If your child receives a pre-k placement, you will need to complete the full registration process. More details on this will be provided to you upon notification.

Kindergarten registration for the 2020-2021 school year was taking place through April 30, 2020 but is now on hold until further notice. FYI: Kindergarten placement will be at your child's neighborhood school or at the new Theodora Smiley Lacey School (formerly known as Eugene Field - One Merrison Street). You will be provided more information once the registration process resumes.

Theodora Smiley Lacey School

On March 11, the Board unanimously approved a resolution renaming the building formerly known as "Eugene Field" to become the "Theodora Smiley Lacey School". For the 2020-2021 school year, the newly renovated Theodora Smiley Lacey School will house nine kindergarten classrooms, servicing most of our kinder population (approximately 180 students).

Mrs. Lacey is the first woman, the first African-American, and the first Teaneck resident to have a school in our district named after her. Her contribution to this community is extensive – we included many highlights in the Board Resolution. For those who want to know more, you can check out her Wikipedia page!

We want to thank the members of the community who submitted nearly 100 nominations for the new building name and those who attended the Board's Naming Committee Community Forum. There were several finalists deserving of special recognition; but we are confident that the community will view the Board's final selection as an outstanding choice! *Due to the recent health crisis, we have postponed our special announcement ceremony that we had scheduled for this evening. An official naming ceremony will take place once the renovated school opens in September.*

Special Education Assistance

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our elected officials – in particular Senator Weinberg and Assemblyperson Huttle and Gordon – for helping to get us an additional \$1 million for this school year to help to cover specific expenses related to our Special Education program.

125th Teaneck Anniversary Celebration

Teaneck Public Schools and the Township of Teaneck have partnered to host a special "125th Anniversary of the Township" Gala on November 19, 2020. Our kick-off planning meeting took place on March 3rd and we want to thank the many community members who came out and signed-up for one of our three subcommittees (Awards, Sponsorships, and Event Logistics). At this time, we hope that this event will be able to proceed. If anyone is interested in helping us plan this special event, please contact our Director of Community Relations at tcorallo@teaneckschools.org

Student Liaisons to the Board

On hold until the students return.

Curriculum & Instruction

Institute for Learning, Learning Labs

We are continuing our focus on establishing common instructional practice across all classrooms that is designed to increase our students' opportunities to engage in demanding curriculum content in both mathematics and English Language Arts lessons. We have determined to meet this objective by supporting all our teachers with content-specific professional development grounded in the Principles of Learning, developed by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Learning (IFL).

Participating in Learning Labs has provided opportunities and guidance for teachers to adapt their individual instructional practices and increase those opportunities. Hosting teachers collaboratively plan lessons with IFL fellows using high-level tasks and texts, and then implement the planned lessons in front of their colleagues. Following the lesson, the hosting teacher and their colleagues debrief and make connections to their own work to increase intentionality of planning and implementing specific pedagogical practices. As such, the Learning Labs serve as a means to learn and refine pedagogical practice through apprenticeship. Teachers and administrators have had the opportunity to see, plan for, and model high-level tasks that make it possible for students to share and discuss their mathematical reasoning, and also develop student agency.

School Counseling

NJSLA Preparation

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Our Child Study Teams are currently reviewing any IEP's for any accommodations needed. The Technology team has been taking the necessary steps to have the district's Chromebooks ready for testing.

March Madness

The School Counseling Department is designating March as "College & Career Exploration Month" with two-month long events.

1. "Rep" Your College Door Decorating - District

We invited staff to represent their colleges, both undergraduate and graduate by decorating their doors. Students will have the opportunity to see a variety of schools that staff have attended and gather some information about each school. Additionally, on Friday's staff were encouraged to wear college gear.

2. Career Exploration - High School

On Tuesdays during the month, the School Counseling Department invited professionals, many of which were THS alum, from various careers present to our high school students.

Special Services

Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) Committee Meeting - 02/18/2020

The Teaneck SEPAG Committee met on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 and provided direct input to the Special Education administration about policies, programs, practices, and services impacting students with disabilities and their families. The committee elected to collaborate with the Special Education Department to facilitate a workshop for parents of students with different abilities to be held in March.

Upcoming Programs/Events

The Special Education Department and Teaneck Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) Presents: Navigating Special Education and Partnering with Your Home District

In our continued effort to support our special education students and parents, the Special Education Department and SEPAG will be facilitating an interactive workshop to empower parents and caregivers of children with different abilities. Guest speaker Dr. Harold Tarriff, former Director of Special Services, Psychologist & Education Consultant will walk parents through the prerequisite procedures and the knowledge needed to be co-equal partners with school professionals charged with meeting the unique needs of classified students.

This event was scheduled for Tuesday, March 24 and will be rescheduled for a later date.

