

Superintendent's Report



December 12, 2018

Superintendent's Advisory Committees

The six committees (Student, Faculty, Beyond Diversity, SEPAC, Faith-based and Student Code of Conduct Review) have held their first meetings and in the spirit of full transparency, their meeting notes are posted on our website.

Preschool Education Expansion Grant Approved

In November, we conducted the preschool lottery for the half-day seats still available at Bryant and the 30 full-day seats at Christ Episcopal. All applicants have been notified, and registration for new students will continue to take place through December 19. Additionally, professional development of new staff and facility preparations continue to ensure Christ Episcopal Church is ready to open on January 2, 2019. The NJ Commissioner of Education has confirmed his attendance for a ribbon-cutting ceremony on January 10. Elected officials and other dignitaries will be invited to attend.

District Strategic Plan

I am pleased to report that our Strategic Plan initiative is now well underway. Our "kick-off" meeting for the Strategic Planning Committee was held on Wednesday, November 28. An additional committee meeting took place on Monday, December 10. Attached is a memo that I am issuing this week to all parents and staff regarding the overall process, and important next step for community input. We have also created a new area of our website where we will add this memo, and continue to post updates throughout the process.

Security Town Hall

On Tuesday, November 27, we held a Security Town Hall featuring Dr. Thomas Gambino, NJDOE's Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning, William Stallone, Bergen County Prosecutor's Office and Teaneck's Lt. Seth Kriegel (Juvenile Bureau Commander). I would like to thank those who attended this important first step in our review of best practices in school security.

College Partnerships

Over the past month, I have been meeting with several local colleges and universities – Ramapo College, Fairleigh Dickinson, and Bloomfield College – with the goal of developing strong partnerships, and providing additional dual enrollment opportunities for our students. We have already received a Memorandum of Agreement from Bloomfield College that I will be sharing with you soon. This agreement will admit our students for free through the EOF program, and will offer substantial merit scholarships specifically for our high school students.

Meeting with the SDA

On December 11, I had a productive meeting with the new NJ Schools Development Authority (SDA) Chief Executive Officer and members of her team. She has requested a list of Teaneck's emergent projects for their consideration under the funding that deemed for "Regular Operating Districts" (non-Abbott). I will be working with our Business Administrator to create this list that will be shared in an upcoming Finance Committee meeting. She is also likely to come to Teaneck for a tour of our schools in early 2019.

Recent Student Recognition

Immediately prior to tonight's meeting, we recognized 14 students from Teaneck High School and Benjamin Franklin Middle School who recently graduated from one of three amazing STEM programs at the Fairleigh Dickinson University's School of Computer Sciences and Engineering. The three programs are:

- Girls Exploring Engineering (GEE) – the newest program option
- Mathematics Enrichment Through Applications (META)
- Technical Enrichment & Outreach Program (TEOP)

FDU Professors taught each of the 8-10 week Saturday sessions (held at FDU); and our students were treated to breakfast and lunch, and provided all lab materials. FDU will award up to \$10,000 per year to students that complete this high school program. A new group of students will be eligible to participate in February for spring 2019.

Student Liaisons to the Board

Updates from Saima Jamal, Vernon Johnson, Stephanie Menendez, and William MacIntosh.

Curriculum & Instruction

Technology: Computer Science Education Week was observed this month. Student were students are encouraged to participate in an Hour of Code. At Thomas Jefferson Middle School, Ms. Luckman-Jacobs, technology teacher scheduled all fifth and sixth grade classes to the computer lab to join the hour of code. At Teaneck High School, students in Mr. Monserrat's TEAMS STEM classes are currently in their bio-medical unit. The teacher and students have teamed with the e-NABLE organization to create prosthetic hands utilizing 3-D printers for individuals in need of an upper limb assistive device who do not have the means to purchase one. Congrats to the teacher and students for making a difference and "giving the world a helping hand."

Guidance: The Guidance Department hosted a NCAA Student Athlete Night on November 13. Dr. Jen Quirk from FDU's department of Athletics spoke to our student athletes and parents regarding the process of becoming eligible for college athletics. The presentation and the conversation included all levels of college athletics: Division I, II, and III. The information provided student athletes and parents with a better understanding of the NCAA clearinghouse process as well as participation. The Hands-on Financial Aid Workshop for Spanish Speaking Students and Parents was held on December 4. A FAFSA presentation was held for students and parents as well as pertinent information to complete all necessary forms for financial aid in the THS media center. Ms. Yajaira Pons, from the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority, was our guest speaker. Additionally, students and parents had the opportunity to start or complete their FAFSA forms on computers. Instant Decision Day will be held at Teaneck High School on January 17, 2019. So far, 13 Colleges have committed to attend. Some colleges/universities that will be in attendance include: Seton Hall University, NJIT, College of St. Elizabeth, Bloomfield College, College of St. Rose, Rutgers-Newark, Kean University, William Paterson University, Dominican College, FDU, and Caldwell University. Bergen Community College will be at Teaneck High School for an Instant Decision Day on January 11, 2019.

