



HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OCTOBER 17, 2018

Good evening everyone. I would like to begin my report tonite by mentioning two of the many recognitions found on our calendars in October. The first is National Bullying Prevention Month, which in New Jersey's schools includes *The Week of Respect*. It was wonderful to see so many of our students and staff wearing blue on October 1st to kick off the month and to celebrate World Day of Bullying Prevention.

When left unaddressed, bullying and name-calling have consequences that are far-reaching, and not just for those directly involved. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention students who experience bullying are at increased risk for poor school adjustment, sleep difficulties, anxiety, and depression while students who engage in bullying behavior are at increased risk for academic problems, substance use, and violent behavior later in adolescence and adulthood. The consequences for those who simply witness cruel behavior or who hear or see harsh words are significant too as these create a negative school climate.

In order to truly realize our district's mission to provide a comprehensive and caring educational environment that will develop the potential of every student, we have to make bullying prevention a priority not just in October, but all year long. In August of 2012 I had the opportunity to serve on a panel as part of the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Summit, hosted by the U.S. Department of Education in Washington. As I encouraged educators attending to do whenever they identified bullying behaviors in their schools, I believe that we always need to ask, "What is it about the school that permits bullying to take place" and consider how the whole school community contributes to bullying behaviors.

A big part of our efforts has to be and is around teaching our students to be upstanders instead of bystanders. Research shows that in more than half of bullying situations (57 percent), the behavior stops when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student who is the target of the behavior.

As with anything we teach in schools, support from our families is crucial to our success in bullying prevention. Parents and caregivers play a key role in preventing and responding to bullying. I am asking all parents and caregivers to take a moment to learn about what they can do and how they can discuss this topic with their children. The informational website I shared with

families at the beginning of the month, which is pacer.org/bullying is full of great information and resources.

And for something a little more celebratory, October is also National Principals Month which recognizes the essential role that principals play in making schools great. Principals and Assistant Principals are often unsung heroes, so tonite I wanted to take a moment to publicly recognize this month and thank our four principals, Art Howard, Lisa Marino, Bill Loughran and Brian Schillaci and our five Assistant Principals, Jessica Vierschilling, Mike Ferrarese, Chantal Simonelli, Gail DeMarco and Amy Jablonski for their leadership of our schools and the care they provide our students and staff every day!

While the school year is still young, our students are already accomplishing amazing things! Just this week we learned that two of our students, Shayna Ahtek and Claudia Zhang, were accepted into the prestigious New York Academy of Sciences' Junior Academy. The New York Academy of Sciences is one of the country's oldest and most widely respected scientific organizations. The Academy is part of a global talent identification and cultivation network the purpose of which is to prepare the next generation of innovators. As members of Academy, Shayna and Claudia will have the opportunity to collaborate with 2,000 students from 85 countries on virtual challenges sponsored by industry leading companies and hosted on the academy's innovation platform called Launchpad. These challenges are designed by the Academy's education experts to help students develop 21st-century skills as they prepare for the jobs of the future.

Congratulations to both students - we look forward to following your work as members of the Academy! I look to all the great news ahead from all of schools, curricular departments and classrooms as we move further into the school year.

A few thank you's to cap off my report:

Thank you to the Village School PSA for the gorgeous new stage drapery and choral risers! I can't wait for our first performance!

A huge thank you to our PLG for an outstanding Welcome Back Teacher Luncheon and series of hangout nights as well as the fantastic Boosterthon Fun Run! This fundraiser, health and wellness and character education initiative was a blast. The students of course enjoyed seeing Ms. Marino being slimed at the end of the day on Friday.

Thank you to the Satz PSG for two outstanding events to get our year off to a “yummy” start: the first was a “Welcome Back” bagel breakfast for our 7th and 8th grade students, while the second was a “Cookie Event” for our faculty and professional staff. The PSG really knows the way to the hearts of students and staff...through their stomachs of course!

Thanks to the PTSO for a wonderful Welcome Back Tea! They did an amazing job sharing subs, wraps, drinks, and desserts with the staff.

Thanks also to the HCAA for all of the items they gifted to support our Arts programs and thanks again to the HFEE for supporting and funding our amazing new STEM Labs at Indian Hill and the Cardio Lab for students at Satz and the High School.

In this year of immense change, all of our parent groups have been incredibly supportive of our efforts to make our schools safer and more innovative, spirited and student-centered spaces than ever before and we are so grateful.

Finally, as I mentioned in my weekly message to families this past Sunday, we are excited that a representative of the Lifelines Program will be speaking to our community tomorrow at 6:00 p.m. in the HS Auditorium. It is my hope that we can all learn more about how to be members of the kind of “competent school community” that Lifelines endeavors to build around suicide prevention. I hope to see many of you there!

Thank you -

Robert A. McGarry, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools