



SCARSDALE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Schools



Season's Greetings... Warmest Wishes... May
the... Wishing you... Merry... Happy...

Welcome to the Holidays in Scarsdale!

We are all extremely fortunate to be part of a multi-national, multi-cultural, cosmopolitan Village, as it creates an incredible richness of diversity resulting in many positive outcomes for our children, as well as for the entire community. However, it can also pose some challenges. For example, the winter months may leave one a little tongue-tied about how to follow appropriate holiday etiquette, or how to respond to a holiday greeting that differs from your own practices.

Here is a small sampling of holidays celebrated in December alone:

Buddhism

Bodhi Day: 8 December - Commemorates the Day Buddha attained enlightenment on this same day in 596 BC while sitting under the Bodhi tree

Christianity

Saint Nicholas' Day: 6 December - Remembrance of Saint Nicholas and the importance of charity

Feast of the Immaculate Conception Day: 8 December - The day of the Virgin Mary's Immaculate Conception

Las Posadas: 16-24 December - Novenario that includes progression to various family lodgings for celebration and prayer

Christmas Day: 25 December - Festival celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ (also celebrated as a secular holiday)

Hinduism

Pancha Ganapati: 21-25 December - Festival celebrated in honor of Ganesha, one of the best-known and most worshiped deities in the Hindu pantheon

Judaism

Hanukkah: Eight-day festival of lights that occurs between November and early January, starting on the 25th day of Kislev in the lunar-based Jewish calendar.

Secular

Kwanzaa: December 26- January 1 - Celebration that honors African heritage, culminating in a feast and gift-giving

Unitarian Universalism

Chalica: A week-long celebration of Unitarian Universalist principles during the first week of December

Of course, the problem with creating such a list is that you are always forgetting someone's important beliefs and traditions. The above list is hardly representative of all the holidays, observances and festivals that are celebrated in December in our community, and by limiting to only this one month, we also miss out on Thanksgiving, Armistice Day, and Diwali in November, and Tu B'Shvat, New Year's Day, and Lohri in January (again, to name a few).

The pressure to get it right might lead us down the road of wanting to disengage completely from seasonal glad tidings, or as George Costanza did in a 1997 episode of "Seinfeld," do away with all convention and celebrate our own manufactured holiday, *Festivus* (for the rest of us!), as a way to escape the pressure, disenfranchisement, and commercialization that can often accompany modern holidays.

As we think about our various celebrations, both now and throughout the year, we are being asked as a District to be more deliberate in our recognition of un- or under-represented groups. Expanding the holidays in our school calendar has been one specific ask: Why not include Chinese/Lunar New Year? How about Eid ul-Adha? There are many to choose from, and we have limited capacity to extend the school year. So, how do we decide?

New York State Law provides little guidance for school districts in this area: "Education law gives school boards authority to close....their schools on a particular day of religious or cultural observance, based on a determination that keeping the schools open would result in a waste of educational resources because a considerable proportion of the student population is unlikely to attend school on that day." As you can see, the standard, as odd as it may seem, is around resource allocation, based on how many families and/or staff members are affected by the observance. This is a difficult determination to make, particularly without updated census data and a clearer understanding of how many families celebrate various traditions and holidays.

We will continue to reflect on how to increase inclusiveness and recognition of the values and beliefs represented throughout our community. Tangible results may be seen in a variety of ways. Our calendars can certainly be more reflective of holidays and festivals, even when our schools remain open. We can be even more explicit in our teaching and learning around multicultural holidays, specifically asking students what holidays they celebrate, and the beliefs, religions, and traditions that accompany them. Utilizing calendars that represent an array of important holidays can also serve as reminders for limiting homework and testing, individually or collectively, particularly around times that

require religious observance. And, of course, we can also be more mindful that our food service program aligns with dietary restrictions that accompany some holidays.

