

# Superintendent's Report



April 29, 2020

## **Coronavirus/COVID-19 Update**

This has been a challenging and sad month for our Teaneck community. On behalf of Teaneck Public Schools, our thoughts and prayers go out to the families who have lost a loved one and to those who are suffering with the virus at home or who are in a hospital in critical condition. These are very uncertain and scary times, and I truly hope that our families are taking advantage of the various mental health services that we provide to our school community. If you need more information about these services, please reach out to your child's school counselor or principal.

Still as with most tragic events, we always see people rise to the occasion and go above and beyond in trying to help serve the community that they love, as well as other Americans who are struggling through this very difficult time. For example, our Science Supervisor, Mr. Rolando Monserrat, in collaboration with Elias Sanchez (a 10th grade student) and other Teaneck staff community members including our PTO's, helped to create 340 face shields (using 3D printers) and donated them to Holy Name Medical Center. We also have a creative young student, Briana Andrade (3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Whittier), who took it upon herself to make bracelets and donate the \$240 proceeds to the Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corps. I realize there are many more examples of the great and compassionate work of our students and staff – and I remind everyone that if you have such an example and think it is worthy of acknowledgement, please send in your Teaneck Apple Award nominations to Ms. Terry Corallo, Director of Community Relations – [tcorallo@teaneckschools.org](mailto:tcorallo@teaneckschools.org).

Over this past month, I have been communicating weekly with our school community in order to make sure that our parents/guardians, staff and students are kept apprised of the latest developments – which often changed daily but certainly weekly. I am pleased to say that now that we have entered what I call “Phase 2” of our virtual learning plans our school community seems to be on a steadier path as we all adjust to this new norm.

Additionally during the first six weeks of our “stay at home” timeframe, we have distributed over 2100 meals and I want to remind everyone that we will continue to distribute free boxed lunches Monday-Friday at Teaneck High School from 11 am – 1 pm on the Cranford Avenue side (drive through and pick-up). I would like to note that during a recent webinar hosted by the New Jersey Department of Education's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning – they were presenting beneficial and important information as our State is confronted by the many challenges imposed upon us by COVID 19) – Teaneck Public Schools' “drive-thru” set-up was selected as one of the three (3) best examples/practices for delivery of goods and services during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a collaborative effort of our food services, facilities, security and district staff. I want to express my appreciation to all who are involved in this important daily operation.

At this point, I know everyone wants to know “when will this end?” As the Governor noted this week, that remains unknown; but I assure everyone that we are planning ahead for several different scenarios. This includes offering a virtual Summer Bridge Program (more details on this will be released soon) to help our students with a transition to the next grade level. It also includes a final decision regarding

our summer camp program (Camp K) for 2020. We realize that a possible cancellation will be disappointing to our children and their parents, but please note that the Township is facing the same decision regarding their summer recreation program. Health and safety of our children and staff must remain our top priority. To that end, we continue to receive updates from our town, county, state and/or federal officials on the status of this virus, along with restrictions put into place in order to limit undue pressure on our healthcare providers and to keep our community healthy and safe.

I will continue to keep our school community updated as needed; but I want to encourage everyone to please follow our district Facebook page (@TeaneckPublicSchoolDistrict) and our district website ([www.teaneckschools.org](http://www.teaneckschools.org)). We are a strong community and we will get through this together.

### **NJSLA & Other Spring State Testing**

As previously announced, the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments for English Language Arts and Mathematics and Science (NJSLA-ELA/Math/Science) ACCESS for ELLs, and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments have been cancelled due to the pandemic. As this was a decision that applies statewide, there will be no make-up testing for this year, and the requirement for a statewide assessment of eighth grade students is waived as well as the statutory graduation assessment requirement is waived for any twelfth-grade student, including the portfolio assessment.

### **Preschool Update**

In March, I informed you that the district received notice from the State that we will receive our final PEEA extension to proceed with 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. Letters have been distributed to the families who applied for 2020-2021 (along with email notifications and follow-up phone calls), and I am pleased to report that with this increase in capacity, everyone who applied (208 applications received) was informed that they will receive a pre-k seat for their child. Actual *placement* letters however are currently targeted to release in June. For our new families who have received a pre-k placement, they will eventually need to complete the full registration process. More details on this will be provided to those families when they receive their placement letter.

### **Theodora Smiley Lacey School Update**

During our March Board meeting, 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).

Renovation is underway and making steady progress. Selective demolition is complete. All new walls have been framed and rough plumbing & electrical is complete. The Contractor is installing insulation and drywall on the second floor walls. The new heating piping is also being installed.

*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.*

With regard to kindergarten registration for the 2020-2021 school year, we had planned to complete this by April 30; however, we have extended the deadline due to the pandemic until further notice. 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). To register your child for kindergarten (new residents only), send an email to [rantinori@teaneckschools.org](mailto:rantinori@teaneckschools.org). More information will be forthcoming.

