



# HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OCTOBER 30, 2019

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 observe the various creative ways that our schools chose to recognize the week this year. Kudos to our Anti-Bullying Specialists for their efforts to lead these activities and thanks to our families for keeping up with the wardrobe demands for the week! In addition to student activities and lessons, we also spent a great deal of time invested in professional development and other discussions of topics related to bullying prevention, including Social and Emotional Learning, character development, student mental health, bias and cultural competence. I have been very impressed with the commitment of staff, students, parents and board members to these topics and to our growth as a district as it relates to these. Thank you to everyone involved thus far.

October is also National Principals Month which recognizes the essential role that principals play in making our schools great. Principals and Assistant Principals are often unsung heroes, so tonight I wanted to take a moment to publicly recognize this month and to thank our four principals, Art Howard, Lisa Vitale, Bill Loughran and Brian Schillaci and our five Assistant Principals, Jessica Vierschilling, Mike Ferrarese, Chantal Simonelli, Jamie Brown and Jennifer Riggi for their leadership of our schools and the care they provide our students and staff!

Every day our schools are filled with exciting and engaging activities, so as you might imagine it's hard to capture all that happens in a month's time in my report, but here are a few highlights of good news from across the district:

Indian Hill's Helping Hornet program continues to thrive as School Counselor Mrs. Jennings has been collecting countless names of students for performing acts of kindness.

Indian Hill students are also busy practicing for the fall play, "The Enchanted Bookshelf" which will be performed on Thursday, November 14th. We are all very excited to see the students perform in a little more than two weeks. Speaking of performances, congratulations to all of the students who performed in the Satz Talent Show last week. This is always a highlight of the fall performance season!

I would like to congratulate Indian Hill's Hornets of the Month for October, including 4th graders Ryan Buchan and Sebastian Postigo; 5th graders Rocio Pastor and Abdullah Attia; and 6th graders Maiya Varma and Joseph Setteducate. Similarly, I'd like to recognize Satz School's "Students of the Season," Tiana Mickens, Adam Papp, Jack Powers and Michelle Steele.

While I already congratulated her via my social media channels, I'd like to again congratulate Satz student Anika Ajgaonkar, whose poem "Glasses" earned a 2<sup>nd</sup> place prize in her division in a poetry contest sponsored by the American Library of Poetry! I hope to invite Anika to a future meeting to read her poem.

Congratulations and thanks to all of this quarter's Music Technology students from Satz who have initiated a catalogue of wonderful mindful musical meditations that are being listened to in classrooms across the district. As you know, we have been engaged in the study of mindfulness for two years now and to see this work impact our students in ways unimagined speaks to what innovate to elevate truly means. I honestly think we could market this collection.

Speaking of elevating, the National Merit Scholarship Corporation has announced its 2020 Semifinalists and Commended Students in the 65th annual program and as usual, Holmdel High School students are included among them. We would like to

congratulate our nineteen Holmdel High School National Merit Commended Scholars and four semifinalists. Our commended scholars include: Rohaan Ahmad, Nicholas Bauman, Sophie Birk, Jeremy Bodycomb, Derek Chan, Yu Chung, Eliot Gunawardana, Joseph Helbock, Carolyn Jiang, Rebecca Liu, Jeffrey Luk, Anika Patel, Musa Shaikh, Daniel Shnitkind, Tom Sui, Sophia Taverna, Owen Walor, Daniel Wang and Justin Zhang, and our Holmdel High School National Merit Semi-Finalists: Emily Levonas, Hannah Lin, Daniel Yuan and Claudia Zhang.

Switching gears, I understand that congratulations are in order for the Village PSA as Ladies Night Out was once again a great success! Special acknowledgments go to the hardworking PSA board and to Danielle Longyear and Danielle Poveromo for leading the fundraising team.

Congratulations also goes out to the PSA and all the families that stepped up and decorated their trunks for this weekend's Trunk and Treat event! Great job to Rebecca Kaplan and Gabriella Pettinato for running another spectacular event!

The students at Indian Hill wanted me to give a huge thank you to the PLG for facilitating three very successful hang out nights for our 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students. The students all had a great time and everyone was thankful for the parent volunteers who helped chaperone the events.

Satz students are thrilled with the return of the Snack Shack! Thank you to the Satz PSG for their continued support of our students, including the return of the "Snack Shack.

Thank you to the high school PTSO for hosting "Demystifying College Night" again this year. The slide show and open forum discussion allowed parents to discuss the college preparation process and gave "recent college experienced" parents the opportunity to share helpful hints to parents just beginning to look at the process for their child(ren)

Thank you to all parents who attended our first Special Education Parent Advisory Committee meeting this month. Parents had an opportunity to meet our new Supervisor of Special Education who joined us last month. SEPAC provides a great way for parents and staff to collaborate. We look forward to our students continuing to benefit from this partnership with families.

Thank you to Mr. Sean Dowd & the H.T.E.A. on another successful Blood Drive. Special thanks to all the staff and students who donated for such an important cause.

Thanks to all of the teachers and administrators who presented workshops for staff members at the professional development day held earlier this month. Student achievement topics included analyzing data to differentiate and plan instruction, technology tips, multi-sensory instruction, effective co-teaching, response to intervention, concept mapping, and using social media to promote learning. Student and staff wellness topics included social-emotional learning and mindfulness practices, anxiety, vaping, and CPR. It was an enriching day for all. We are looking forward to our next in-service day in January.

Finally, I wanted to follow-up on two matters discussed during our last meeting. The first relates to the concerns expressed about non-public transportation and the limits placed on us by statute. I am proud of this board's efforts to address this on behalf of the families with children attending non-public schools. On the agenda tonight is a motion that will hopefully encourage the New Jersey Legislature to hold hearings and to consider amendments to the nonpublic pupil transportation statutes to meet the concerns of parents of nonpublic school pupils in Holmdel and across the state.

The second matter is in response to the issue of Pep Band. Based on the Board's direction and the feedback from students, parents, and staff, a committee was

formed to evaluate the current requirements of the band classes and to make a recommendation to me that included feedback from all constituents. Dr. Seeley met with students this week to provide an overview of the information that was presented to the Curriculum and Instruction and Special Services Committee earlier this month and our plan for moving forward.

In closing, I wish everyone participating a safe Halloween and a successful close to the first marking period of the year.

With respect,

Robert McGarry, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools