



SCARSDALE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Schools



Combating a Dangerous Trend

As many in our community know, a Scarsdale High School senior, Jack Waxman, recently appeared on "Good Morning America" to promote the ideas beyond his self-produced video, *Juulers against Juul*. It speaks to both the dangers of juuling and the difficulties in trying to quit this habit once the nicotine addiction takes hold.

In response, High School Principal Ken Bonamo offered the following statement, "We have been aware of the trends regarding student use of Juul and e-cigarettes for some time, but have seen a dramatic increase in use over the past year. What started out as a concern about a relatively small number of students has turned out to be a growing problem that requires a multi-faceted response to a much broader audience. As such, we have developed programming to educate our students, parents, and teachers about the dangers of electronic cigarettes: We have offered a presentation to parents by a physician who specializes in this topic, instruction in physical education classes for all students, and discussions at faculty meetings. We have also sent communiques to teachers and parents to inform and educate them further. And, as an added measure, we have increased staff presence in areas of the building which might be more susceptible to vaping activity."

Additionally, the High School has been in the process of collecting data in order to ascertain how

many students are affected by what is becoming a national teen and adult epidemic. According to the Pride Survey, which was administered in February 2017, 97% of our students reported that they did not use any tobacco products within the past 30 days, and 91% of our students reported that they did not smoke any e-cigarettes within the past 30 days. However, in a follow-up survey given a few weeks ago to SHS 9th, 10th and 11th graders, nearly 17% of the 758 responders said affirmatively that they are juuling or vaping. Of those, nearly 97% say they juul or vape with others. And 24% of users say they do this in school bathrooms. But juuling and vaping effects are not limited to those who are using, as 31% of total survey respondents say that they are negatively impacted by Juuling/vaping in SHS bathrooms. In descriptive language, many students describe feeling awkward and uncomfortable when students are vaping in the restrooms, and, as a result, some students have even said they no longer feel comfortable using the restrooms.

Obviously, we know that we are not alone in tackling this issue, but it is even more difficult when 80% of our students who are using have indicated on the same survey that they do not want help in quitting, and another 12% answered the question with a "maybe," leaving only 8% who said they want to stop. If recognizing a problem is the key to seeking its solution, it seems we have much more work to do with our students. Moreover, we know that this issue is not limited to the High School, and that our focus needs to be on both our Middle and High School students. Know that we are committed to this work and utilizing parents and community members as partners in this endeavor.

Warm regards,
Dr. Thomas Hagerman



What Do Students Need to Learn?



By Lynne Shain, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, and Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation: Co-Directors of the Center for Innovation

Since the 1990's we've heard multiple versions of what students need to learn in school to succeed in the globally interdependent world of the 21st century. Which major themes put forth in these discussions are most relevant, most worthy of action?

Of all the educational thinkers and writers who have tried to answer this essential question, the advice of Dr. Tony Wagner (longtime leader at the Harvard Graduate School of Education), has resonated the most: "It is not what you know, but what you can do with what you know, that counts." His words suggest the need to design more active, project-based learning, with abundant opportunities for students to transfer and apply knowledge and skills to non-standard, challenging situations.

The Scarsdale Schools has embraced this philosophy, and District staff and administrators created a strategic plan that highlights these ideas. The plan includes traditional learning goals, as well as what education author and blogger Will Richardson calls "Modern Learning." Such an approach embraces a focus on:

- Educating the Whole Child
- Fostering a love of learning

- Providing a classical education taught in the progressive tradition
- Embracing a commitment to help others (*Non Sibi*)
- Understanding global connections and their place in an interdependent world
- Engaging in experiences with STEAM, including "Maker" projects
- Using Design Thinking to solve complex problems
- Participating in project-based learning experiences
- Learning how to collaborate with others

This approach to education honors the academic disciplines of individual departments, and employs progressive practices that embrace the holistic intellectual, emotional, and physical development of children and youth; it aims to develop students who are confident and capable 21st Century learners, and who become informed and contributing members of a globalized society.

This type of learning promotes more inquiry and collaboration, and focuses more on concepts, less on procedures. It encourages students to feel free to be more creative, more innovative, more entrepreneurial.