### **125<sup>th</sup> Teaneck Anniversary Celebration Postponed**

Teaneck Public Schools and the Township of Teaneck have partnered to host a special "125th Anniversary of the Township" Gala. This event was scheduled to be held on November 19, 2020 but due to COVID-19 and the uncertainty of what lies ahead, we have decided to postpone this event until 2021. Once a new date has been chosen, we will let you know.

### **Student Liaisons to the Board**

On hold until the students return.

### **Curriculum & Instruction**

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction has been busy teaching and learning in the District's virtual classrooms. Administrators have been visiting Google classrooms and reviewing lessons plans and upcoming assignments. Our teachers have produced wonderful recordings of teaching while also engaging in Google Meets. To support this learning, please continue to review the District's website where resources continue to be uploaded and updated. Also, look out for your school's next town hall meeting.

### *School Counseling Department*

- The Mental Health Initiative is Back! – Elementary & Middle Schools – The Mental Health Services initiative have resumed providing support to students in grades k-8. Telehealth sessions are conducted utilizing Google Meets. Parents can access these services by sending an email to your student's counselor.
- Support Services – The School Counseling department is continuing to provide support to students and families during this time. Mrs. Golding-Cooper facilitates weekly meetings with the members of the district "Support Staff" (all counselors, F.O.R.U.M staff and the SAC) to discuss families that are being impacted during the pandemic and community resources available. Mrs. Golding-Cooper coordinates services to families with students in more than one school as well as providing resources and support to counselors working with families experiencing difficulties. All Elementary Outreach Workers, School Counselors, and F.O.R.U.M staff are available during school hours via Google Meets. Counselors also have Google Voice numbers to contact students and families. Parents and students are encouraged to email their counselor for support.
- Counselor Google Classrooms – All School Counselors (5-12) and Elementary Outreach Workers have created Google Classrooms to continue to provide support to their students. Classrooms include grade level content ranging from Mindfulness activities, motivational posts, academic guidance/support and college and career readiness information. Counselors are also hosting Google Meets on a variety of topics.

- Future Scheduling for Grades 5- 11 – In order to assure that all students in grades 5 - 11 will be properly scheduled for the 2020 - 2021 school year, we will be doing this process electronically due to school closures beginning April 20. The middle and high school families received communication regarding the process. Information including an instructional video are posted on the “Scheduling” tab on the “School Counseling” page.
- Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU) Partnership Update – FDU has continued the Saturday Programs virtually. Teaneck students participated in GEE (8th Grade girls), TEOP, CSEOP, and META
  - Summer College Credit Program- The opportunity to once again earn FDU college credits this summer is being explored. More information will be available in the upcoming weeks.
- Communication - The “School Counseling Department” page has an additional home under our COVID-19 section of the website: <https://www.teaneckschools.org/CounselingServices.aspx> . This page will contain relevant information and resources for all students and families. In addition, follow @TeaneckSchoolCounseling on Instagram and Facebook.

### **Special Services**

#### *Special Education Town Hall Meeting 4/8/20*

In response to the COVID-19 health-related school closure, the department hosted a town hall meeting on Wednesday, April 8, 2020 to outline how we will continue special education services to our students. We discussed:

- Access to remote learning via Google Meet for Virtual IEP Meetings and Related Services for Special Education Students and families took effect on March 25, 2020.
- Special education teachers and related service providers continue to ensure that resources are varied (e.g., audio, multiple texts) and aligned to the goals in each students’ IEP.

#### *Special Education Parent Advisory Group (SEPAG) Committee Meeting - 04/21/2020*

The mission of the Teaneck Special Education Parental Advisory Group (SEPAG) is to facilitate proactive collaboration and honest communication among parents, students, staff, the Teaneck Board of Education, and the community. To that end, we continue to develop and sustain a supportive partnership to ensure the delivery of appropriate services for our students with special needs. We acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of our Teaneck community and continuously strive to promote equity and inclusion for ALL students. The Teaneck SEPAG Committee met virtually on Tuesday, April 21 to discuss the following:

- Rescheduling of presentation by Dr. Harold Tarriff on the topic of “Navigating the Special Education Process.” We are trying to schedule a virtual presentation for either May 19 or June 9 at 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm. Update to follow.
- IEP Progress Reports
- Remote Learning & IEPs: How are they being followed, administered?
- Social Skills in the age of social distancing
- Sharing a bright spot: Ms. Delores Connors, Thomas Jefferson Middle School teacher, has recently published a children’s book celebrating children with special needs. She joined our meeting to briefly share her work and experiences.
- Extended School Year (ESY) 2020

*Special Education BOE Committee Meeting 4/23/20*

The special education department held its first Board of Education Special Education Committee meeting on Thursday, April 23, 2020. Board of Education members Clara Williams, Gerald Reiner, Denise Saunders, and Sarah Rappoport joined Dr. Irving and the special education administration in a vibrant discussion about virtual learning and the impact on students with special needs, components of the special education strategic plan and the department's accomplishments for the 2019-2020 school year.

