



# HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MAY 1, 2019**

Good evening, everyone. In an effort to model leading with gratitude, I am moving the gratitude section of my report to the top, starting with gratitude from Village School. When you visit Village you can't help but notice the brand new beautiful tree gifted this year by the PSA in honor of Arbor Day. Many thanks to the PSA for all they do to beautify Village school while helping the environment at the same time.

Our continued thanks to the PLG for all their hard work and efforts. They are currently busy planning the annual Career Day celebration in June. The PLG also helped to coordinate the tree planting ceremony on Arbor Day which featured a poetry reading by our very own Mike Sockol. This year's tree was dedicated to our police and first aid members who expressed gratitude for this recognition.

Thank you to our Satz PSG for the outstanding luncheon they provided for staff this past Monday in early recognition of Teacher Appreciation Week which is next week. It was wonderful...and tasty (by all accounts)!!

Speaking of food, thank you to the high school PTSO for coordinating a wonderful breakfast to celebrate Administrative Professionals Day! We are also looking forward to the luncheon scheduled for Tuesday, May 7th in celebration of Staff Appreciation Day!

Finally, thanks to all of you listening to or reading this report. Your engagement in the work of our district is so important and very much appreciated.

As you may have noticed, I have taken a different approach to reporting on our goals this year, highlighting on-going efforts throughout the year rather than waiting to give a culminating presentation. I hope this approach has given you a view that is more like a motion picture rather than providing a simple snapshot that a presentation allows.

As it relates to what we've been referring to as our Student Wellness goal, we've begun to explore concepts related to Social and Emotional Learning. Just last night, I met with our new

Student Wellness Task Force, a wonderful group of Holmdel parents who happen to also be mental health and wellness professionals. This group's input, as well as the input of our administrative team and analysis of relevant data informed my recommendation as shared in our budget presentation to secure a partnership with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care to provide services to our district in the coming year.

Last night these parents and I discussed the core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning, while Earlier in April I surveyed our staff around SEL. The survey asked staff to rate on a scale of 1-5 how important they thought SEL was to the success of our students. This question resulted in a mean rating of 4.8, thus indicating that our staff agrees that this is highly important. Interestingly though, almost 70% identified having had no specific training in their careers related to this topic. We are already using this finding and data point from this year's goal to develop plans to address this in the coming year and this will be a topic of discussion when the School Safety/Climate Teams at each school meet this month to collaborate on all things SEL

Meanwhile, "the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups" is one of the core competencies of SEL. "The ability to negotiate conflict constructively and seek and offer help when needed" is an area that Village School Counselor, Ms. Barbara, will be working on in collaboration with our teachers through developmentally appropriate lessons in the classroom on relational aggression.

Similarly, Indian Hill's Counselor, Mrs. Jennings, will be teaming up with our district School Resource Officer Jon Martin for a fourth and fifth grade presentation on the topics of bullying, tolerance, and overall appropriate student interactions. They will be role playing with the students and providing meaningful peer mediation techniques and strategies.

Our Peer Leaders program, a joint venture between Satz and the high school reached its conclusion for the year. Mr. DeStefano, Mrs. Finnegan and Mr. Bruce are anxious to review the feedback from our students about some of the changes made to this year's program so that they may continue to enhance it.

Finally, the District's first Mindful Cohort will come together for their final collaborative session on May 21st. The focus will be on the successful implementation of mindful practices in the classroom. That same day our trainer will also attend a meeting of the Student Wellness Task Force, our parent experts, to share with them a reflection on the work completed this year.

In terms of our efforts to increase the practice of collecting and using accurate data to inform decisions in all aspects of the school district from the classroom to the boardroom, I am happy to report that analysis of our Spring MAP results is in full swing. I am so pleased to report that across all grades in Mathematics one grade level met their overall growth projection but I am beyond ecstatic to report that in six grade levels we exceeded projections for the year, including in 5th grade math, providing us with assurance that our decision to create enrichment for all resulted in 5th grade math is paying off.

Surprisingly, Reading Growth results were not as strong with the exception of results in the primary grades where we exceeded growth projections in two of three grades. Overall, it is important to recognize that all of our mean RIT Scores are well above the mean for all schools in the nation using MAP. We look forward to continuing to analyze results, share them with families and determine ways to support growth for all students.

The Village School data Team met recently with administration and the Director of Supplemental Services to prepare for upcoming data-talks with grade level staff on MAP growth results. Committee members will be responsible for answering and collecting questions regarding MAP as they guide teachers in reviewing quadrant full year growth, quadrant growth winter to spring, and the learning continuum in order to inform instruction. Team members will also be leading staff in utilization of the universal literacy end of the year screening tool provided by Benchmark Advance for Grades 1, 2 & 3 to be used as an additional assistance piece for placement.

At Indian Hill teachers have been using MAP data and a variety of formative assessments during their center work and small group instruction time to help students identify areas of strength and set personal learning goals. This same data has been used to inform instructional decisions so that teachers can make the most of their 100 minutes each day.

Indian Hill's Data team met this month and is preparing for their final rounds of MAP Data talks. Grade levels will be given a full day of collaborative time to discuss, analyze, and interpret data from multiple measures.

Satz teachers are also beginning to look at our Spring Map Data while the English teachers there also wrapped up the year-long professional training with our writing consultant this past month. They have been focusing on using standards, notes from one-on-one writing conferences, and the unit's genre-based writing rubric for unit planning. This process showed our teachers how to incorporate formative assessment data when designing instructional units for writing.