National Autism Awareness Month

April is National Autism Awareness Month! National Autism Awareness Month represents an excellent opportunity to promote autism awareness, autism acceptance and to draw attention to the tens of thousands facing an autism diagnosis each year. During the month of April, the Special Education Department will be facilitating classroom activities to help our students understand autism, differences, and acceptance.

Community Relations & Volunteer Services

Community Relations

- Women's History Month began on March 1 and we successfully completed our second annual Women's History Month Community Calendar of Events. This calendar features 13 events from seven community organizations and was released in a printed, poster format and a JPEG format for online posting. Thank you to all who contributed to this year's community calendar.
- Communication is critical – especially during this difficult time. We strongly encourage our families to frequently visit the district website or follow us on Facebook (@TeaneckPublicSchoolDistrict) to see regular updates on our schools and district. We also want to make sure that we have your correct phone and email contacts. Please contact your school principal if you are not receiving our calls or emails.

Volunteer Program

Due to the Coronavirus health crisis, our second "Leading Through Lessons" event – done in partnership with Arbor Terrace Teaneck senior living facility – has been postponed indefinitely.

Special Events

- ***With the exception of our Board Meetings, all school and district events & activities scheduled through spring break have been cancelled or postponed.***

Technology

As part of the District's Strategic Plan, the Technology department, alongside the Human Resources department, have been working on getting our new online onboarding process completed. We have a number of forms added to the system and we will be testing its capabilities in the upcoming months. The technology department has also been working with Community Education to streamline our Camp K forms and make them available online.

The Technology Department has worked on preparing the Chromebooks for the middle schools students. We have made configuration changes and added offsite filtering on the middle school student's Chromebooks to allow them to take them home during this health crisis. The offsite filtering will block any inappropriate website even when the students are home. If any parents have any questions about the Chromebook they received, please visit the link below for more information.

Information:

<https://www.teaneckschools.org/11ChromebookInfo.aspx>

Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://www.teaneckschools.org/ChromebookFAQ.aspx>

Bryant School

Recent and upcoming events/activities at Bryant include:

- Students celebrated the 100th day of school on February 12 with posters and dressing up to look 100 years older/smarter.
- Kindergarten teachers took place in IFL training.
- Students helped pack donations for kindness bags. Over 135 kindness bags were made and donated to the Bergen County Housing, Health and Human Services Center in Hackensack.
- Our Black History Month assembly/concert which took place on February 26 was a huge success. Students had a wonderful time performing for their families, as well as learning about African American heroes and history.
- Students participated in our week-long Read Across America initiative by dressing up each day. Parents also came in to read to their child's classroom. Other volunteers came in to read as well.

Hawthorne Elementary School

Recent and upcoming events/activities at Hawthorne include:

- Hawthorne students and staff celebrated Read Across America during the first week of March. Students and staff wore crazy socks, wacky hairstyles, shirts with inspirational message like Be Kind, pajamas, stripes. Principal Pitt visited several classrooms and shared her enthusiasm for books while reading to her scholars.

Lowell Elementary School

Recent and upcoming events/activities at Lowell include:

- March 2: Read Across America in Media Center – Dr. Irving was among our many readers
- March 2: Math Competition by Grades (K-4) – Coordinated by Math Coaches
- March 5 : Parent Workshop: HOT – Homework & Organizing Tips
- March 6: MD Class Trip to Bowler City

- March 6: 4th Grade - National Elementary Honors Society Induction Ceremony
- March 10: Math Competition by Grades (K-4) – Coordinated by Math Coaches
- March 10: PTO - Spring Picture Day

Whittier Elementary School

Recent and upcoming events/activities at Whittier include:

- Whittier School held its Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration on Friday, March 6. The theme of the event was Together in Unity. Students honored Dr. King with songs, poems and presentations. In addition, the third grade students hosted a living wax museum honoring significant and celebrated African Americans.
- March is Music in our Schools Month; this year's theme is Music Changes Lives. Whittier School is celebrating with some music related activities. Every Thursday is a themed dress day representing a different genre of music. Students will also create posters depicting how music can change lives and teachers are sharing some of their favorite songs during the morning announcements.
- March is National Reading Month. Beginning March 2, the PTO is sponsoring a Read-a-thon for all students that will encourage reading and improve literacy skills while raising money for student activities. Each student has been asked to complete 10 reading sessions over a two-week period with a school-wide goal of 1000 hours. So far, the program is a success--Whittier students have read 812 hours as of March 11.
- Whittier is also inspiring students to read with a Mystery Reader Challenge. Faculty members recorded themselves reading stories (without showing their face and disguising their voice). Students are given clues and guess who the reader is.
- After the Bell program is in full swing with over 75 students enrolled. Students are practicing math and literacy while learning how to program and code using spheros, dash and ozobots.