*Upcoming Programs/Events*

- To facilitate student learning during this health related school closure, paraprofessionals have completed various professional development modules, some of which now include Google related tools. Chromebooks will be distributed to paraprofessionals with the goal of them beginning to enter Google Classrooms by May 4, 2020.
- ESY applications for eligible classified students were sent out prior to our health-related school closure. By April 30, 2020, parents and guardians should return the completed ESY applications.

**Community Relations & Volunteer Services***Community Relations & Programs*

- Communication is critical 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.
- **The Teaneck Apple Awards** - We want to celebrate those who are going "above and beyond" to keep our district moving forward and/or helping our children to learn and develop in creative and fun ways. Does a certain someone or a group come to mind? Then we want to hear from you by nominating them for a Teaneck Apple Award!

**Nomination criteria:**

- Must be a person/s whose efforts are positively affecting our district and/or our children since the first day of our school building closings (March 13). The person/s can be a parent/guardian, staff member, student, community member, partner or vendor.
- While so many are doing great work, these particular efforts must be beyond normal job expectations.
- Extra points awarded for creativity and positive results!
- Please send your nominations to Ms. Terry Corallo, Chief of Staff/Director of Community Relations: [tcorallo@teaneckschools.org](mailto:tcorallo@teaneckschools.org)
- Nominees may be featured on our district Facebook page (@TeaneckPublicSchoolDistrict) and on our district website. We will also recognize the "best of the best" at a future Board meeting.
- **Send Us Your Student/s Photo** - We have added a new webpage to our "COVID-19 Update" section on the district website: <https://www.teaneckschools.org/HomeLearningPhotos.aspx>  
NOTE: Parents/Guardians: If you send us a photo of your child/children learning from home, we will add this photo (must be appropriate, of course) to this section to share with our community. When sending your photo to [tcorallo@teaneckschools.org](mailto:tcorallo@teaneckschools.org), please include the child's school and grade. **If you send it a HORIZONTAL format, it is more likely to be used on the district's homepage.** We may also share on our District Facebook page (@TeaneckPublicSchoolDistrict) so if you do not want it posted there, then please specify.

### *Volunteer Program*

- Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, our “Leading Through Lessons” event – done in partnership with Arbor Terrace Teaneck senior living facility – has been postponed indefinitely.
- To our in-school volunteers, we miss you and hope you are doing well!

### *Special Events*

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

### **Technology**

In preparation for moving to an online learning platform, The technology department was able to deploy over 600 Chromebooks to our elementary school students. In addition to the Chromebooks, we also deployed over 100 hot spots for any families that do not have access to reliable internet access in their homes. Our 1:1 Chromebook initiative has now expanded to grades 1-12.

The technology department has a Chrome depot setup for any devices that need to be repaired to swapped. They are available at the Teaneck High School Cranford side parking from 11 AM to 1 PM every day. Parents and students can also send an email to [helpdesk@teaneckschools.org](mailto:helpdesk@teaneckschools.org) if they are having any technical issues.

*Frequently Asked Questions:*

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

### **Bryant School & Theodora Smiley Lacey School**

#### *Bryant School*

- Pre-K/Kinder completed a successful Week 5 Extended Learning Lessons and the K team added 3 virtual recorded lessons in ELA, MATH, and a READ ALOUD for families.
- Kindergarten and PK teachers created videos to send positive messages to the students and their families in PK & K.
- Pre-K/Kinder sent out the first Parent Questionnaire survey to gather feedback from the school community regarding the PK & K EL Lessons, resources and distance learning.
- Bryant Town Hall scheduled: Tuesday, April 28 @6pm

#### *Theodora Smiley Lacey School*

- Lacey building finishes and classroom furniture options are being finalized
- Planning meetings are being held to begin transitioning to new Lacey School.

### **Hawthorne Elementary School**

- The Hawthorne School community has been working on or transition to Google classroom. During the week of April 13, a survey was distributed to parents, students, and staff in order to ascertain feedback regarding the online learning platform. In addition, information regarding the submission of extended learning assignments was shared with parents and staff.
- On Tuesday, April 28, Principal Pitt hosted the second virtual town hall meeting at 4pm to discuss the online learning platform and specifically address the survey's feedback. The members of the Hawthorne staff are committed to maximizing this online learning experience for our students.