A recent message from PISA (the Programme for International School Assessment) provides quantitative evidence to support collaboration:

It turns out that a mid-pack country in individual results can fare much better in a collaborative setting. While the US hovers at 39th for Mathematics in the PISA test, it scored a remarkable 13th on the first ever focal subject of Collaborative Problem Solving in the PISA. The four Chinese provinces, typically strong performers on the PISA, came in at 26th.

"Strong academic skills will not automatically lead to strong social skills," Andreas Schleicher, who oversees the PISA tests, wrote in an editorial note accompanying the score report. "As workplaces around the globe are demanding - and paying higher wages for - people with well-honed social skills, schools need to do more to help their students develop these skills."

OECD Test for Schools Newsletter March 2018

There are many imperatives for schools to change their approach to learning, including new research, acceleration of globalization, and the increasing impact of technology. These changes have resulted in more emphasis on STEAM; Making/Design Thinking; project-based and active learning; and collaboration.

One promising pathway involves designing learning experiences that incorporate more student choice and voice. Often referred to as student agency, this approach gives students opportunities to follow their passion and use authentic methods to pursue a topic of keen interest: methods such as such as conducting inquiry research using primary sources, and actually interviewing people in that field.

Student agency refers to the level of control, autonomy, and power that a student experiences in an educational situation. Student agency can be provided through giving students voice - the freedom to express their learning preferences; and giving students choice -- the freedom to choose the type of learning environment, subject matter, or pace that works best for them.

The Scarsdale School District uses this approach at the elementary level, by arranging for all fifth grade students to participate in an experience known as the "Capstone Project." As a culmination of their elementary school years, every Scarsdale student embarks on a research project that explores an area of personal interest. In preparation, students receive detailed instruction in how to form

"essential questions," and how to use effective research strategies. These strategies include interviewing an expert in their field of interest, gathering information by going on a site visit, finding appropriate print resources, and searching for online content using subscription databases and other sources.

In addition to providing students with a personalized learning experience, the Capstone project allows students to demonstrate perseverance, learn project management and planning skills, and use a variety of media and technology to make presentations.

Authentic assessment, experiential or project-based learning, and self-directed learning all provide opportunities to increase student agency. More student agency can lead to higher levels of engagement and commitment to the learning process. Student agency is a valuable asset in itself, and it can also help to counteract stress.

As one Scarsdale High School student wrote about her Design Thinking experience in our High School STEAM elective classes offered by Lisa Yokana and Brian McDonald:

The most important thing I can say about these courses is that they are unique from any other ones that our school has to offer. Design thinking teaches you how to think beyond the redundant, robotic, memorization that we attack on a daily basis.

As someone who actually enjoys most of my more traditionally structured classes, the type of learning done in this department has definitely pushed me. Key in this type of learning is failure.

The circuitry, 3D-modeling, coding, etc., that I have learned are all awesome skills to keep in my back pocket. However what we use these hard skills to fabricate is the development of complex and intricate soft skills. Deep empathy, crazy non-linear path of problem solving is something that extends far beyond the STEAM curriculum, ideation, and possibly most importantly, collaboration. I find myself taking what I learn in these classes and implementing it into others, but more importantly, into everyday life.

Ali Rothberg, Scarsdale High School, Class of 2019



Elementary Support Services: Your Comprehensive Guide to What and Why

By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services

Over the past few years there have been a number of changes in the Elementary Student Services and Special Education Departments. We have adjusted and expanded both our general and special education support, and streamlined the processes around identification of students in need of support services. At the end of this article you will find a link to the new Elementary Support Services Handbook, which details the departments, programs, and procedures designed to support our students. I encourage everyone to look through this comprehensive guide. In addition to the "what," the Handbook also explains the "why."

Experience tells us that just about every student will need to access "support services" at some point in their elementary career. For most, that will be confined to occasional contact with one of our psychologists to work through a social situation or process a life event. It could also mean working with the teacher during CCT time for a Tier 1 intervention (the primary level of supplementary intervention in Scarsdale Schools) to overcome an academic challenge. Some students will need

more intensive or longer term support. In any of these cases, the overall focus is to identify challenges the student is having, and provide the support to help the student overcome the challenge. These interventions have two goals. The first and most obvious is to help the child find the proverbial "answer." The second and arguably the more important goal is to give students a skill set that will enable them to face and manage these challenges independently as they arise in the future.

