



# HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION APRIL 3, 2019**

Good evening, everyone! As we inch closer to the finish line of the school year, I am pleased to again report on some of the wonderful work taking place related to our annual district goals.

First of all, we are continuing to examine and evaluate issues related to the social, emotional and psychological health of all students (District Goal #1) by considering programs currently provided while identifying others that may be needed to promote the health and well-being of all students and staff.

At Village School we've been looking at how the school's physical environment supports our efforts related to this goal and thanks to the Village Character Education committee, Village Art teacher, Mrs. Montana, and volunteer students from Holmdel High School, Village is in the process of painting positive messages on the walls in order to motivate and encourage students as they travel through the halls of Village School! Once again thanks to Jaime Montana and our talented High School student volunteers (Go Eun Wang, Cynthia Zhang and Katherine Geslak) for their efforts - look for images coming soon.

The Village Character Education committee is also updating the school's Interactive Character Ed bulletin board for the final theme of the year which is "Mindfulness!" With the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments on the horizon for our 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, we hope that incorporating Mindfulness as the marking period's theme will reduce anxiety and remind all students to always bring a gentle, accepting attitude to their present moment.

On March 8th, Indian Hill School was thrilled to have had Eric LeGrand tell his incredible story. The students and staff were captivated by his positive outlook and his message of tolerance and kindness. His visit and his message have found their way into the curriculum. Dr. Seeley reported to me that during Literacy lessons, she

and others have observed students citing ways to overcome obstacles as a result of his presentation. This is Amazing!!

In preparation for LeGrand's visit, all students completed a "Believe in your Selfie" activity in which each student listed three reasons why they believe in themselves and/or why it is important to believe in yourself. It was explained to all students that believing in yourself helps you grow and learn.

During this month, classroom lessons/activities were also completed on conflict resolution, friendship skills, and communication strategies. Students participated in role plays as well as discussions on these important Social and Emotional Learning topics.

Over here at the Satz-High School Complex, our 7th and 9th grade students are completing the Lifelines Suicide Prevention curriculum in their Health class. This has proven to be a very positive learning experience for students; teaching them how to recognize signs of depression for not only themselves, but within their peers; giving them an awareness of how and when to report such. The feedback from our school counseling staff - as well as our Health teachers who have been giving the lessons - has been very positive.

Lifelines reported to us how pleased they were with the success of this program and they have shared that they in the process of developing a curriculum for 11th and 12th graders as well. They are planning to offer Holmdel training in the near future for this new curriculum and we are hopeful that we can implement this in the 2019-20 school year.

Our Peer Leaders are having their final meetings this week to discuss what the transition to the next grade level is like. The main SEL topic of discussion is *unconscious bias* - students will be viewing a video on this topic and engaging in a discussion and a reflection on whether they have ever found themselves in situations of unconscious bias.

As I shared with the Board recently with each of these efforts we are examining how individual programs and strategies relate to the the Social and Emotional Learning competencies of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision-Making. Towards the end of the year

we will examine how the collection of efforts over the year covers the full spectrum of these competencies in order to identify gaps as part of our ongoing improvement efforts,

Meanwhile as part of our efforts related to data (District Goal #2), Village's data-team is proactively continuing its mission to become school-wide data experts. This month all team members will be attending a professional development workshop hosted by Dr. Tracey Severns on "Differentiated Data Analysis." At this workshop, in addition to learning the key constructs of data usage, our team members will learn how to use data to accelerate learning through collaborative implementation of impact cycles and how to use data in solution-oriented conversations with peers, parents, students and administrators.

This month, Village School teachers examined grade level growth data using MAP performance scores from Fall to Winter with a particular focus on students who were in the 50th percentile or below. They were then introduced to five different instructional options within their literacy block for providing targeted instruction to address students who needed additional support. The goal of these options is to identify ways to address these needs without compromising the integrity of our commitment to the daily administration of balanced literacy instruction.

Indian Hill's data team met earlier in the month to continue to find ways to support staff in utilizing data in their classrooms. Students are taking the spring MAP assessment this week and as is becoming our standard practice, grade level teachers will interpret the results and design differentiated lessons soon after.

Just like Village School's teachers, Indian Hill's literacy teachers were introduced to the same five different options for providing targeted instruction to address the needs of students falling below the 50th percentile on their winter MAP scores.

A little different than using data that comes in the form of assessment scores, or quantitative data, English teachers at Satz have learned how to use anecdotal notes (a set of qualitative data) from one-on-one writing conferences to identify instructional needs that could be addressed either through whole class, or small group instruction. This demonstrates how even informal data serves to inform instructional needs and lessons.

The final round of Algebra I MAP testing for the year will be taking place at the High School in the coming weeks. Staff will continue to work as a collaborative team, along with administrators, to review areas that need to be targeted for individual students. Feedback and execution of instruction, based on review of MAP reports, has been very positive from the teachers working with our Algebra 1 students.

This month, the BOE C&I/SS Committee learned a bit more about the data associated with MAP and how our administrative team is using it to assess the effectiveness of district goals and decisions by comparing the winter results of 2018 and 2019. Thank you to the committee for joining us in this discussion.