### **Lowell Elementary School**

- April 27-May 2 we will host an online Scholastic Book Fair
- Virtual Spirit Week
  - Monday, April 27- Character Day, dress as your favorite storybook character and take a picture
  - Tuesday, April 28- Tourist Day, dress as someone vacationing from home- fanny pack, Hawaiian shirts, camera, cargo pants, summer hat or glasses
  - Wednesday, April 29- Family Twin Day, grab your parent or sibling and dress like twins
  - Thursday, April 30- School color day, dress up in your school colors- white and blue
  - Friday, May 1- Pajama Day, wear your favorite pajamas- ALL DAY March

### **Whittier Elementary School**

- Annie Matesic, 2nd grade teacher at Whittier School, created a video for the students to view on their first day of virtual learning. Every staff member was asked to take a picture with a message for the students and it was placed to music. It can be viewed on the Whittier website. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VGRRbCeBvhyqo4MeKy\\_LazUtzY8dolf1/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VGRRbCeBvhyqo4MeKy_LazUtzY8dolf1/view)
- Briana Andrade, a third grade student at Whittier School, made custom bracelets and sold them to raise funds for the Teaneck Volunteer Ambulance Corp in the fight against COVID- 19. Briana was able to raise \$240.00 which she donated to the Ambulance Corp.
- Virtual Learning is underway at Whittier School for Grade 1 through Grade 4.
- Kindergarten students access learning plans through the Whittier website. Staff and students are doing a great job acclimating to this new teaching style.
- Principal Valdes hosted a Virtual Town Meeting on Thursday, April 9, 2020. The Frequently Asked Questions from the town hall meeting have been added to the Whittier website. Please visit the website to see Mr. Valdes' responses to concerns and questions raised by the parents/guardians.
- The next meeting of the Whittier PTO was held on April 28 via Zoom.

### **Benjamin Franklin Middle School**

- The majority of March has been consumed with preparing our school for distance learning to ensure the continuity of instruction for our learners. Due to the school closure, many of our programs were cancelled due to the effects of COVID-19.
- Benjamin Franklin Middle School participated in distributing food, Chromebooks, and packets for students at Teaneck High School daily during the closure. We also donated Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) collectively with other schools to provide the needed assistance and support to essential workers in the Teaneck area, specifically, Holy Name Hospital.
- Working in concert with Mr. Rolando Monserrat, Science Supervisor, the school donated its 3D Printers to assist with the creation of face shields to protect workers involved in fighting COVID-19. Our Media Specialist, Ms. Hina Mehta, worked at home using one of the school's 3D printers to assist with this task.

- On April 7, our schools hosted its Virtual Town Hall Meeting for the school community to share how our remote learning will look beginning April 13.
- A Google Classroom was created for parents to learn about the remote learning platform and provided real-time feedback for parents adjusting to this form of teaching and learning.
- BFMS launched a Teacher “Geek of the Week” Program to commend educators for going above and beyond using technology and SAMR Model related strategies to promote virtual learning and preserve high-level instruction during our school closure.

### **Thomas Jefferson Middle School**

- TJMS staff attended virtual faculty meetings on March 27 and April 17.
- The TJMS PTO held their monthly meeting online on Zoom on Tuesday, April 21. Since all Spirit Week activities have been cancelled, the PTA has decided to give all of the 8th grade graduates a complimentary yearbook.
- TJMS administration hosted a Virtual Town Hall Meeting on Monday, April 27. through Google Meet to answer any questions parents/guardians have about the Google Classroom platform.
- Report cards for the third marking period will be available through Skyward on April 29.

### **Teaneck High School**

- The THS School Counseling Department initiated College Fridays. Staff members wore the apparel of colleges that are meaningful to them. Teachers and students decorated doors with college and university paraphernalia. The School Counseling Department awarded a teacher with a gift card to Dunkin Donuts for being the first to decorate her door.
- Department supervisors lead content meetings to plan for extended learning sessions. Two weeks of lessons were initially created. The content supervisors then held Google meets conferences to develop two more weeks of lessons.
- Prior to spring break teachers planned to move to Google Classroom as the instructional model for distance learning. The high school teachers were prepared for this transition.
- THS held a Town Hall meeting on April 7 with close to 200 people on the Zoom call. All of the questions that were asked in the chat were answered.
- THS Survey answers indicate that teachers, students and parents are pleased with the move to a Google Classroom model of instruction. Student / Teacher contact time increased with the transition to Google Classroom. Teachers answered questions during their periods in writing or in Google Meet sessions.
- The Cranford Ave parking lot is being used to distribute lunches, Chromebooks and student instruments. Mrs. Moore sends out an email daily to report the numbers of people that pick-up lunches, Chromebooks, instruments and other items.
- THS held a second Town Hall meeting on April 28 at 5 pm.

### **Human Resource Management**

*Staff Vacancy Updates – see attached document*