As you will see in the Handbook, there are many types of service and interventions available for students. These services follow a Response to Intervention framework, which means that student interventions, are regularly reviewed to assess the progress being made. Based on these assessments, determinations are made on whether to decrease, continue, or increase services.

As the Handbook illustrates, we think about school-based services along a continuum. This continuum starts with high-quality instruction in every classroom, differentiated for all types of learners, and can continue all the way to specialized programs developed through the Committee on Special Education. Our goal always is to match the needs of a student with the appropriate level of intervention.

I encourage you to access this Handbook to understand our philosophy and the services we provide at the elementary level: [Link to the new Elementary Support Services Handbook](#)



School Rankings

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

Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction



Several national publications have been publishing annual rankings of public schools. Their stated purpose is to provide consumers with a service that allows them to make comparisons between schools and school districts: to "shop." From time to time we get questions from the public about these rankings, and so are providing some basic information about the raters, their methodologies, and what to make of them.

K-12 district and school rankings typically rely either on publically available data (i.e., test scores), user input (requests to schools or users of their site for specific information), or both. The methodologies used to establish rankings (grades, 5-star, or 1-10 scales) range from straight test-score-based ratings/rankings to more complex statistical analyses, sometimes involving surveys taken by those visiting the raters' web sites.

It is important to note that these publications are also businesses -- they sell advertising and/or their data presentations to various sources. Articles that attract readers help their bottom line. The annual publications that we are asked about most often are summarized below.

US News: [Best High Schools](#) relies on published reading and math test data (Regents exams), along with AP (or IB) exam participation to rank schools. They also use a statistical method to predict expected results based on school characteristics, and use actual versus predicted performance to rank.

Washington Post: [America's Most Challenging High Schools](#) uses a "challenge index" which is

simply the number of AP tests taken divided by the number of graduates that year.

Newsweek [NB: *Newsweek* has not published school rankings since 2015]: [America's High Schools](#) and [Beating the Odds \(BTO\)](#) ranks high schools based on two methodologies- straight achievement, and by achievement, but with poverty rate taken into account. To be considered for the list, schools must be in the top 20% in their state in terms of test scores; then, [six indicators are used](#), including graduation rates, AP scores, and counselor-to-student ratios.

Scarsdale Student Achievement vs. National Magazine Rankings

An analysis of the most recent *U.S. News* rankings shows that Scarsdale ranks near the top in several criteria, such as standardized test performance, but low on their "college readiness" formula, which is based almost entirely on participation rate in Advanced Placement (AP) tests.

High School Principal Ken Bonamo notes:"The *U.S. News* list uses participation and performance on Advanced Placement examinations as a major criterion for ranking. Scarsdale moved away from AP courses in 2007 in favor of Advanced Topics courses, which provide teachers with the latitude to design college-level courses without being beholden to an external assessment or curriculum requirement.

"As our AT program has matured, fewer and fewer students are taking AP courses over time, for a number of reasons, including that students are not really looking for advanced placement or early graduation in college, and that colleges have pulled back on the amount and type of credit they give these exams.

"When we instituted AT more than a decade ago, we consulted with colleges to determine whether there would be a negative impact on college admissions. At the time, they assured us that there would be none, and the college placements of students since that time have remained consistently outstanding.

"As a district, we believe that standardized test results do not provide a complete picture of student or school performance, and the *U.S. News* list goes in the opposite direction. From time to time we have reacquainted members of the community with our journey on this issue and have continued to receive support from the community overall."

In a recent report to the Board of Education on Student Assessment, it was noted that Scarsdale students take Advanced Placement and SAT examinations in grades 11 and 12. Historically, Scarsdale's SAT results have been in the top 1% of the top 1% nationally.

For the most part, these tests don't give us results that help us understand teaching and learning, but they do provide us with an independent external benchmark, so we can understand how our students fare in relation to others. In 2016-17, the most meaningful SAT and AP results were as follows:

- Scarsdale's Mean Combined SAT Score results continue to be the highest among comparable districts in our region.
- The percentage of students receiving scores of 3, 4, or 5 on AP Exams is 97%, which has been consistent over several years.

College acceptance results have always been excellent and have grown even stronger over the last two decades. In 2017, 98% of graduates were attending college, 97% in four-year colleges. 59% of graduates were accepted at colleges and universities ranked "most competitive" in the U.S. These statistics compare with 61% in 2010, and 57% in 2005. We do not know of another comprehensive, non-selective, public school district whose students achieve stronger results.