We recognize that embracing inclusivity and the diversity within Scarsdale takes a concerted effort. It requires awareness of our similarities and differences, and specific and accurate knowledge of others' values and beliefs, along with the skills to individually negotiate various types of multicultural relationships. There are certainly structural changes that can support that work, and we are committed to doing that. It is important as an institution that we consistently state and model our beliefs.

It is my own theory that impactful and lasting understanding of others' lives comes from personal proximity. It is by getting to know others well that our worldview is eventually broadened. So, if you are celebrating this season, and even if you are not, consider reaching out and learning more about someone who is different from you within our community. Diversity expert Dr. Jeff Kottler says it more eloquently: "Have the courage to enter into the world of those you are trying to understand by learning their unique cultures, family histories, languages, customs, values, and priorities."

Best wishes to you and yours in the year ahead!

Warm regards,
Dr. Thomas Hagerman



Student Achievement - And the Teaching that Supports it

By Edgar McIntosh, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Co-Director, Center for Innovation

At our November Superintendent's Conference Day, there was one particular moment that stands out. After our guest speaker Milton Chen- a nationally recognized leader in innovation- spoke to a capacity crowd of Scarsdale educators, we watched a short clip of some Scarsdale High School students describing their current areas of scientific research.

We saw Adina describe her research into neuro-generative disease- as inspired by time spent with her grandparents- and the success she had in analyzing a particular cellular death pathway in order to develop strategies to inhibit cell loss. John told about his mentorship at Albert Einstein Medical Center and the work he's done exploring antibiotic resistance through freeze-drying viruses. Several equally impressive examples followed.

The audience of teachers, administrators, nurses, psychologists, and counselors beamed. One teacher quipped, "They've come a long way from labeling the parts of a ladybug!"

We then asked any educator in the room to stand who had worked with any of the students highlighted. A large portion of the audience stood and the rest of us applauded.

This doesn't just happen. And it takes more than just a village.

Students are able to reach these levels only through a combination of rich curriculum, teacher access to ongoing professional learning, careful planning, expert instruction, and opportunities for innovation in all grade levels. Teachers help students equally with content, skills, and essential learning

dispositions. These dispositions include perseverance, resilience in the face of failure, critical thinking about complex ideas, social acumen to collaborate with peers and mentors, and emotional regulation to persist in the presence of a million modern distractions.

As part of an educational report for the Board of Education scheduled for December 17th, I am focusing on the scope and depth of our current K-12 Science and Math Curriculum, and the impact of newly released "Next Generation" Standards.

Beyond reviewing standards and curriculum, I have had the great pleasure of observing several science and math lessons in action. Many of these lessons have started with a problem, and have invited deep and creative thinking through thoughtful questioning, model development, and supported debate. Once the problem is unleashed, the teachers act more as facilitators than lecturers. Not surprisingly, the most engaging learning experiences come when the problem is complex, meaningful, connected, and allows for multiple processes and- at times- multiple solutions. And through active analysis of both process and solutions, students discuss and determine the efficiency of their methods.

I've seen fourth-grade mathematicians grappling with number grouping through a vending machine problem, and first graders describing and demonstrating their newly designed hand pollinators. I've seen seventh graders physically re-enact a train journey from Scarsdale to NYC to create a kinesthetic learning model of a word problem, and sixth graders discover red blood cell regeneration through a theoretical classmate's injury. In High School, young biologists are wading through swamp mud in search of bloodworms, and young mathematicians are determining the optimal environment for installing wheelchair ramps in their community, given current ADA regulations related to gradient, ramp slope, and access point.

There are times, as well, when our students focus on skill development, automaticity of math and science facts, and memorization of essential content. Both discovery and content mastery are essential in the development of creative, flexible, efficient, and confident student mathematicians and scientists. And while facts may indeed be facts, our understanding of the scientific world is constantly evolving and must include in-the-moment research and the critical evaluation of our sources. (The Periodic Table is not the same as when I was a kid-ever hear of nihonium?)

