



SCARSDALE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE (MAY 2016)

Superintendent's Message (Dr. Thomas Hagerman)

ALERTS: Budget Vote May 17, Half Days Reinstated in June

Engineering is Elementary (Lynne Shain, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum)

Well, Well, Well (Dr. Bernard Josefsberg, Asst. Supt. for Personnel)

Planning Timeline (Stuart Matthey, Asst. Supt. for Business)

Inclusion, Value, and Affirmation (Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education)

Mindfulness and Mindset (Ray Pappalardi, Dir. of Physical Educ., Health, and Athletics)

Technology Plan (Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation)

From Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Schools



Geoffrey Chaucer + 21st Century Learning = A Paradox?

During the rain-soaked days of the past week I found myself, at various times, transported back to my younger years as an English major with a love of Chaucer's work. I was so enamored my senior year of college that I actually entered a literary competition dedicated to the Bard. As part of the preparation, I even memorized a good portion of the *Prologue* of the *Canterbury Tales*:

*Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;*

*Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.
(General Prologue, 1-12)*

If your Middle English is a little rusty, Chaucer is simply describing the return of spring: April showers, burgeoning flowers, and birdsong. Of course, he is also setting the stage for English pilgrims to visit the relics of Saint Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. They intend to thank the martyr for his assistance during difficult times: a typical spring endeavor at the time.

Not surprisingly, there is significant debate among educators themselves, and between students and instructors, about the relevance of studying literature like this that is six centuries old with somewhat archaic and stilted language. In fact, we have had several speakers in Scarsdale this year alone who have openly challenged the significance of any sacrosanct content across all curricular domains. They have argued that both the proliferation of information and the technology to access it renders mastery of content an untenable goal.

This may seem like a somewhat contradictory message in a place that has prided itself on providing our students with an outstanding classical education in a progressive fashion. It is also easy to understand how this balance might be questioned with our very vocal and visible foci on innovation, STEAM, and entrepreneurship.

First, I want to affirm that it is absolutely imperative to provide our students with appropriate 21st century skills. These include cognitive (i.e. critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity), interpersonal (i.e. self-regulation, collaboration, social-influence), and intrapersonal (i.e. curiosity, diversity appreciation, work ethic) competencies that will allow them to successfully engage in authentic work with others, not only now, but for a lifetime. The world is an ever-changing set of interconnected systems and relationships, and those who understand that, and adapt accordingly, will

be those who are most successful. Those who do not will face inevitable irrelevance.

However, the development of refined competencies in isolation does not ensure success in this new paradigm. Another significant variable of equal weight in this equation is authentic work. For students, this is derived, in part, from substantial and challenging content. There are many choices of literature that are a lot easier to access that can help students learn similar elements, so why is Chaucer still important?

Given what we know about 21st century learning, educators understand that students need to be challenged with meaningful work. Effective teachers for today's students recognize that it is their responsibility to translate Chaucer into a relevant topic with tasks or problems that actively engage students. This is often most effective when students are involved in an inquiry process that utilizes higher level thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Students should also be given a choice about how to demonstrate their iterative thinking and any solutions or findings. In other words, rather than simply decoding the Middle English version of the *Prologue* and *Tales* into a modern language version for a perfunctory, comprehension exercise, a teacher who really embraces tradition and innovation will create a challenge for students that requires a variety of tools, techniques, and resources to both decipher these vignettes and do something meaningful with them. A highly developed task will also utilize skills that students currently have, but also likely ones they do not, requiring critical problem-solving and collaboration.

In an odd twist of fate, the *Canterbury Tales*, itself, is the direct result of a design challenge. The problem: a long road trip, a motley crew, no entertainment, and cash-strapped times. The solution: In a tavern near London, the Narrator joins 29 pilgrims. He sets up a competition where each pilgrim will tell four tales, two on each leg of the trip. The winner will be rewarded with a dinner when they return, compliments of the collective group. The Narrator also decides that he gets to choose the winner and retains all artistic rights for describing and recasting both the pilgrims and their tales. Did the Narrator, Harry Bailey, get it right? Why did he, or why not? How might a group or class of students design this challenge differently? How might students re-create this challenge themselves, and who would they choose as the judge? How would this change the outcome?

The depth and complexity of this Chaucer work creates endless possibilities for student interaction and ownership. In turn, students not only internalize important plot, character, and theme information, but they also come to recognize the relevance of historical literature and artifacts through new interpretations.

So, does every teen need to read Chaucer? Probably not. Although I was and continue to be a big fan, I recognize this might be an acquired taste for some. However, if the real question is, does every child need to be provided with unvarnished, rigorous content, like Chaucer, across all subject areas? The answer is an unqualified "yes." Learning how to access, interact with, and manipulate difficult raw materials isn't just preparation for the future; it is what will sustain us through it.

"And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche." (Chaucer)

With warm regards,
Dr. Thomas Hagerman

ALERTS:

Budget Vote and Board of Education Elections

The Scarsdale Schools Budget Vote and Board of Education Elections will take place on Tuesday, May 17, from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Scarsdale Middle School Gym.