For further details, please see the November, 2017 Curriculum Report, "[Student Assessment in the Scarsdale Schools](#)"

Elementary Food Service Update

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



Throughout this past school year, a committee of school leaders and parents has met to review the current state of lunch services at the four elementary schools that do not have kitchens: Edgewood, Fox Meadow, Greenacres, and Heathcote. This committee was charged with identifying the current strengths and limitations of the PTA-run programs in terms of food quality, food safety, allergy issues, and other dietary concerns. Along the way, we learned that these lunch programs have a relatively short history in the District. More often than not, they were started as fundraisers. A typical example is that pizza was sold by the slice one day each week as an alternative to parents providing lunch every day. Thanks to the dedication of parent volunteers, in the last ten years these services have grown to include online payments and multiple food options five days per week, and are used by as many as 50% of families in each school.

While these programs have had many strengths, and families have been grateful for the efforts of the PTA to organize and often serve lunch, the programs have become increasingly difficult to sustain on a volunteer basis. This, combined with continued pressure from state and national PTAs for local PTAs to move away from providing school lunches, led the PTAs and the District to conclude that the current programs must end in June.

The Committee is pleased to announce an expanded and enhanced partnership with Chartwells (the company that provides food services at the High School, Middle School, and Quaker Ridge Elementary School) to deliver catered meals to the other four elementary schools starting this coming fall. In this new plan, students will have more choices for hot lunches as well as "a la carte" sandwiches, salads, and fruit daily at each school. As we roll out this new plan, we continue to work closely with school leaders and parents to ensure that we provide our children with the highest standards of food quality, choice, and safety, while improving the cost structure, parent controls, and pre-ordering and payment systems for all meals. In particular, we will remain sensitive to the needs of those with dietary restrictions and allergies.

To assist with both the implementation of the expanded Elementary Food Service Program and all food-related operations, the District has arranged through Chartwells for the hiring of an executive chef. Chef John "Mike" Wazny started with the District this past month and is excited to bring his many years of culinary experience to Scarsdale.

Over the summer, elementary school parents will be contacted with instructions on how to sign up for an online payment system. We expect to launch the program in mid-September with full implementation in place no later than October 1, 2018.



