



# HOLMDEL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION NOVEMBER 20, 2019

Good evening everyone! I want to start off my report tonight by wishing everyone a *Happy American Education Week!* This year marks the 98th Anniversary of this national celebration of public education, a week during which our nation honors individuals who are making a difference in ensuring every child receives a quality education. As a product of public schools and as a public school educator, this annual celebration is important to me.

According to the President of the National Education Association, Lily García, "American Education Week serves as a tribute to the team of people who work with our students, everyone from the classroom teacher and the bus driver to the cafeteria worker and the administrative staff - plus countless others." In this spirit, I wanted to start off my report by acknowledging all staff members and the Board of Education of the Holmdel Township Schools for their innovative and tireless pursuit of excellence for all children.

As I was searching for an inspirational quote about the importance of public education for tonight's report, there was one that struck a chord with me as the person who reports monthly to the board of education about investigations of biased-based Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying. It is a quote from Helen Keller, who once said, "The highest result of education is tolerance."

While I remain concerned about what I read via HIB investigations and though we are exploring how increasing our efforts to address social and emotional learning and character development will positively impact this area, I am asking that we all take action to address and educate children and young people about the dangers of bias in its many forms, including bullying so that together we lead all students to the highest result of education as Helen Keller suggested.

With that said, I am inspired by what I have already seen as a result of one marking period of a new required course for 8th graders entitled, *Standing Up to Intolerance*. One mom recently reflected on how she believed that through this course her daughter's social conscience had been stimulated and how this was a pleasure for her to see. I am grateful to all those who had a role in creating this course, including those on the board - especially Mr. Sockol - for their input into its

content and to Mrs. Crimoli for her expert curriculum writing and delivery of that curriculum each day in the classroom.

This course is another great example of us working towards our collective calling as stated in our mission to create responsible and resourceful citizens.

Speaking of social and emotional learning, our Village School students and staff will soon be participating in the “I Am Enough” Campaign. This initiative, inspired by the children’s book, I Am Enough by Grace Byers and led by Village School teacher, Mrs. Salzman, supports SEL and Village’s well-established bucket filling efforts by reminding students that each of them is “good enough,” “smart enough,” and “funny enough” just as they are. By reinforcing this simple message schoolwide, we hope to continually promote positive self-esteem and self-acceptance in all students.

Meanwhile, our second grade students are vigorously practicing for our Winter Show coming up on December 11th and 12th. Early thanks to Mrs. Donovan and Ms. Nigro as they prepare our second graders for what will surely be a fantastic show!

In this season of giving thanks, we want to give special thanks to the Village School PSA for a successful start to their Giving Tree campaign, a huge annual Village tradition of giving to others less fortunate than ourselves.

Before we get to focused on holidays ahead of us, I wanted to share news of the annual Veterans Day celebration held at Indian Hill last week. 25 local veterans serving from various branches of the service and time periods came to share their experiences and field questions from students. The whole school was honored to meet these local heroes, hear their stories and see the various artifacts that they shared with us. Special thanks to the PLG for providing a wonderful breakfast for our guests.

Later that night, Indian Hill students presented “The Enchanted Bookshop” as this year’s school play. A packed Indian Hill auditorium enjoyed the wonderful performances by our students. Congratulations to all of the students involved as well as the direction provided by advisors Ms. Robin Watts and Ms. Cathleen George.

On November 15th, Indian Hill School kicked off a Kindness Campaign with a visit from acclaimed presenter, Brian Williams. Mr. Williams has travelled the world sharing his message of community and helped our students kick off a plan to set new heights in being kind and compassionate to one another. Thank you to the PLG and Mrs. Jennings for all of their help in securing Mr. Williams and providing our students with this worthwhile experience.

In other kindness news, Indian Hill School is in the midst of a canned goods drive for the Bridges organization. Our students have brought in an overwhelming number of donations. Kudos to the Indian Hill School Student Council and their advisor, Mrs. McCarthy for all of their efforts in coordinating this drive.

The Satz School is also in the “giving” spirit - recently completing a collection for “blessing” bags to be distributed to needy families and moving on to a turkey collection for Thanksgiving before sponsoring additional holiday drives that will also benefit the local “Bridges” program.

Thank you for the Satz PSG for sponsoring its annual Fall Clothing Drive - benefiting needy families in the area.

In other news from Satz, Satz students participated earlier this week in the second of a series of outreach meetings with high school students as part of the Peer Leader program. The Holmdel High School Peer Leaders have been successfully implementing new team and relationship building lesson plans infused with Social and Emotional Learning as well as Character Education that Satz students enjoyed.

The Satz Math Club is currently off to a strong start in its “season,” participating in both NJ Math League and CBA Math League competitions, as well as participating in the rigorous AMC 8 math contest.

Rehearsals are underway for the Satz Winter Musical, Annie Jr! We are all looking forward to a fantastic show in January.

Congratulations to the students in both Dr. DeVivo’s Theater classes and Ms. O’Hara’s Dance class for their recent end of marking period public performances - they were outstanding!!

Congratulations also to Dr. Riso and Ms. Nigro’s music students who will be featured in the near future on News 12 New Jersey for an interdisciplinary “mindfulness” project they completed that is benefiting students in all of our schools.

After a busy week with their younger peers, the High School Peer Leaders are currently preparing for the 2nd “Hello Hornets” Breakfast, a new initiative promoting social inclusion by welcoming our newest Hornets (transfer students) to the high school.

The high school administration asked that I thank the PTSO for helping to coordinate volunteers at many of our recent Athletics events. This has been a huge help and we are looking forward to their continued assistance as we prepare for our annual Powder Puff game being played Tuesday, Nov. 26th at 6:00 p.m. on Roggy Field.

I want to give special thanks to all of our district staff, especially the administrators, teachers, secretaries and custodians in the schools that rolled up their sleeves and contributed to the preparation efforts for our NJQSAC buildings walk-through that took place just yesterday. We are well on our way to retaining our high-performing district status!

Finally, along with several members of the administrative team, I had the pleasure of recognizing two tremendous educators on the eve of American Education Week.. Congratulations to Ms. Nicole Fiorletti and Ms. Jennifer Flynn for their recognition by the State of NJ as Exemplary Educators 2019 at the secondary level. This is a new award initiated last school year which alternates on an annual basis between the elementary and secondary levels each year. Ms. Fiorletti and Ms. Flynn were recognized for their strong content knowledge and skills, inspiring presence and positive impact on students, colleagues and the school community. I am sure the Board would welcome the opportunity to recognize these two exemplary educators at a future meeting.

On behalf of the district administration and staff, we want to extend warm wishes for a ***Happy Thanksgiving*** to all.

Respectfully,

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