The new science and math standards are powerful, and were designed collaboratively by scientists and educators to mirror and emphasize the essential practices necessary for our modern world. The good news is that many of these practices are already part of the Scarsdale culture of constructivism and inquiry. The better news is that through ongoing professional collaboration and learning our teachers are engaged right now in evaluating, adapting, and infusing our curriculum and instruction with these updated practices.

It's exciting to hear our students describe how they are going to improve the planet, cure diseases, and save the human race. It's equally exciting to hear how they are learning to do it. If you'd like to hear more, I encourage you to attend or tune in to the December 17th Board of Education meeting.

The Tenure Class of 2019

*By Drew Patrick, Assistant Superintendent
for Human Resources and Leadership Development*



Achieving tenure is a significant accomplishment in the career of an educator. Put simply, tenure marks a change in an educator's employment status which affords that educator the right to keep his or her job, and requires due process for discipline or dismissal. Similarly, granting tenure, upon recommendation from the Superintendent, is among the most serious and significant responsibilities of

the Board of Education. Interestingly, Boards of Education are empowered only to approve or reject the recommendation of the Superintendent, and cannot award or deny tenure without such a recommendation. Importantly, none of this can happen before a teacher or administrator successfully completes a trial, or *probationary*, period of employment.

Our appraisal system during the probationary period relies on a wide variety of inputs to inform a decision to recommend tenure, including:

- Four formal classroom observations annually, which include a discussion, reflection, written report, and rating, conducted by supervisors (i.e., department chair) and administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal).
- An observation by an Assistant Superintendent and/or Director, annually.
- Numerous informal "drop-in" observations by supervisors and administrators.
- Formal and informal mentoring.
- A portfolio of materials documenting professional practice, with written commentary.
- A year-end conference, written appraisal, assessment of progress, and rating, annually.
- A parent survey, as well as ongoing feedback from members of the community.
- An administrative review panel attended by District administrators, building administrators, supervisors, and Board of Education members, annually.

It is our expectation that the rigors of the tenure process are commensurate with the importance of the achievement. With this in mind, the candidates eligible for tenure this year are listed below, along with a timeline for the process, and an invitation to the community for input. To learn more about this process, [please visit our website](#).

Members of the community are invited to share their experiences with these individuals [by emailing](#) or writing to:

Drew Patrick, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources,
2 Brewster Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

Name	School	Tenure Area
O'Connor, Kim	Edgewood	Elementary
Cohen, Emily	Fox Meadow	Elementary
Blackhurst, Lindsey	Greenacres	Music
Corrigan, Dana	Quaker Ridge	General Special Education
Bagala, Erica	Scarsdale High School	Secondary Mathematics
Buonanno, Anna	Scarsdale High School	Secondary Science
McDonald, Brian	Scarsdale High School	Technical Subjects
Rosenzweig, Jennifer	Scarsdale High School	Secondary English
Weldon, Robert	Scarsdale High School	Secondary Foreign Language
Castaldo, Tracie	Scarsdale Middle School	Secondary English
Hirsch, Michael	Scarsdale Middle School	General Special Education
Korzen, Bryan	Scarsdale Middle School	General Special Education
Urena, Javier	Scarsdale Middle School	Secondary Foreign Language

Tenure Timeline

December, 2018 Overview of tenure process; tenure candidate list shared via *'Dale Dispatch*, website
Public input invited on tenure candidates

January, 2019	Parent survey distributed electronically Administrative review panel meets to discuss tenure candidates
February, 2019	Tenure recommendations completed
April, 2019	Administrative review panel meets to discuss all other probationers
May, 2019	Continuation decisions made Board of Education tenure vote (tentatively May 13)



Diversity: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services

Scarsdale has become more diverse over the past decade; we have a rising population of families that come from different cultures, lifestyles, religions, and regions of the world. How do we make sure that these families feel welcome, add their voices to the community conversation, and ultimately become an integral part of our community? It's not easy, but Scarsdale has long realized the benefits that come with diversity. It's important to examine our own practices periodically and make sure they align with our ideals and what we value.