Specialized Services: The Department of Special Services has worked collaboratively with the Bryant School administration to address the ongoing program needs of preschool students who need special education programs and services. As a result, and based on the need, they have added an additional full day Pre-K classroom at Bryant School. Additionally, the department is excited to be utilizing the newly

purchased bus for our students in the high school's Transition Program and Life Skills Program. As of December 10, students in both of these programs will use this bus to travel to their work sites, as well as for community based instruction/activities.

Community Relations & Volunteer Services

Planning is underway for several winter events including the pre-school ribbon-cutting ceremony, community forums focused on the budget planning process, and student participation in the Holocaust and Enslaved African Memorial art and music projects. Ms. Corallo, Supervisor, has joined the

Superintendent in meetings with several local colleges – Ramapo College, Fairleigh Dickinson and Bloomfield College – as we continue to look for ways to collaborate and provide dual enrollment opportunities for our students. From a communications perspective, she issued the new TAAS Contract press release, and secured another article in *The Suburbanite* – highlighting Teaneck's "Exceptional Achievers" on PARCC. On December 4, she held a focus group with seven school volunteers to review and assess the district's Volunteer program. Their feedback was very informative and will be shared at the January Community Relations committee meeting. Several new volunteers were Board approved in

November and their information has been forwarded to the schools. Community outreach includes attendance at the monthly Library Board meetings, THS' Drama Club presentation of "Clue On Stage", and planning and attendance of the recent Security Town Hall event.

Bryant Elementary School

Bryant held a successful F.L.I.P.S family night with a focus on literacy. The session was interactive and provided parents with specific and targeted strategies to use to support emergent readers pre-K through kindergarten at home.

Bryant has also been preparing for the preschool expansion for January. All new pre-K teachers and support staff have been working in classrooms, meeting their students, hosting Meet & Greet/Open Houses and preparing classrooms. On December 12, all preschool staff will attend professional development in the Tools of the Mind curriculum.

Hawthorne Elementary School

Recent activities and upcoming events at Hawthorne included:

- Updated Student Council: Fourth grade elections conducted. All candidates did a great job of preparing and presenting their speeches in front of the entire 4th grade class at a Town Hall Meeting. Our first meeting held on December 5. We discussed matters affecting our school and strategized about how we can make a positive impact throughout the year;
- The Title I After-school Program commenced on December 4. Eighty-six (86) students are participating;
- In line with our Title I Parent Engagement/Parent involvement goal, our first event held on November 28, and based on the evaluation responses from the parents, was a success. The event focused on K – 2 students and strategies to help them be the best readers that they can be. The presenters were Ms. Garcia, Ms. Lindner, and Mr. Garcia;
- Our second event on December 11 focused on grades three and four. The topic is Helping Your Child Succeed with Homework and Studying. The presenters will be Ms. Blount, Ms. Norris, Ms. Nunez, and Ms. Thomas; and

- In line with our School Level Goal of producing teacher/staff generated video tutorials, the staff has begun producing parent video tutorials and submitting them to Mr. Jennette. Links to be available on the Hawthorne School web page starting January 2, 2019.

Lowell Elementary School

Recent activities and upcoming events at Lowell included:

- Lowell's PTO is havening a two-week Sock Drive for the Homeless for the holidays. The goal is to collect 200 pairs of new socks for adults and children;
- As mentioned last month, the school is currently hosting a MATH Competition every "F" Day; the students compete to answer fundamental math fact questions/problems;
- Their PTO is sponsoring a "Decorate your Classroom Door" Contest; the theme is Winter Wonderland. All doors will be up for display by Monday, December 17. Our staff has been very motivated and creative; and
- The 3rd-grade students participated in a webcast by author, Jacqueline Woodson. Ms. Woodson explained her writing process, and she encouraged students to use writing as a creative outlet and express their feelings. The students will follow up with a Q & A session with Ms. Woodson via SKYPE.

