



SCARSDALE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Schools



Where There's a Will...(Richardson, that is)

Dear Parents, Colleagues, and Community Members,

Will Richardson has an imposing presence. He is a tall man, standing over six feet, with a strong jawbone, goatee, and medium length, silver hair pulled back into a tight ponytail. When he speaks, it is hard not to notice that he might look as natural on the set of some new *Lord of the Rings* film as he does in front of groups of educators.

Although I didn't ask him directly, I suspect that Richardson's stature helps in his current role as a passionate advocate and provocateur. You see, Will is well known for his keen observations, bold declarations, and pointed questions:

"Stop innovating in Schools. Please."

"We've trained our kids to wait. They wait to be told what they should learn, how they should learn it, and how to show that they've learned it."

"Most schools try to tell a good story about who they are, what kids accomplish while there, and what sets it apart from other places of learning. Very few schools, however, have a good narrative, and these days, a narrative is more important than a story."

When Richardson makes these claims, you can see the visceral response among his audience. You can hear it, too, since there is no shortage of questions that challenge his assumptions and assertions. And yet, he remains steadfast in his thinking, drawing from his experience as a 22-year public educator, national speaker and thought partner, educational blogger, and author of four books.

Two weeks ago, we were fortunate enough to have Richardson come back to Scarsdale; it was his second visit in three years. Throughout the day he visited classrooms, engaged in conversations with staff, and presented to teachers, administrators, and parents. On this visit he spoke to many of the themes in his latest book, *From Master Teacher to Master Learner*.

The basis of his thesis is fairly straightforward. Subject area content is everywhere. And with its exponential proliferation, there is no humanly way possible for teachers to remain ahead of this curve. Moreover, children will access this information in the ways that are most interesting and accessible to them individually. Think internet searches, online books, YouTube videos, games/simulations, and, of course, apps. If students are dissatisfied with the value or quality of one experience, they will move on to the next -- and, be assured, they are discerning consumers of information. Given this phenomenon, classrooms can no longer be seen as single sources of content, and teachers can no longer be relegated to purveyors and assessors of relevant knowledge.

A case in point: a parent who was in the audience at Richardson's after-school presentation contacted me this weekend to let me know that her daughter taught herself how to read her own MRI, and then informed her mother that she had a torn ligament in two places. The daughter engaged in this research because the doctor wasn't available to review the images until Monday, and she wanted to know. When Monday came, it was confirmed that the daughter's diagnosis was exactly right. When kids want to know something, when they are engaged, and when they care, they make it their business to find out how to do things.

This, of course, begs the question, "what is the role of the classroom and teacher in this new paradigm?" Not surprisingly, Richardson has some thoughts on this as well. He posits that, while different, the role of the

teacher remains critical. Both personal experience and vast amounts of research remind us that most of content knowledge in any given class is superficially acquired and quickly forgotten. We've likely all had the experience of watching as a child memorizes facts or information, takes a test, makes a good grade, and then is unable to recall what was "learned" only days, weeks, or months before.

Richardson believes that focusing too heavily on content mastery is both misguided and a missed opportunity for our children. Instead, he asserts that we should be engaging students in "productive" learning, or experiences that engage students in the moment, but more importantly, instill a desire to learn more. In doing so, we build capacity for students to take a more active role in their learning, steering and guiding its trajectory, based on their individual needs and interests. Richardson is clear that this includes both what students are studying, and how they demonstrate their mastery of that learning. Over time, this agency leads to deeper conceptual understanding in all content areas, more nuanced and transferable skills across many domains, and, perhaps most important, confidence in their competency as learners and do-ers, both inside and outside the classroom.

The role then must necessarily shift from teacher-with-all-the-answers to teacher-as-master-learner. Said another way, teachers take on even more active roles as facilitators, coaches, and problem solvers. They create the conditions for an engaging classroom; devise authentic problems and experiences for students to tackle; and provide resources, feedback, and expert consultation. Richardson says that it is imperative for students to see and understand their teachers as learners as well, so that they can internalize and emulate an array of strategies for accessing and using knowledge in different ways and settings.

