

Superintendent's Report



September 18, 2019

Student & Staff Recognition

Prior to this meeting, we held a special reception to recognize three groups of students who participated in exceptional summer programs:

- The FDU/TPS summer dual enrollment program (earned college credits for FDU courses taught at the high school by Teaneck faculty)
- The W.E.B. DuBois Summer Institute at Princeton University
- The Age-Friendly Teaneck internship program (included \$1000 stipend)

Congratulations to these outstanding young men and women!

Summer Staff Training

My leadership team has participated in several professional development sessions this summer with a specific focus on improving instruction in our classrooms. Many of you will see considerable changes this year as we emphasize rigor and classroom discussions, and through the daily use of instructional technology. In fact, all of our middle and high school students will now have access to their very own Chromebook; and our high school students will be able to take these devices home each day. For more information on this, please visit our district website at:

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

Welcome New Leadership Team Members

Over the summer, we welcomed several new leaders to our district:

- Ms. Christine Jimenez-Johnson – Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Schools
- Ms. Erica Cerilli-Levine – Director of Special Education and Nursing Services
- Ms. Shellian Mirander – Assistant Director of Special Education
- Ms. Keshia Golding-Cooper – Director of Guidance, Career Services and Vocational Education
- Mr. Cameron Cox – Public Safety Coordinator
- Mr. Clifton Thompson – Teaneck High School Principal
- Mr. Terrence Williams – Benjamin Franklin Middle School Principal

We also promoted several current staff members to assistant superintendent, principal, director and supervisor levels.

District Strategic Plan Town Hall Events

Between September 16 and October 17, I am hosting Strategic Plan Town Hall events at each of our district schools. I felt it was important to visit each school because I want to give the entire Teaneck community the opportunity to learn more about our new vision, mission and specific goals that we will be working towards over the next five years. The full list of events are available on our district website under “Our Latest News”. Everyone is welcomed to attend the location, date and time that works best. NOTE: The full Five-Year District Strategic Plan is posted on our website.

District Office Moves

We are excited to add a new Early Childhood Center to Teaneck Public Schools' wide array of offerings. While we refurbish the Eugene Field building to become our district's new Early Childhood Center, please be advised that our district offices (currently located in the Eugene Field building - One Merrison Street) have moved to a temporary location: 300 Glenpointe Centre, Teaneck ("East" building – 7th floor). NOTE: Phone numbers and email addresses for the district offices have not changed.

The Central Registration and Community Education offices will move at the end of September to Thomas Jefferson Middle School. More information on this will follow. Additionally, plans for the new Central Office building (to open in September 2020) will be shared at a later date.

Superintendent's Advisory Committees

Over the next few weeks, we will be recruiting committee members for my six Superintendent Advisory Committees – Students, Faculty, Beyond Diversity, Faith-based, Special Education Parent Committee, and Student Code of Conduct Review. Committee expectations and applications will be available on our district website (by September 25):

<http://www.teaneckschools.org/SuperintendentSteeringCommittees.aspx>

Keynote Presentation at Diversity Conference

The School Climate Transformation Project (SCTP) at Rutgers University will be hosting its SCTP Cross-Cohort fall Conference on October 30. I will be co-presenting one of the breakout sessions (Competencies and Conditions for Engaging in Difficult Dialogues) but as a result of the work being done here in Teaneck Public Schools with the various Superintendent Advisory Committees, I have been offered the opportunity to deliver the keynote presentation at this event. The working title is: *Celebrating Diverse Histories for Promoting a Positive and Supportive School Climate – Perspectives on Preparing for newly-required LGBTQ and Ability-Inclusive Curricula in 2020-2021*. The conference planners noted that they were "very impressed with your story of forming a Community Advisory Committee and working across groups in your district to not only plan for the upcoming mandate, but build stronger connections and better understanding in your district around issues of equity and inclusion. The keynote is intended to focus on 'the why' of this work and its importance for building community and positive conditions for learning. We feel schools could benefit from hearing your perspective and experiences as a school district leader actively engaging in this work."