The Good:

I believe that diversity of thought brings us strength of mind, diversity of perspective brings us strength in our decisions, and diversity of culture brings us strength in our humanity.

Scarsdale has long celebrated diversity, whether through our curriculum, which very specifically teaches the ideas of tolerance and global interdependence; our multicultural celebrations, which highlight our foods and specific cultures; or our commitment to global experiences for all students whether virtually or in person. This commitment has long been part of the reason that our students excel not just in school but in life. A student who has experienced friendships with people who don't look, sound, pray, love, or think as they do has a much better ability to conceptualize the complexities of life. They also learn to be less uncomfortable around things that are not familiar, whether people or experiences. Students become less susceptible to cultural scapegoating and more critical in their consumption of information because they have experiences that inform their learning.

The Bad:

"Bad" may be the wrong word here; "challenging" fits the topic better, but bad fit better with my title's association. Diversity is indeed challenging. Students (and families) must grapple with the uncomfortable. New friendships and experiences can be unfamiliar, and may not conform to the traditions or even the values of your family. A community must look to honor diversity in its institutions and traditions while maintaining the respect for what "was" and is still important. As a school or community, we must learn to communicate in ways that show respect for each other. However, as populations change, this may mean what was respectful or inclusive yesterday may not be so today. These challenges are often seen as a one-way street, focusing on how the people who were already "here" have to change. It's not -- it is definitely a two-way street. Respect is mutual; without discussion and the courage to ask questions and seek out new ideas and set norms together, we run the risk of resentment.

The Ugly:

Well, the rising tide of hate speech is apparent to anyone with access to the news. We have entered a time in our country (and arguably in much of the "western world") where there is more tolerance and even celebration, in some instances, of bigotry. More and more conversations about immigration, religion, and social norms are becoming shouting matches about the relative worth of the cultures or beliefs involved. I don't have to elaborate; you can just watch the evening news. Fortunately, these phenomena have not become prevalent in Scarsdale; by and large, the schools and community have not seen a rise in the type of hate speech many other places have experienced (most recently Purchase College.) However, our kids hear the news and they hear us talk, even when we think they don't. This societal context just makes it easier for us to forget that we must actively work to be inclusive in order for the benefits of diversity to be realized. This work is largely not about policies or legislation; it is about our interactions and our willingness to reach out of our circles and invite diversity in. It is about asking how a new or growing "culture" experiences the everyday life of our community. It is about being open to hearing that something that always was may need to be adjusted. But, most importantly, it is about actively seeking to engage the different, and find our common humanity. It's about finding the treasure that lies in diversity by actively digging to find it.

Budget Planning for the 2019-20 School Year

*By Stuart Matthey,
Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities*



Although it doesn't quite seem possible, we are already well into the 2019-20 budget planning process. Informally commencing as far back as the last school year, the District has been even more focused on 2019-20 budget development since early this fall.

Principals and other administrators work with their teams to develop budgets that support the continuation of their work, and any new initiatives that may require additional staffing or funding. Meetings are then held in October and November with District-level Cabinet members, when staffing and other significant funding requests are presented and discussed, taking into account District-wide instructional consistency and financial impact.

In the Business office, projections of current year spending are prepared, taking into account current staffing levels and both current year and historical expenditure trends. This year, at the Board of Education's meeting on November 5th and again at a public forum on November 15th, a multi-year budget projection was shared with the community, noting the widely variable increases in the District's self-funded insurance plan and the mandatory employer contribution rates for the New York State Teachers' Retirement System pension plan as the major factors in any given year's financial outlook. These meetings also invited public comment on the upcoming year's budget itself.