Although passionate about his views, Will Richardson is no ideologue. He understands that this type of transformation in schools does not occur without controversy. In an era of high stakes testing, this approach, which values depth over breadth, would likely result in a decrease in overall subject content coverage, leading to greater stress on the part of both teachers and parents regarding student performance on standardized assessments. According to Richardson, this is our choice and our challenge. And, quite frankly, it gets to the crux of the issue. To make this, or any other meaningful change, in schools today, we must cultivate a united vision about what we want for our students, and we must be deliberate and thoughtful about how to achieve those outcomes. If we are okay with the status quo, then our job is easy, and there is no more to say....On the other hand, if we want students to have more agency over their learning, if we want them to engage in "productive" work that they are passionate about, and if we want our teachers to be empowered to engage

students in new and meaningful ways that may not be measured by more traditional metrics, then maybe our conversation has just begun. A next step in this journey is clearly moving from the Will...to the way.

Warmly,

Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent



Scarsdale Students Engage in Global Pilot Assessment

By Lynne Shain, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction

Lynne Shain and Sue Peppers, SHS Assistant Principal, observe students taking part in the Global Learning Assessment pilot project

Scarsdale High School students in Christopher Side's science class recently worked with a class at the Hwa Chong Institution (HCI) in Singapore on a collaborative, real-world science problem. Students worked in teams to engage with a global issue ("The Global Warming Challenge: Keeping global warming below 2°C") as a Global Pilot Assessment, sponsored by the Global Learning Alliance (GLA).

Members of the GLA, representing eight countries, will be studying the findings of this Global Pilot Assessment at the GLA Summit this summer. They will examine how students working in small groups exhibit collaborative problem-solving capacities in virtual communities. These are the objectives guiding their research:

1. To understand how students engage in knowledge sharing / construction in virtual communities:
2. To identify how students in groups draw on different sets of expertise and collaborate to solve problems in virtual communities: and
3. To study ways students demonstrate ability to work in a team towards a shared goal.

Three student groupings were involved in this project: HCI-only groups, Scarsdale-only groups, and HCI-Scarsdale groups. This allows researchers to compare data across groups and in particular, to explore how the inter-school/country collaboration may differ from the school-only collaboration.

Prior to the collaboration, students were asked to read the problem frame and linked articles. They then discussed these through WizIQ during the first online session on March 4th. Students were encouraged to share what they learned and raise questions. Raising questions is important to this research because we want to explore how students critically engage with what they read, and how their collaborative discussion helps generate critical questions related to the problem. Questioning is a key learning disposition: good solutions to problems are dependent on asking good questions in the first place.

Toward the end of the first session, each group discussed a focus topic and identified five related questions they wanted to investigate further. They delegated specific roles to each team member who would research one question. During the second online session on March 11th, team members shared their research. The team then synthesized this into a specific research question and discussed a possible innovative solution to the problem,

The GLA was founded by the Scarsdale Public Schools, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Hwa Chong Institution. The Summit at which the group will review this Pilot Assessment will take place in Singapore in August.

The Work To Be Done

By Dr. Bernard Josefsberg, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Human Services and Leadership Development

A higher rate of urgency does not imply ever-present panic, anxiety, or fear. It means a state in which complacency is virtually absent.

-- John P. Kotter

Looking for a few outstanding candidates to fill a small number of teaching positions, I recently attended a Columbia University Education Fair. Looking to fill a much larger number of positions, a Washington D.C, Public Schools (DCPS) recruiter - from the "Office of Talent and Culture" - sat immediately to my left. She told me that DCPS hired 800 teachers for this school year, which translates to about 23 percent of the district's total teaching staff. The comparable figure for Scarsdale is less than 5 percent.

Her display table featured an elaborate set-up of signage and swag, designed to lure prospects into her zone of influence. She worked hard all day, jumping up from her chair and repeatedly leaning forward to better position herself to emphasize the opportunities available in her school system. She was singularly assertive in expressing an upbeat message that is echoed on the DCPS website wherein the following information can be found:

DCPS in Numbers:

- **46,500** - The number of students committed to graduating from high school, prepared for college and work.
- **3,500** - The number of teachers determined to live up to our unparalleled role in ensuring the achievement of our students.
- **111** - The number of schools and principals who demonstrate the vision to build positive school communities focused on academic achievement.
- **3,500** - The number of classroom aides, social workers, counselors, custodians and other support staff who understand that our students must be safe, healthy and supported in order to achieve at the highest possible levels.
- **Countless** - The number of parents and family members supporting our children and demanding a high-quality education for them.

In short, she embodied "a sense of urgency."