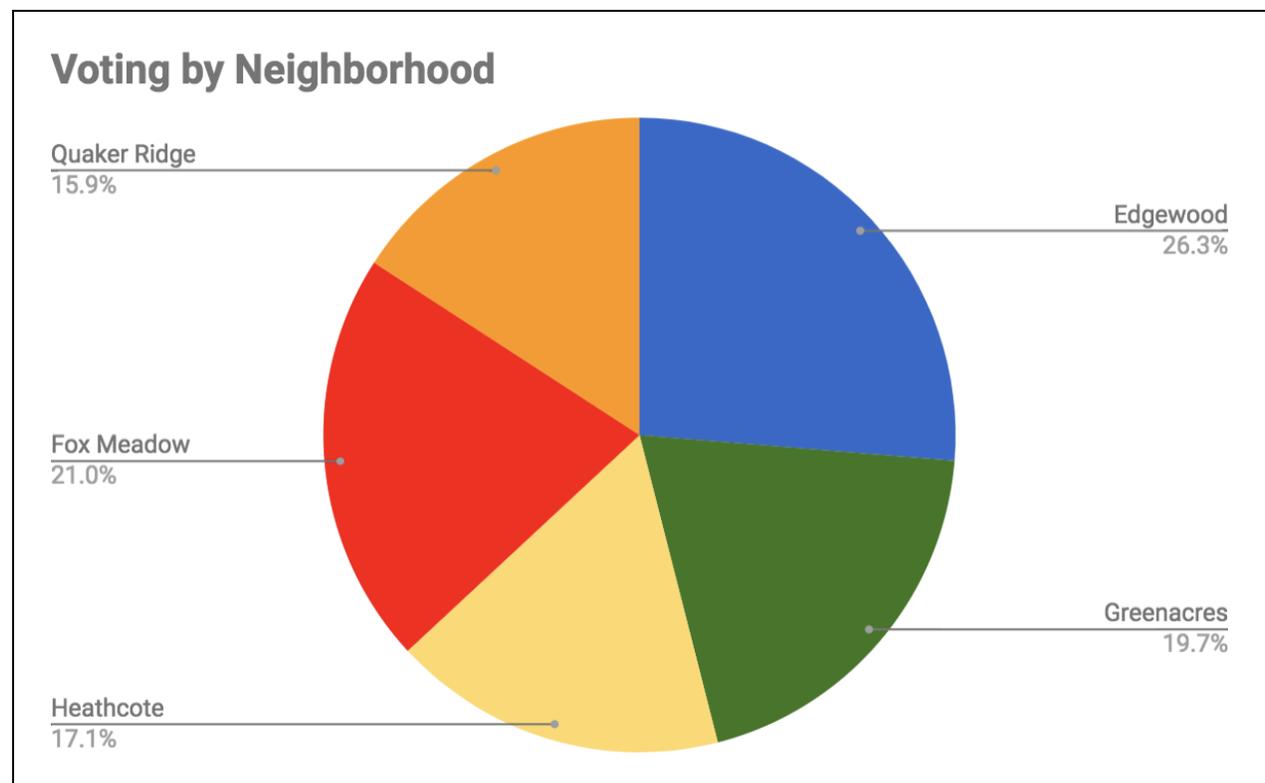
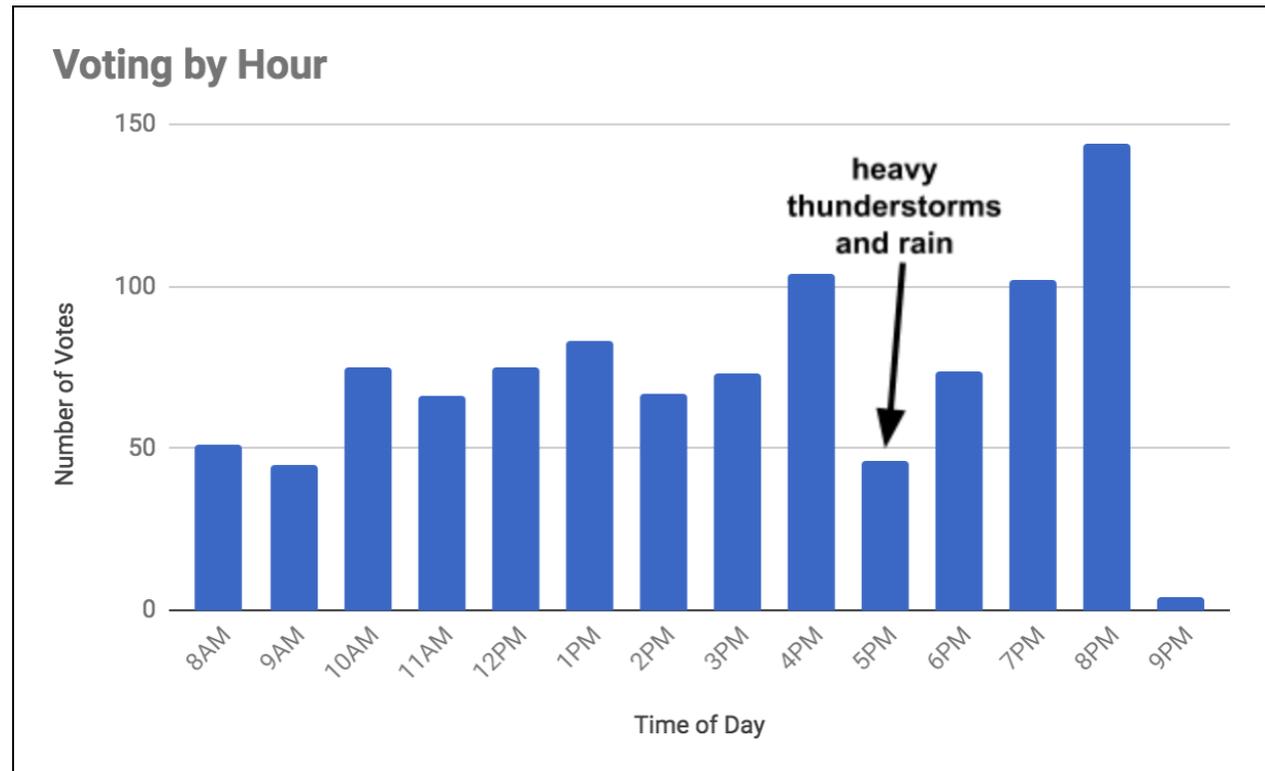
BOLD Election Management System Launched in time for May Vote