Teaneck Chamber of Commerce Community Service Awards

I was pleased to attend this year's Chamber of Commerce Community Service Awards. Mr. Matt McMillan, TAG/Junior Great Books/Humanities Teacher at Thomas Jefferson Middle School was recognized as Educator the Year. Ms. Kasai Sanchez, currently a 9th grade student at Teaneck High School (formerly at Benjamin Franklin Middle School), was presented the Mayor Lizette Phillips Parker Memorial Award. This award recognizes a Teaneck youth between the ages of 14 and 22 who has demonstrated significant community service in Teaneck. Mr. McMillan and Ms. Sanchez represent some of our best and brightest; and I am extremely proud of both of them.

Curriculum & Instruction*Instructional Strategies:*

With the support of The Institute for Learning (IFL), our school district will be focused on the following nine principles of learning:

- Organizing for Effort
- Clear Expectations
- Fair and Credible Evaluations
- Recognition of Accomplishment
- Academic Rigor in Thinking Curriculum
- Accountable Talk Practices
- Socializing Intelligence
- Self-Management
- Learning as Apprenticeship

We will be sure to keep the Teaneck community regarding this exciting initiative.

Mindfulness at the Middle Schools

This year, the Teaneck School District will be instituting 10 to 15 minutes of mindful practice at both middle schools. We surveyed three vendors, and of the three, we will be moving forward with Inner Explorer. The Inner Explorer resource provides seven to ten minutes of mindful practice every day. The following themes will be addressed throughout the year:

- Breathing and relaxation exercises
- Awareness of senses
- Compassion for self and others
- Preparation for learning
- Strategies for reducing stress

Feel free to learn more about this program by visiting the website: <https://innerexplorer.org>

School Counseling Department

- Freshman Parent Orientation took place on August 29. Building administration, the Athletic Director, The FORUM Supervisor and Mr. Monserrat were in attendance to provide additional information.
- College Visits scheduled for the month of September: Students were notified via morning announcements, Naviance and the THS App of the following schools scheduled to visit: Fairleigh Dickinson University - Metropolitan Campus, Saint Joseph's College-ME, UCONN, Dominican College, Brown University, Cedar Crest College, Washington College, Temple University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Syracuse University, Wellesley College, Sacred Heart University and Boston College
- Upcoming events:
 - Senior Parent Night- October 9
 - PSAT's - October 16
 - Financial Aid Night - October 22
 - College Fair - October 30

Special Services*Intervention and Referral Services Procedural Manual*

Over the course of this summer, the Special Education Department revised and added updated forms to be used during the Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) for general education students experiencing academic, and/or social/emotional challenges. This move was informed by the recommendation from the 2018 Special Education Study conducted by American Educational Consultants. Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) workshop opportunities are in progress.

Section 504 Procedural Manual

In collaboration with the Guidance Department, the Special Education Department drafted a revised Section 504 Procedural Manual. This updated procedural manual will provide guidance to administrators and staff throughout the district.

Special Education Meet and Greet

On August 19, the Special Education Department facilitated a Meet and Greet session at Teaneck High School for special education parents/guardians, and community members. There were approximately fifty parents/guardians and community members in attendance. Attendees were provided an update on the programs, administration, Chain of Command and the restructuring of the child study teams at respective buildings. In addition, parents were given an opportunity to share their commendations and recommendations to assist in moving the department forward. Those inputs have been included in the framework for the Special Education Strategic Action Plan. We were fortunate to have the support of fifteen Teaneck High School FORUM volunteers who assisted in various capacities throughout the event.