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

Recent and upcoming activities/events at BFMS include:

- Benjamin Franklin Middle School closed Black History Month with an amazing Tribute to the Elders of the Teaneck community.
- On February 19, a symposium was held by members of the Divine 9 family of fraternities and sororities to share college and life experience for the students at Benjamin Franklin Middle School. The network of participants provided and established connections for staff and students interested in the collective work of these organizations.
- The Teaneck High School Black Youth Organization, many former BFMS students, returned home to perform for the students and staff here at Benjamin Franklin Middle School. This abbreviated performance of the Terpsys provided students with a look at the work of our students interested in performing arts at Teaneck High School.
- Benjamin Franklin Middle School welcomed the Mental Health Services Program on Monday, February 24, 2020. Mondays were designed as the day for students and families. This schedule was modified to include Thursday. This expanded support have been helpful to our families at BFMS and also in the Teaneck community.

- The BFAST Program continues to enroll students and have shifted much of its work toward supporting students as they prepare for NJSLA. Data suggests that our students involved in the BFAST Program have increased their grades in corresponding content areas.
- Students embarked on an outdoor learning experience aligned with our “Water Shed Wednesdays” initiative which is a partnership between Benjamin Franklin Middle School, Teaneck Creek Conservancy, NEEF, Samsung, Montclair State University, Hackensack River Keeper, Bergen County Department of Parks, and NJ Center for Water & Technology. This expanded learning opportunity took place on March 11 and 12 at Teaneck Creek Conservancy.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Recent activities/events at TJMS include:

- Afternoon and evening parent/teacher conferences were held on February 20 and were very well attended.
- Our Student vs. Faculty Volleyballs Games were held after school on February 24. Grade 5 and 6 students played against grade 5 and 6 teachers, and grade 7 and 8 students played against grade 7 and 8 teachers, with the administrators joining in both. The teachers won both games, and everyone had a wonderful time either playing in the games or cheering the players on from the bleachers.
- On February 26, the Drama Club held two assemblies for grades 5/6 and grades 7/8 to showcase their acting skills. The presentation was a celebration of Black History Month.
- Our After School Math and Literacy Program ended on Thursday, February 27. We will be having two informative events to advise parents on how to help their children in the areas of Literacy and Mathematics at home. Reading Night will be on Tuesday, March 31. Math Night will be on Thursday, April 2.
- On Saturday, February 29, TJMS families celebrated Literacy at the Earlybird Laundromat with TJ’s Literacy specialist, Ms. Delores Connors. There were food trucks, music and gift card prizes. The event was very well attended.
- On March 2, Read Across America Day, our librarian, Ms. Roberts planned several activities to celebrate and encourage reading. We had the following themed days during that week:
 - Monday, March 2 – Crazy Hat Day
 - Tuesday, March 3 – Inside Out Day
 - Wednesday, March 4 – Crazy Sock Day
 - Thursday, March 5 – Wear Red and White Day
 - Friday, March 6 – Wear Your Grinchiest Green Day
- On March 6, the S.T.E.P.S. Girls Mentoring Group held a Women’s History Month assembly. They showed a Powerpoint presentation about influential women in American history. They also celebrated 10 “Sheroes” from the staff by presenting them with certificates and flowers.

Teaneck High School

Recent and upcoming activities/events at THS include:

- Every Tuesday in March guest speakers were scheduled to present to our students about their various careers as part of School Counseling Career Exploration program. THS was able to have the first round of presenters on March 3.
- To promote and inspire students to go to college the School Counseling Department is hosting College March Madness. Staff members will wear college paraphernalia to promote either their college or a college that is meaningful to them. Also, staff members are encouraged to decorate

- their classroom doors. Mrs. Cooper presented Mrs. Williams with a gift card for being the first person to decorate her door.
- The "Oscars Party" **will be rescheduled**, as it is the culmination of a collaborative project between the Theater and English Departments. Students created "shorts" for stories that they wrote, filmed and edited. The students were able to show the shorts to their classmates on March 11.
- As CPR is a requirement for graduation all 11th grade students, they will receive CPR training in their physical education classes.
- **Principal Thompson will be rescheduling the Climate and Safety Town Hall Meeting** the Student Center for Parents and Guardians. The Building Quality Management Team meeting will be held at 5:30 prior to the Town Hall.
- The School Counseling Department **will be rescheduling the NCAA Event** (information session) in the Media Center.
- The Spring Musical, "Chicago" scheduled for March 27th & 28th @ 8pm and the 29th @ 3pm **has been postponed until the end of May 2020**. The actual dates will be confirmed by April.

Human Resource Management

Staff Vacancy Updates – see attached document