What is the Scarsdale counterpart of that sense of urgency? First, some numbers:

- **80** - The number of faculty participants at the Fall Leaders Meeting convened to update the District's vision statement, "A Scarsdale Education for Tomorrow" (SET 2.0).
- **10** - The number of "commonalities" identified as critically important to that vision. They are: Love of Learning; A Classical Education taught in the Progressive Tradition; The "Whole" Child; Global Connections; STEAM; Making; Design Thinking; Project-based Learning/Active Learning; *Non Sibi*; and Collaboration.
- **3090** -- The number of square feet envisioned for the SHS Maker-Space- I-Lab that will be ready for students in 2017.
- **2,480,000** - The estimate of dollars required to build the SHS Maker Space I-Lab
- **40** - The number of Scarsdale High School students engaged with their counterparts from Singapore in exploring "Inter-cultural Collaboration through a Global Issues Project." (See Lynne Shain's accompanying article).
- **Countless** - The number of learning opportunities provided to our students that draw upon the challenges and opportunities of global interdependence.

What "sense of urgency" do these numbers suggest? The answer, I submit, lies in the work to be done to realize the ambitious learner-centered vision of "A Scarsdale Education for Tomorrow." The teachers that Scarsdale seeks are those who understand what that vision requires -- of them as individuals, of their new-found colleagues, and of the system as a whole.

May 2017 Capital Bond Project Update

By Stuart Matthey, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities



The District is now in the midst of planning for an upcoming bond vote a little over a year from now, in May 2017.

KG&D, the District architects, recently completed a comprehensive Building Condition Survey (BCS) for all buildings, which is required by New York State. The BCS identifies, by building, infrastructure items that will most likely need to be addressed over the next five years and prioritizes these items as follows:

- Priority 1: urgent work required for safety or to prevent imminent

- damage to the facility;
- Priority 2: health and safety work required by current building code or to remedy unsatisfactory conditions;
- Priority 3: replacement of aging building systems, general maintenance, and efficiency improvements; and
- Priority 4: desirable improvements to enhance appearance and function of spaces and address technology and curriculum enhancements.

In addition to the BCS, we have convened building-level teams comprised of building stakeholders to review the infrastructure needs of each building, and also to review and recommend improvements that would enhance the programmatic or building experience for all on a daily basis.

Once these building-level committees complete their work in the next four to six weeks, a building-level Master Plan will be developed reflecting each building committee's recommended work on a prioritized basis as well as BCS prioritized items. These building Master Plans will, in turn, be submitted to the Board of Education for their review.

The work of both the original and re-convened Greenacres Building Committees and all of the Greenacres Building analysis reports, including the Building Conditions Survey, have already been received by the Board as part of this process and may be accessed on the District website ([link](#)). In addition, two public forums have also been held, allowing attendees to hear and voice opinions on a presentation of the BCS and the future of Greenacres in particular.

After receipt and review, all Master Plans and information will be forwarded to a soon to be formed District-wide Facilities Steering Committee. This Committee will review all building Master Plans over the course of the summer and early fall before submitting their recommendations to the Board of Education in November.

The Board of Education will then review those recommendations and hold public forums throughout the winter before finalizing a bond proposal in April 2017, for a vote by the community in May 2017.

Beyond the Couch:

Psychologists' Role in our School Community

By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services

Modern psychology, especially school psychology, has moved on from the ink blots, couches, and jackets with elbow patches that many of us conjure in our minds when thinking about a psychologist. We may think of psychologists in terms of treating

disorders or helping us through traumatic experiences. While this is a part of what they do, it doesn't tell the whole story. Scarsdale employs 10 psychologists across our schools; they are an integral part of the educational community. In addition to their counseling duties, they help in creating school culture, and guide the social development of students, but play different roles depending on grade levels.

Elementary school is a time when student habits, personalities and basic social skills are formed and solidified. This makes social learning a major part of the curriculum, and a major focus for the psychologists. Psychologists teach three formal social skills lessons in every class on every grade level each year, and they also drop in to teach "lessons of the moment" on a regular basis. The lessons focus on bullying, problem solving, social thinking, and conflict resolution. These skills are reinforced by the classroom teacher to help students put them into practice. Psychologists also play a major part in providing positive behavioral interventions in situations where students need help resolving conflicts or understanding expectations. I can't emphasize enough how the tone our elementary psychologists use in their teaching and in their dealings with individual students sets expectations for student behavior for their entire educational careers.

