



HADDON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION

Broadcast

Dear Haddon Township School District Community,

I hope this message finds you well and enjoying a season of rest, renewal, and time with loved ones. As we move through the heart of summer, I want to take a moment to update you on important developments across the district and share my gratitude for the continued trust and partnership that make our community so special.

A Salute to the First-Ever Junior Police Academy

First and foremost, I want to applaud the Haddon Township Police Department for launching our inaugural **Junior Police Academy**, which concluded last Friday evening with a moving ceremony at Rohrer Middle School. This program exemplifies the power of partnership between our schools and civic leaders. I commend the cadets and their families for stepping out of their comfort zones, and I deeply respect the HTPD leadership for guiding them with discipline and heart. It was an honor to be a part of this meaningful milestone.

Budget Update: Averted Crisis, Encouraging Progress

After much anticipation, we received confirmation from the State of New Jersey that with one minor amendment and our **tax levy incentive aid will be approved**, officially averting what could have been a difficult financial summer for the district. While the federal government has frozen \$6 billion in national education funding, we remain in line to receive approximately **\$300,000 additional in Title funds**, though the timeline remains unclear. Compared to where we could have landed, we consider this a major win for our schools.

Clarifying Our Stance on ICE Access and Safety Grants

There have also been community questions regarding safety and security grants tied to immigration enforcement provisions. I want to be absolutely clear. **We will not pursue any grant opportunities that include provisions allowing ICE access to our school buildings.** Our primary obligation is to the safety, dignity, and education of our students. That includes protecting the psychological safety of all children in distraction-free environments. As such, any request by outside agencies to access school buildings must be accompanied by a judicial warrant signed by a judge. We will continue to work in full cooperation with the Haddon Township Police Department while upholding our **core values of inclusion and student protection.**

Summer Board of Education Meeting Calendar Shift

This summer, the Board of Education has made a small but strategic shift in our meeting schedule. Rather than holding a meeting in July, which typically includes limited business, we will hold two meetings in August on **August 7** and **August 21**. This shift aligns with the natural rhythm of our work, as the end of summer often brings a surge of preparation and planning.

School Calendar Update: Rosh Hashanah & Student Days

Please note one small revision to next year's calendar: The **day off for Rosh Hashanah** will move from Wednesday, September 24, to **Tuesday, September 23**, which more appropriately aligns with observance. Additionally, the **2025-26 school year will have 180 student days** rather than 181. Due to the positioning of Christmas and New Year's Day, bringing students back for a single Friday would not serve our community well. To maintain this balance, **the Friday before Memorial Day will be a school day**, regardless of snow day usage.

Regarding Community Feedback on Grade Configuration

At the end of the school year, the Board and I received a large number of emails under the subject "*Save Our Neighborhood Schools*," which appeared to be generated from a shared script. These messages expressed concern over a **supposed plan** to reconfigure grade levels in our elementary schools. I want to take a moment to respectfully clarify the facts. There is no current plan being evaluated. There are no changes currently underway. **What I shared publicly was simply a request to begin a collective conversation about how we might enhance our students' academic and emotional experiences in the future. This includes the idea of maintaining our current structure while also exploring new concepts, such as a dedicated early childhood center. These are appropriate conversations for a district committed to excellence, and summer provides the necessary uninterrupted time to engage in such strategic reflection.** We will continue to think boldly, communicate transparently, and lead responsibly.

Administrative Shifts for 2025–26

Due to ongoing budget constraints, we will be operating next year with one fewer district-level administrator. I am proud to share the resulting shifts in leadership roles that will allow us to continue providing strong support across all schools.

- **Mrs. Chantelle Shorter** will serve in a new capacity as **Assistant Superintendent**, expanding her scope beyond Curriculum and Instruction.
- Haddon Township High School will be led by **Mr. O'Brien as Principal** and **Mr. Allen as Assistant Principal**, with **Mrs. Shorter** also supporting academic planning through collaboration with department facilitators.
- **Mr. George** will take on additional responsibilities in **Student Activities** while continuing his leadership in **Athletics**.
- **Ms. Massey** and **Ms. Lunsford** will now both serve as **School District Safety Specialists** in addition to their current principal duties, and **Dr. Pullano** will continue in the roles of **Principal of Van Sciver** and **District Equity Coordinator**.
- **Ms. Jen Gauld**, our Business Administrator, has recently been elected Vice President of the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials, a prestigious volunteer statewide

position. In addition to her current responsibilities, she will now directly oversee our **Child Care Programs** as a result of staffing reductions in the business office.

- **Mr. Sweicicki** and **Mr. Greway** will lead Rohrer Middle School as Principal and Assistant Principal.
- In August, I will recommend the internal promotion of **Mr. Mike Mahon** to the position of **District Technology Director** following the retirement of Mr. Steve Chard. **Mr. Chard has served this district with distinction** as a teacher, coach, and technology leader, and we offer him sincere thanks and best wishes in retirement. Mr. Chard's impact as a teacher, coordinator, and coach has been extraordinary, and he will be deeply missed.
- **Mr. Bruner** will continue in his role as **Supervisor of Building and Grounds while also monitoring all bond projects**, with Mr. Casanas assisting.

I am deeply proud of our administrative team, each of whom has embraced these changes with grace and commitment. Their dedication to our students and schools is evident in everything they do.

Referendum Update: Tennis Courts Open!

Finally, I'm pleased to report that the second official project funded through our community referendum has been completed. **Our brand-new tennis courts are now open and ready for use** (with pickleball lines on two courts still to come). In the coming weeks, I will share a more detailed update focused on the status of all current referendum projects, but I believe you'll be encouraged by the progress that's already been made both inside and outside our school buildings.

Thank you again for your continued support, your belief in our shared mission, and your partnership in building a district rooted in safety, dedication, and care.

-Sincerely,

Robert J. Fisicaro, Ed. D. Superintendent