Whittier Elementary School

Recent activities at Whittier included:

- On November 20, Whittier's annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration was held for students, families and friends of Whittier School. Students in all grades performed songs (in both Spanish and English), read histories of famous Hispanic citizens and performed dances inherent to the Hispanic culture. The celebration concluded with an enthusiastic and well-received performance by the Mariachi Band – Mariachi Nuevo Mexico. Students and their families were invited to sample Hispanic cuisine prepared by parents and teachers. The gym was decorated in collaboration with Ms. Berry's fourth grade advanced art students. It featured a variety of Hispanic themed art in connection with the Day of the Dead (also known as Dia de los Muertos) which originated in Mexico and remembers ancestors that have passed away. This is part of Whittier students' exploration of different cultures through studying Art around the World;
- Red Carpet Literacy Night was held on Tuesday, November 27. Students and their parents participated in an evening of fun activities centered on reading and writing. Activities consisted of Reader's Theatre, Writing and a Sight Word Game. The event was a huge success – 60+ students attended!; and
- On Wednesday, November 28, Whittier School's National Honor Society Induction took place. Sixteen fourth grade students were chosen to participate in this special program that acknowledges scholarship, responsibility, leadership and service.

Benjamin Franklin Middle School

Recent activities at BFMS included:

- On November 13, the BFMS auditorium transformed into the ultimate fall fest. Our Makerspace club created hayrides and intricate mazes for our students' enjoyment;
- The school's annual French day event was held on November 21. Students were treated to presentations, performances, and cooking contests in honor of Francophone cultures.
- On November 27, BF families participated in the second annual Sports night;

- The school's National Junior Honor Society induction ceremony was held in the BF auditorium on December 4 and featured a Teaneck icon, Dr. Jason Baynes, as guest speaker. This remarkable ceremony was immediately followed by a Student Recognition ceremony in honor of those who earned honorable mention, Honor Roll, and Principal's Honor Roll for the first marking period;
- November recipients of Student of the Month were recognized on December 7; and
- Also on December 7, the school's grade 5 students celebrated their grade level win for the Embrace Your Power race. The fifth graders were invited to a school slumber party during the last period. The Embrace Your Power race is a school-wide competition whereas each grade level are rewarded for no disciplinary infractions daily. The grade level that earns the most points is rewarded with a special treat.

Thomas Jefferson Middle School

Recent activities at BFMS included:

- Ms. Brolewicz, one of our fifth grade teachers started a Math club on November 7 for grades 5 and 6. It was an instant hit. They meet each Wednesday in the Media Center and participate in Mathematics games and competitions;
- Ms. Zoran, one of our seventh grade Language Arts teachers took a number of seventh graders to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey in Hillsdale and donated hundreds of non-perishable food items on November 15;
- The Bergen County Prosecutors Office delivered a Drug Presentation on November 16 to our seventh graders in light of the Opioid crisis affecting our society today;
- The PTO sponsored a faculty VS student Volleyball game on November 20. The administration and faculty won all four games. The students cannot wait for a rematch!;
- TJ hosted their third annual Thanksgiving Dinner on Thanksgiving Day. Many families and community members came out for dinner. It was a heartfelt and satisfying day that the school looks forward to doing once again in the 2019-2020 school year; and
- On November 29, the TJ Activist hosted a Paving the Way Garden Sustainability Activity inviting the community to raise awareness for Autism. The pavers lead into the entrance to the Michelle Obama Garden.

Teaneck High School

Honor Roll Celebrations

We are proud to announce that 606 students were on the Honor Roll for first marking period. Of the 606 students, 261 students achieved Silver Honor Roll (3.5 – 3.99 Weighted GPAs), 191 students achieved Gold Honor Roll (4.0 – 4.49 Weighted GPAs), and 154 students achieved Principal's Honor Roll (4.5 Weighted GPA and above). All of the students who are on the Honor Roll received a letter of congratulations and the traditional THS Honor Roll bumper sticker in the mail. Ms. Green and Student Council will distribute Honor Roll t-shirts to all of the students beginning this week. On the morning of December 19, the Honor Roll students will be rewarded by attending a "movie day" in the morning. The title of the movie will be a surprise for students. Congratulations to all of the students and their families!

Strive Academic Support Program

Our Strive Academic Support Program is now fully underway. Strive is an after-school academic coaching program sponsored by the FORUM designed to assist Teaneck High School students in achieving their academic goals. Strive is staffed by Teaneck High School Faculty who assess the academic needs of students, and then pairs them with a qualified peer academic coach. To date, 40 peer academic coaches have been trained. Peer coaches are trained to assist struggling students with:

1. Setting realistic academic goals
2. Developing action plans to meet their academic goals.
3. Academically and socially assisting students in the process of meeting their academic goals (tutoring, homework help, organizational skills, advocacy, communication skills)

Human Resource Management

Staff Vacancy Updates – see attached document