At the high school MAP results have been shared for Algebra 1 students and the administration will be meeting with these teachers to discuss the data, successes we found using MAP for the first time at HHS, and ways we may be able to enhance for next year.

Districtwide, the administration has been meeting with staff for end of year reviews, which includes a review of Student Growth Objectives. This has given teachers the opportunity to showcase growth made through the course of the year for their students. Staffing meetings this spring also included the review of student achievement data as a component of teacher effectiveness.

MAP data progress from the fall to winter as well as winter to spring administration cycles was presented to the C&I/SS Committee following the winter and spring cycles. As I am sure Mrs. Ammirati will report, you will hear in the C&I/SS Report this month about a discussion the committee had around our continued commitment to data to support my recommendations for Approval to the Board.

In terms of our goal to Establish a network of partnerships with businesses and organizations within our local community and globally, Indian Hill School is busy planning for their big Career Day celebration which will take place in June. Many parents from the community have volunteered to present to our students, providing meaningful real-life experiences. Our students and staff thoroughly enjoy this opportunity as a means to make school-community connections.

Students who are part of our Transitions Program continue their work at various local businesses. As showcased at the last Board meeting, we are very fortunate to have so many partnerships that allow our students and local businesses to connect in a way that benefits everyone involved.

Our next Community Partnership meeting will be held on May 17th. Dr. Seeley and Mrs. MacConnell will also attend the Job Fair at Bell Works on May 9th to let the businesses there know about our plans for the future of our Career Concentrations program that I mentioned in response to Mayor Hinds' question during the public portion of our meeting last month.

And now for some notable accomplishments:

A big congratulations goes out to the Indian Hill School fifth grade Academic Bowl team which competed in Jackson, NJ at the Goetz Middle School and won the championship round. They

competed against many schools from the Monmouth/Ocean County area. The sixth grade team placed fifth, also a great accomplishment!

Ishani Singh scored at the top as a national leader in the Continental Math League competition. She also placed first in Monmouth County and tenth in NJ for the NJ Math League competition. The sixth grade team placed 14th in NJ out of a very large field of competitors.

Congratulations to our April Hornets of the Month: 4th Graders Maya Baireddy and Brian Xu; 5th Graders: Annika Raj and Echlin Ryan; and 6th Graders: Claire Liu and Jake Harris.

Congratulations to our Satz "Academic Bowl" teams for their strong showing at the annual competition, especially our 8th grade team which finished 2nd overall!

The HHS Jazz Band performed at the Jackson Liberty Jazz Festival and the Princeton Jazz Festival. At the Jackson Liberty Festival the Band came in *First Place*. They received an award for *Best Trumpet Section*. Brian Chu received an award for *Best Overall Soloist*. Alec Licato and Sameer Erramilli were recognized with awards for *Outstanding Musicianship*. At the Princeton Jazz Festival, the band received the highest rating of *Superior*. They also received awards for *Best Saxophone Section*, *Best Trumpet Section*, *Best Rhythm Section* and *Best Sight-reading*. Brian Chu again received an award for *Best Overall Soloist*.

Sophomores Alex Tian and Seehanah Tang and Freshman Antonios Tsompanidis were selected to perform as part of the All Shore Symphonic Band.

Congrats to Hannah Lin for her performance as a soloist with the Monmouth Symphony Orchestra!

Congratulations to Joel Barham who was recently awarded the Bungalow Foundation's "Package of Hope" Award of specialized art lessons to nurture his amazing talents! The Bungalow Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to reduce stress and promote healing through involvement in the arts. Congrats to Joel for this amazing honor and to Ms. Lazar and Ms. Lagoa for helping him to progress in his artwork!

Congratulations to Nicholas Bauman and Elizabeth Caplan who represented Holmdel High School and the state of New Jersey at the National Association for Music Education All Eastern Conference in the All-Eastern Mixed Chorus and All-Eastern Treble Chorus.

Congratulations to Holmdel High School Science Department as we just received the 2019 Waksman Student Scholars Program (WSSP) Approval - The Science Educational Specialist from Rutgers, in her correspondence stated, "During the 2019-2020 academic year, we will continue our molecular biology and bioinformatics research investigations with you, Josephine (Blaha), and the Holmdel High School Scholars. Your many contributions and expertise help strengthen our Programs and we look forward to working with you and your students." Congratulations to Yi-Hsien (Joyce) Eu, rising grade 11 for her student acceptance to the coveted WSSP Summer Institute

In high schools across the state, the demands of standardized assessments, including the NJSLA, SAT, ACT, and AP, can be taxing on children. In some instances, students will put forth their best efforts on those they deem matter most and may not perform their best on all of them. This is an issue that students and parents have identified in Holmdel. In troubleshooting this issue, one of our student representatives to the Board of Education recommended a recognition event to motivate students to perform their best. We thought this was a great idea! Therefore, to recognize all students currently in grades 9-12 that earned Level 5 scores last year, HHS will host a bagel breakfast in the Lower Commons on Thursday, May 16th. A congratulatory letter, certificate and breakfast voucher will be mailed home to those students later this week.

That's all for now - we're looking forward to a great meeting on May 29th when we recognize many of our high school students for accomplishments this year.

I want to close with continuing encouragement to all of our students taking the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment this month! I am confident that the growth mindset we've developed this year is going to help us shine!

Respectfully,

Robert A. McGarry, Ed.D.