Community Relations & Volunteer Services

The Superintendent's Convocation ceremony was held on Tuesday, Sept. 3 and we had over 300 staff members in attendance. The meeting opened with a special video that not only introduced our new leadership team, it also displayed their singing talents. Our theme for this year's gathering was focused on leadership and John Dean (TTEA President), Gabriella Sanchez (THS Student Government President), and Dr. Ardie Walser (Board of Education President) were invited to say a few words to our staff. The last half of the meeting featured Dr. Irving's presentation of our five year District Strategic Plan. The event was video-taped and will be posted on the district website for all to view.

Governor's Town Hall Event – The district is pleased to host Governor Phil Murphy's Town Hall event on September 25 at the Teaneck High School. Seating is limited. For more information, please review the flyer available on the district website.

On October 16, the district will be hosting its annual Volunteer Appreciation Reception immediately prior to the Regular Board meeting. Invitations will be sent to the district's volunteers from the 2018-2019 school year. We are so grateful for their help and support!

Central Registration

We are pleased to announce that we now have 190 students attending full day preschool. In October, Central Registration will be moving to a temporary location at Thomas Jefferson Middle School for the 2019-2020 school year. New residents are encouraged to call for a registration appointment – 201-833-5512.

Community Education

It was another successful year for the district's Camp Kookooskoos. We thank all of our camp staff for their outstanding work. With the start of the new school year, the district's SACC program is in full swing. In addition, thanks to the Puffin Foundation, the district will once again offer the Hobby Quest afterschool program starting this October. More information will be coming on this soon.

Finally, we have approximately 590 followers of the district's Facebook page. Please "Like Us" or "Follow" the Teaneck Public School District to get the latest on what is happening across the district!

Technology

During the summer months, the technology department worked diligently to help improve overall operational efficiencies at all levels of the organization. This included the successful migration and decommission of all legacy systems still running on the network. Additionally, we have implemented a software that will automatically create student accounts overnight once they are entered into Skyward. This allows the students to get their accounts in a timely fashion and reduce any human error that may come with manually creating accounts. We have also added PaperCut software to all the copiers. In order to use a copier or print a document, employees must scan a district badge. This will help with any misprints, reduce paper usage, and help us maintain the copiers. Lastly, we now have a helpdesk ticketing software in place. The software is crucial to the department providing support to all staff members in an organized and timely response. It will also give us data on where we need to improve and what locations need support.

1:1 Chromebook Roll-out – This summer, the department prepared over 1,200 Chromebooks to ensure a smooth roll-out for our 1:1 Chromebook initiative. Mr. Saleh, our Technology Director, has several student interns who supported this initiative and wants to thank Aliza Ezrapour, Ting Lu, Summer Smith, Lucas Perez and Joe'l Pinkney for their assistance. Chromebook training took place in early September and we are now ready for our 1:1 initiative deployment starting September 23. We are also pleased to announce that the district has partnered with T-Mobile to provide internet at home for those students without internet access. More details on this will follow.

Lastly, we are excited to finalize our audio and video upgrades to our high school choir room with a brand new recording studio, dance room with the black box theme, and an upgrade to our student center.

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

Each of our schools are making plans to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 – October 15). Currently, Benjamin Franklin Middle School has already planned the following:

- Every Thursday of the month a themed activity related to Hispanic Heritage Month will take place (1st Thursday -Food/Food Making, 2nd Thursday -Songs with Guitar, 3rd Thursday - Food and Dance, and 4th Thursday - Hispanic History Activity).
- Daily Morning Announcements for the month by students from various countries/islands... culminating with a brief description of their country's location and geography.
- As students move from Mindfulness Period (Homeroom) to Period 1, music from various Latino artists will be played softly for the 2-minute transition.
- A culminating assembly will be held on October 15

Bryant Elementary School

Recent and upcoming activities/events at Bryant include:

Opening day was especially smooth. All classrooms were prepared and ready for students despite the delay in building access. Students took annual fall school pictures on Tuesday, September 10. There was an outpouring of parent volunteers, which was due to the school's signup.com app, which creates easy and free sign-up sheets to manage and schedule parent volunteers. Some PreK classes held a family breakfast gathering to welcome families to the new school year.