By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology

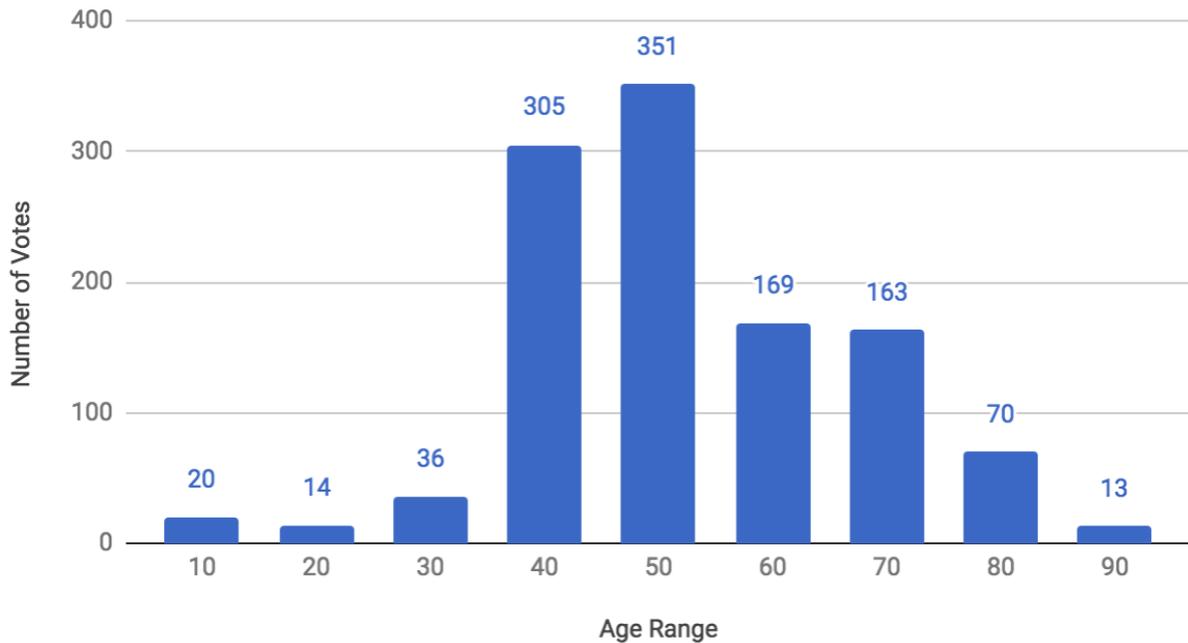
In the last edition of the 'Dale Dispatch, I wrote about the impending implementation of the Election Management System (EMS) by BOLD Systems, LLC. As planned, EMS was launched in time for the May 15 Budget Vote and Election.

EMS replaced the handwritten "buff cards" with digitized voter registrations, printed poll books, and scanning pens. Using EMS proved to be significantly more efficient than the previous system. EMS provides a customized database that incorporates County and District voter information that is reviewed and validated for accuracy. This reduced the amount of discrepancies in the printed poll books which enabled poll workers to locate voter information quickly, reducing the wait time for voters.

This system not only streamlined the process of maintaining voting records and reducing discrepancies, but it has also introduced new reporting capabilities. Below are a few graphs depicting voter turnout for the May 15 Budget Vote and Election. In the future, year-by-year comparisons will provide another interesting dimension.



Voting by Age



This kind of data will be useful in many ways, including community communications, logistics, and monitoring voter turnout over time.

To anticipate questions, I want to be clear that this system only captures voter demographics; it does NOT record actual votes. EMS is completely separate from the County voting machines that tabulate the voting results; individual votes are completely confidential. To learn more about BOLD Systems, LLC, visit www.boldsys.com.

Another benefit EMS provides is that voters are able to see if they are registered to vote by accessing [Am I Registered](#) on the District website. To learn about voter eligibility and how to register to vote, please visit the [Voter Registration](#) page, also on the District website.



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Scarsdale District Office
2 Brewster Road
Scarsdale, NY
(914) 721-2525