Formal presentations to the Board of Education and community will continue in December with a presentation of 2019 year-end financial projections, and 2019-20 budget planning factors. After the Holiday Recess, additional presentations and discussions are scheduled for the Board of Education's calendar throughout the winter into early spring, leading up to the statewide school budget votes on May 21st. The timeline for these important budget presentations and discussions is as follows:

- **January 14th and 28th** - Discussion of Staffing Recommendations and Other Major Budget Drivers
- **February 4th** - Budget Plan Overview, and focus on Debt Service, Transportation, and Employee Benefits Budgets
- **February 11th** - Budget Plan Update, and focus on Instructional, Facilities, Athletics, Special

Education, and Technology Budgets

- **March 11th** - Budget Plan Update, and Full Budget Review including Revenues and Tax Projections
- **March 25th** - Special Meeting - Budget Forum
- **April 8th** - Board of Education adopts 2019-20 Budget
- **May 21st** - 2019-20 Budget Vote and Board of Education Elections

We invite all community members to participate in the discussion by providing comment at the Board of Education's meetings or e-mailing the Board at boardofed@scarsdaleschools.org.



The Four R's of Resilience

By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology

Resilience can be defined as the ability to absorb disturbances. In technology, resilience is one of the most important cornerstones of a solid infrastructure. The four R's of resilience are the four facets that help improve resilience:

1. Redundancy refers to the existence of additional components that are not strictly necessary, but are available, in case of failure in primary components.
2. Robustness is the ability to withstand and overcome adverse conditions.
3. Response is the ability to mobilize quickly in case of a crisis.
4. Recovery is the ability to regain a degree of normality after a crisis.

With the above in mind, the Information Technology team, over the past three and a half years, has implemented a long list of significant infrastructure upgrades to support our instructional program, as well as the District's business, data, communication, and security systems. These upgrades include the following:

- We implemented a Voice over IP (VoIP) phone system and integrated it with our public address system.
- We installed a 911 emergency notification system and we are in the process of further enhancing our security infrastructure.
- We implemented a virtualized server cluster and a storage area network (SAN).
- We migrated from a Novell to a Microsoft network and implemented Active Directory.
- We installed a backup internet circuit, upgraded our wireless networks, replaced our network switches, and implemented network monitoring.
- We installed a new internet content filter, implemented a new server backup solution, and upgraded our print management solution.
- We implemented and started to roll out a Mac OS management solution.
- We completed a comprehensive cyber security assessment.
- We are planning the implementation of a Wide Area Network (WAN) ring topology which eliminates single-points of failure, so that no single fiber cut can take down the network. The traffic will reroute around the cut and service will not be interrupted.
- We are reviewing options to improve cellular coverage within and outside our school buildings.

Our students, parents, and staff expect a technology infrastructure that reliably supports our instructional program and administration. While reliability is our ultimate technology infrastructure goal, resilience is the means to achieve it. We will continue to strengthen our systems resiliency to meet the demands of the increased use of technology, the frequency of severe weather, and the heightened need for security.

Planning for a New Technology Plan

Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation, and Co-Director of the Center for Innovation



The 2018-19 school year marks the conclusion of our current three-year technology plan. The District technology team will spend the next few months preparing and writing a new three-year plan that will address our future needs.

To prepare for the creation of this new document, we are conducting focus groups and surveys to gather information from faculty and students that will help us reflect on current practices and prepare new goals for our program.

The new plan will include a revised vision statement and updated student expectations, based on technology standards for each level. It will also include an expanded section that focuses on digital literacy and information fluency, thanks to the addition of our elementary librarians to our technology team. The plan will also contain a three-year budget projection, a section on technology professional development, and a section on our long-range technology infrastructure plans. The final portion of the plan will include a section on assessing our technology program, focusing on the delivery of services and the impact of technology on student learning.

The new Technology Plan will be presented to the community at the March 25th Board of Education meeting, where the technology team will provide an education report that highlights the instructional technology program. After the plan is presented to the public, members of the community will have an opportunity to submit comments and suggestions before the Board formally adopts the plan. We look forward to having conversations with all of our stakeholders as we develop and adopt our new technology roadmap.



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