Next week, Bryant will have its parent Back-to-School night on Thursday, September 19. The students will have a half-day on that day.

Hawthorne Elementary School

Recent and upcoming activities/events at Hawthorne School are as follows:

- On August 29, the Hawthorne School PTA hosted a welcome back barbecue for their families. Ms. Pitt, new school principal, had the opportunity to formally introduce herself to the school community. Many Hawthorne staff members, district personnel, and school board members attended the event. It was a wonderful turnout!
- The Hawthorne staff received training from a national consultant, Kelvin Oliver, regarding how to support positive interactions between staff and students. The training included an introduction to restorative practices and specific training related to community building circles. Subsequently, the staff participated in team building activities and collectively identified core beliefs to guide their work. These activities took place on Wednesday, September 4.
- Hawthorne staff welcomed their students and families for the first day of school on the school lawn. Four remarkable fourth graders aided Ms. Pitt with reciting the pledge of allegiance. Then, students and staff entered the building ready to get to the business of education. On that evening, the PTA held its first meeting of the school year. Dr. Irving and Dr. Walser attended the meeting and provided great insight regarding occurrences in the district.
- On September 9, the Hawthorne staff participated in professional development regarding growth mindset and authentic student engagement.
- The Strategic Plan town hall meeting was held at Hawthorne School on Monday, September 16.
- Hawthorne School will host its back to school night on Thursday, September 26 at 6:30 pm.

Whittier Elementary School

Recent and upcoming events/activities at Whittier include:

- The 2019-2020 Whittier School year is off to a great start. Whittier School added two Kindergarten classes being taught by Ms. Elizabeth Bennett and Ms. Monica Lawson, both from Bryant School. In addition, the school welcomed four new teachers – Ms. Mindy Fliegelman-Grade 4, Ms. Samantha Jankowski-Grades 1 & 2 LLD and Ms. Alexandra Bial-Art. They also added an additional MET teacher – Kim Sullivan – to provide supplementary math instruction to their students.
- Whittier School has received a \$1,000 grant from the Bergen County Utilities Authority to implement/increase environmental awareness among the students of Whittier School. Nina Lionetti, Whittier's TAG teacher, who applied and was awarded the grant monies, plans to utilize the funds to create an integrated curriculum of science, literacy and art with an emphasis on recycling efforts.

- For the first time, Whittier School will participate in the Continental Math League, a nationally sponsored mathematics competition. Practices and meets are designed to both maximize student opportunities to participate and to improve problem-solving capabilities. The meets – which run from December through March -- will provide students the opportunity to compete with other students on the same grade level.
- Congratulations to James DiMicelli on being named “Teacher of The Year” by his Whittier colleagues for his work with Whittier School’s Grades 3 & 4 LLD program. Mr. DiMicelli combines playfulness and a strong work ethic in order to help each student reach their individual goals.
- School Picture day (September 17); first community Town Hall Meeting (Sept 17), PTO Book Fair (September 23-27), PTO Meeting (9/24) and Back to School Night (9/26)

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

Recent and upcoming activities/events at BFMS include:

- On August 20, Benjamin Franklin Middle School hosted a “Meet and Greet” in the school’s auditorium. The event provided me with an opportunity to meet new students, parents, and other stakeholders. The event was well attended.
- On August 27, New Staff Orientation included a message from author Kerry Hemms who shared her experience as a new teacher and how she sought support. The BFMS Community also hosted a Welcome Back BBQ for all incoming 5th Graders as well as new students to BFMS.
- The BFMS “I-Team” came in on their own time to have a meeting and design a bulletin board.
- September 9 – “Mindfulness Period” was launched during homeroom for all grades, and staff. This will continue during 2019-2020 academic year. The staff meeting that same day featured HEROK12 training for the entire staff.
- September 11 - Full 1:1 Chromebook rollout took place.
- September 11 - To pay tribute to the 9-11 tragedy, the entire school observed a “Mindful Moment of Silence” and reflected on the contributions of lives that were lost during September 11, 2001.
- September 12 - The BFMS Leadership Team, BFMS Child Study Team and BFMS School Counselor, along with Mrs. Keisha Golding-Cooper met with Krista Collopy from Comfort Zone Camp to begin discussions to support students needing support due to the loss of a parent at this 3-day Sleep-away camp.
- September 12: I-Team assemblies, run by students were held during recess periods. The students focused all of their activities on their value word of the month –COOPERATION
- September 16, 2019 Professional Learning Community
 - Ms. Joan Lazar will present to the staff on marking up text and other reading strategies.
 - Ms. Hilary Almeida will present to the staff on how to work with English Language Learners
- Kastle Fundraiser - September 17: This fun event, sponsored by the PTO, encourages students to support the school and possibly win prizes in the process.
- September 24 - Back to School Night at BFMS
- October 4 - The School will host its BFMS Student of the Month
- Week of Respect - October 7 - 11:
 - Monday 10/7: Ms. Klein: Respect for Self and Others School-wide Assembly w/ Mr. Hashim Garrett
 - Tuesday 10/8: Mr. Smith: Respect Our Differences: Students, in all grades, in SS, will create a poem, rap, etc. about respect, acceptance, inclusion, peace, etc.

- Thursday 10/10: Ms. Powell: Grade Level Meetings: HIB Slide Show and Student Shares
- Friday 10/11: Ms. Powell's I-Team: Pride Day: Organize games and photo station at recess
- BF PTO will host its Book Fair (October 14-16); Multicultural Dinner will be held on October 22 at 6:30 pm and National Junior Honor Society Induction Ceremony on October 24 at 6:30 pm

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Recent activities/events at TJMS include:

- TJMS received donations of five backpacks full of supplies from First Baptist Church of Teaneck, 6 backpacks full of supplies from Danny Gareri (district Transition Coordinator), and 5 large boxes full of school supplies from Cross River Bank. The school staff appreciate these generous contributions noting their students have already greatly benefited from them.
- On September 5, the Teaneck Chamber of Commerce recognized Humanities teacher, Mr. Matt McMillan, as Educator of the Year. Congratulations Mr. McMillan!

Teaneck High School

Recent and upcoming activities/events at THS include:

- Principal Meet and Greet was held on August 26 – over 300 people attended.
- Freshman Orientation was held on August 29, welcoming the Class of 2023 to the Teaneck High School family. During orientation, the freshmen were able to meet the school administration, be introduced to members of the School Counseling Department, tour the building, and receive their schedules and locker combinations.
- Class meetings were held on September 9 and 10 to set the expectations that school administration and staff have for students at each grade level.
- On September 13, the Medical Club posted words and phrases of encouragement on every locker and doorway. Staff members and students have been stating how this simple act made the start to their day better.
- Hispanic Heritage Month activities will begin on September 15 with the morning announcements.
- Back to School Night will be held on September 17. Parents will be able to follow their student's schedule in order to meet the teachers and get the teacher's expectations.
- On September 20, students turning 18 years old prior to November will participate in a Voter Registration Drive sponsored by Shiloh Lodge #53 and a Teaneck High School student's parent.
- On September 25, Teaneck High School will be the host site for one of the Governor's Town Hall meetings. A Teaneck high school student will recite The Pledge of Allegiance and three other students will sing the National Anthem.
- Dr. Watson will start the month with Week of Respect activities. October's theme will be Acceptance and Responsibility. Also, Mrs. Williams will secure a speaker to engage students about the month's theme.
- Students will participate in the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Walk as members of various Civic Organizations and High School athletes will wear pink as part of their uniforms in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Human Resource Management

Staff Vacancy Updates – see attached document