And for a completely different data use purpose, the Holmdel High School Code of Conduct Committee has a third meeting coming up this month which will include a review discipline data to inform recommendations made for future revisions.

Finally, as it relates to our goal of developing a network of partnerships with businesses and organizations within our local community and globally (District Goal #3), I appreciate and am so inspired by how this month our Kindergarten students got engaged in work on this goal as they visited Bell Works for a Community Building experience. Students visited the new Holmdel Library, attended a baking demonstration at Bell Market, and visited Dimension Dental, Holmdel Florist, and The Bar Method

High School students also got a taste of possible future partnerships at Bell Works as our FBLA Club visited to learn about various companies there. They first met with Todd Schobel Co-Founder of Oasis VRX who discussed creating a business, raising capital and developing a team. They then met with Jenna Gaudio, Vice President of Product Management at Vydia, who introduced the students to the management, finance, technology and marketing teams who discussed technology development, customer relations, finance and career development in the tech industry. Finally, they met with ICIMS where they were introduced to their University Recruiter, Sara Palughi, and Brand Associate, Emily McMichael. They discussed careers at ICIMS, their technology development and businesses partners. Students also gained insight on how to develop their studies to help them gain experience and be more competitive in the technology job market.

Dr. Seeley joined Mrs. Gill and Transition Coordinator Doreen Riegal at a meeting at Bell Works earlier this month to further explore the possibilities for partnerships for High School Students. BellWorks is really turning into a great partner for us.

All of this is happening as students are meeting with their counselors to finalize elective choices for 2019-2020 and to share possible career concentrations. The high school administration is continuing with the plans of having an internship-type class offered for the 2020-21 school year for our Class of '21 seniors.

And now for some recognition of great things that have happened in our schools over the last month,

Congratulations to Dr. Riso and all of the Village students who participated in the Second Grade musical this past month. Parents were treated to a medley of Broadway songs and show tunes.

Congratulations to the Indian Hill March Hornets of the Month including 4th Graders Shannon Naughton and Tyler Scarpino, 5th Graders Hadyn Byruch and Thomas Spicer and 6th Graders Victoria Finamore; Dylan Frigola

Congratulations to Satz Students of the Month for March: Jonathan Nolan, Julia Hood, Savini Amaradiwakara, Aidan Lawlor, and Lana Taha

Congratulations to Akarsh Kollu for qualifying at the state level for the NJ State Geography Bee!

Congratulations to students from Ms. Rafferty's Italian classes who won three (3) awards and placed 2nd overall at the annual Italian Language and Culture competition sponsored by the ITANJ!

Congratulations to Ms. Samantha Miller, Satz English teacher, who will be accompanied by some of her former classmates from The College of New Jersey to speak about creating safe spaces and using inclusive language for LGBTQIA Youth within young adult literature and English classrooms at the National Council of Teachers of English annual conference this fall.

Congratulations to the members of the Technology Student Association, who competed in the state tournament and represented Team Satz very well.

Kudos to our WL Dept. Teachers and WL Honor Society Students for success with their WL International Dinner and Performance Night.

Congratulations to Olivia Brescia, Katherine Geslak, Sanjana Gupta, Anthony Prestigiacommo and Sophomore Cynthia Zhang for representing Holmdel High School in the Monmouth County Youth Art Month Celebration sponsored by the Art Educators of New Jersey.

Congratulations to all of our student musicians and our music teachers for an outstanding District Music Concert last week! This is always an amazing opportunity to witness on one night the full impact that our music program has on student growth as performers.

And finally our monthly gratitude report.

Village School would like to thank our PSA board members for identifying and funding a wonderful assembly for our students, "The Magic Book!" Students were treated to a fantastic and educational puppet show about the importance and joy of reading. Thank you PSA members for continuing to partner with Village to provide our students with a variety of different educational experiences

A huge thank you to the Indian Hill PLG for helping support our amazing assembly program with Eric LeGrand. The staff and students were so grateful to have such an inspirational speaker visit the school. It was an assembly program that most won't soon forget. Thanks are owed to the PLG for another successful Boardwalk event. All students and families had a blast! Thank you to teacher volunteers, Mrs. Giusti, Mrs. McCarthy, Mrs. Stevenson, and Mr. Woods for lending a hand during the event.

Thank you to the Satz PSG for their continued support of the Satz students and staff - most recently through hosting a "sold-out" Tricky Tray event. As always, the proceeds of each PSG event benefit the Satz school directly, and the entire school is truly grateful for the support.

Thank you to the PTSO for keeping the entire High School community so well informed and for planning upcoming special days including Administrative Professionals Day and Staff Appreciation.

Thank you to the HFEE for another fantastic Battle of the Faculties! To this day, I've never seen anything like this event - anywhere!

Thanks to the HCAA for hosting Family Feud this Friday - another fun event for our community.

And finally, thank you to all who joined me last week for a discussion of school safety and security communication. It was an impressive gathering of all those who care deeply about the safety of our students and staff. I appreciated the feedback and encourage all those who have feedback or concerns to share them with me.

Thank you.

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