

January 19, 2022

Dear Palos 118 Families,

Happy New Year to our Palos 118 community!

### **Strategic Planning Update**

It's been a busy start to 2022, and we've been ringing in the new year by engaging the entire school community in discussions designed to identify specific skills and attributes all Palos South graduates will need to be successful in high school and beyond. These identified skills and attributes will become our **Portrait of a Graduate**, which will guide the Board and community as they develop a new strategic plan for Palos 118.

Partnering with consultants from HYA, we have held both virtual and in-person community forums as well as focus groups sessions with major stakeholders. This discussion with the community will continue through the remainder of this month and all the information will be compiled and shared with the Board and our strategic planning steering committee in late February/early March.

I want to thank everyone who has participated in these important conversations and encourage any community member or parent who has not yet participated to please consider filling out our online [Portrait of a Graduate survey](#). It is critical we hear from the community and thank you in advance for your participation.

### **Updated Guidance on Isolation and Quarantine**

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Illinois State Board of Educations (ISBE) recently adopted new CDC recommendations for reduced isolation and quarantine periods for K-12 students which we have also implemented. The new guidelines will allow the school district to return students and staff to the classroom safely but within a shorter time period. I want to take this opportunity to thank our school nurses and administrators for their continued diligence in implementing our COVID safety plan and adapting to ever-changing regulations and guidance.

### **Palos South Play**

We are excited to announce the return of Palos South's annual play. This year, students will be performing Dr. Dolittle Jr. which will take place on Friday, January 21st, and Saturday, January 22nd at Stagg High School. Tickets are currently on sale at the Palos South school office. We have close to 80 students who are performing, building sets, or working as stage crew, lighting, and sound. Thank you to teacher Kevin Graham for directing this year's play and Adam Turlakes for serving as assistant director, Amanda Schuller for serving as choral assistant, Stavros Makropoulos for serving as lights and sound assistant, and Randy Buvala for directing the stage crew. Best of luck to Palos South as they finalize preparations, and we look forward to watching our students perform this weekend.

### **2022/23 School Calendar Reviewed at January Regular Board Meeting**

The Palos 118 Board of Education met for its regular board meeting on January 18. Among the topics covered, the board reviewed the proposed calendar for the 2022/23 school year. You can see some of the highlighted dates from the proposed calendar and read a summary of all of the business discussed at the January meeting [here](#).

## **Palos Students Earn High Marks**

I was heartened to see that despite the challenges of the past year and half, our Palos School District 118 students still performed well compared to their peers on the most recent Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) test. Our schools had the highest scores in math and second-highest scores in ELA in South Cook County. All Palos 118 schools performed in the top 10% of all elementary schools in the state in ELA and near the top 10% in math.

Palos South Middle School performed particularly well with students placing in the top 5% in the State of Illinois in ELA and math performance was among the top 10% in the state.

I can't say that I'm surprised by these outcomes. I see our students' performance as a reflection of our District's long-standing tradition of high achievement and excellence. That's a credit to our talented and dedicated staff, engaged and supportive families, and a responsive school board all striving to help our students to continue to learn despite the many challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.

Thank you to all of you who have contributed to our students' continued success during this challenging time. I'm looking forward to even greater success as we begin the new year.

Best regards,

Dr. Anthony Scarsella

Superintendent of Schools