Where elementary school is a time for setting foundations, Middle School is a time of transition and self-discovery. Students transition from childhood to adolescence, with all of the excitement and trepidation that comes with it. Friendships change and evolve, boys and girls start to become less icky to one another, and students prone to anxiety and depression start to experience its impact. Our psychologists run numerous counseling/social skills groups, see students individually, and collaborate with the houses they serve during team meetings. This year they are also piloting a peer mentoring program, in which students with disabilities from the High School get to spend time with Middle School students with disabilities, and share their experiences and knowledge.

Our High School psychologists help prepare our students for independence. High School students start to look and act like adults, and they experience many adult situations. Our psychologists are often the ones helping them learn to cope with these situations, including hard choices, temptation, rejection, sexual orientation, and stress. Along with the counseling that these types of issues require, the psychologists visit health classes and grade level seminars to discuss emotional health issues. Over the past two years the psychologists have also started a number of executive functioning groups, including one for seniors leaving for college.

These professionals are often unsung, but their contributions regulate the emotional health of our community and provide comfort to its members who are in turmoil.

Scarsdale Physical Education: Past, Present, and Future

By Ray Pappalardi, Director of Physical Education, Health, and Athletics

If you walk from the High School Brewster lobby toward the Central Office, you will see two photos in the hallway, hanging in one frame, on the right just after the Public Information Office. These

photos depict two Scarsdale High School physical education classes from the 1920s. Interestingly, while these photos tell us a bit about our past, they also provide a glimpse into our future.

Side by side, the two photos show boys' and girls' physical education classes. In both classes, several pieces of apparatus are set up with horsehair mats to provide cushioned landings. A horizontal bar, horizontal ladder, parallel bars, still rings, swinging rings, wall bars, benches and climbing ropes can be seen in the boys' photo. The girls' photo includes balance beams, a pommel/vaulting horse, and replaces climbing ropes with vertical rope ladders. In each of the classes, students are engaged performing or spotting. While you cannot tell if the classes are running simultaneously within Gyms A and B, the boys and girls are separated into two distinct groups.



A Scarsdale High School physical education class in the 1920s

While the early 20th century dates each photo via student uniforms and construction of the equipment, the curriculum is clearly progressive. The multiple and diverse nature of the apparatus offered a variety of training and developmental options. The setting allowed for differentiation and personalization of instruction at a time when cohort instruction prevailed. The classes provided opportunity for the development of both health and skill-related fitness components in an environment that required moderate to vigorous physical activity. Furthermore, the exclusion of an instructor in either photo reflects a student-centered philosophy.

The classes depicted in these photos share a progressive approach with the current fitness units at Scarsdale High School. Start-up Fitness, Fitness Fundamentals, Principles of Modern Fitness, iFit, and Raider Fit allow students to develop skill and health-related fitness. Each unit provides a basis of content knowledge with an emphasis on performing functional movements with proper technique. Students are expected to extend their knowledge through development of personalized plans and monitoring their own individual progress.

However, it should be noted that the old photos show apparatus that enabled instruction to be differentiated and individualized to match student interest and abilities. This is where our past confronts our present, and demands a different future. The present weight room limits our students' development in nearly every way that the 1920's classes in the photos provided opportunity. Currently, choice and interest are replaced by fixed stations. Open space and free movement are stifled by overcrowding. Safety is maintained through high levels of teacher management and student conformity.

Fortunately, the promise of a new fitness facility in January of 2017 will provide relief. The new fitness center under Gyms 3 and 4 will be a state-of-the-art teaching and learning facility with a focus on wellness and movement throughout a lifetime. Our new space will support student interest and development in ways beyond those depicted in those photos. Our facilities will match our curriculum and provide freedom and opportunity to boys and girls of all interests and abilities.



District Website Redesign Launched

By Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation

The District recently launched a redesigned website that will allow us to improve communication and highlight the work of our students and teachers.

The new website includes a number of new features:

- A fresh, modern design, that takes advantage of the full browser window
- More room for announcements and other information
- Responsive design, allowing for easy website navigation on mobile devices
- A "Scarsdale Spotlight" area that features stories about our schools
- Embedded social media icons that link to our Facebook page, streaming video channel, and forthcoming Twitter feed

The website is currently "in transition" and new media will be added on a regular basis. Be sure to check www.scarsdaleschools.org as we continue to update our content.



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