Unused Snow Days Allow for Half-Days in June

Because the District needed to use only one snow day this year, four half-days for the elementary schools will be reinstated during the last school week in June, Monday through Thursday, June 20-23. High School Graduation is that Friday, June 24, and is a 10 a.m. early dismissal day for all schools.



Engineering is Elementary: Pilot Program in Grades 1, 3, and 5

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

Our District has embraced the importance of integrating STEAM learning activities into our instructional program at all levels: elementary school, middle school, and high school. The acronym STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. This article focuses on one aspect of progress toward our STEAM goal at the elementary level in grades 1, 3, and 5.

Most of us have watched children play, and we know they're fascinated with building things -- and with taking things apart to see how they work. Children are natural-born engineers. During the next school year, Scarsdale students in Grades 1, 3, and 5 will have an opportunity to further tap into their natural disposition to tinker and build. This summer, teachers from the selected grades will work with the Science Helping Teacher, Jennifer Kiley, using materials developed by the Museum of Science in Boston (*Engineering is Elementary*), to organize the following engineering experiences:

Grade 1: The Best of Bugs: Designing Hand Pollinators

Grade 3: The Attraction is Obvious: Designing Maglev Systems.

Grade 5: Water, Water, Everywhere: Designing Water Filters

Engineering calls for children to ask questions, and test and re-test a hypothesis by applying what they know about science and math. This must be an iterative process of trial and error until expected outcomes are reached. Engineering activities, based on real-world technologies and problems, help children see how all the STEAM disciplines are inter-related and relevant to their lives.

Well, Well, Well

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

In preparation for next year, to date, the Board of Education has appointed 14 educators to probationary positions in Scarsdale. Five educators within the District have been appointed to new positions. Ten or so additional positions will likely be filled by the end of June.

Time will tell whether in fact their outstanding credentials will enable these educators to flourish in Scarsdale. Their appointments can be understood as predictions that they will. Those predictions aside, I can say with complete confidence that upon entering Scarsdale these educators present credentials that are...outstanding.

They are well educated, with degrees from such places as University of Chicago, Boston College, University of Rochester, Manhattan College, Teachers College, University of Wisconsin, St. John's University, Yeshiva University, Fordham University, North Carolina School of the Arts, University of Connecticut, Dowling College, SUNY Geneseo, University of

Missouri, Syracuse University, New York University, Hunter College, Bank Street College, University of Delaware, University of Miami, and Bucknell University.

They are also a well-experienced cohort, having served in such places as Bronxville, Bronx High School of Science, Stephen Gaynor School, Bedford, New York City, Ardsley, Nyack, Stuyvesant High School, Bishop McGann, Mercy High School, The Dalton School, Mahopac, and Democracy Prep Charter High School.

Moreover, they have been well vetted, not only by their prospective colleagues and supervisors during a regimen of interviews, but also by Scarsdale students during their demonstration lessons.

And finally, they are all excited about what lies ahead. And we are excited for them, and for this opportunity to work together.

Planning Timeline for 2017 Bond

By Stuart Matthey, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities



The District is currently in the pre-referendum stage of planning for a Bond proposal, set for May, 2017, that would address facility infrastructure needs throughout the District. The final project scope will encompass projects identified by the recently-completed Building Conditions Survey, building-level committees (including the Greenacres committee), and the soon-to-be-completed Fields Master Plan.

All those projects will be submitted to a District-wide Steering Committee, which will meet next fall and review every possible project. The Committee will then offer its recommendations to the Board of Education on project inclusion and priorities. The Bond Project Planning Timeline is as follows:

TASK	WHO	BEGIN	END
Building Condition Survey	Architects	Sept. 2015	Nov. 2015
Greenacres Feasibility Report	Greenacres Bldg. Committee	Oct. 2015	Dec. 2015
Bldg. Conditions Survey Report	Architects	Nov. 2015	Jan. 2016
Receipt and Review of Reports	Board of Education	Dec. 2015	Jan. 2016
Public Info. Forums	Administration	Feb. 2016	Mar. 2016

Bldg. Level Committee Reports	Building Level Committees	Dec. 2015	May 2016
Master Plan for Fields Report	Architects	Nov. 2015	May 2016
Receipt and Review of Reports	Board of Education	June 2016	June 2016
District-wide Facilities Plan Report	District-wide Steering Committee	Sept. 2016	Nov. 2016
Receipt and Review of Report and Final Scope Determination	Board of Education	Dec. 2016	Jan. 2017
Public Info. Forums	Administration	Feb. 2017	May 2017
Bond Project Vote	District Residents	May 2017	May 2017

Scarsdale Includes, Values, and Affirms All Students

By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services

Over the past few years transgender issues have become more prevalent in the news and popular media. As society becomes more informed and accepting of transgender people, inevitably more students will feel comfortable enough to express their gender identity openly. Scarsdale is no exception: we have transgender students now, and expect more in the future. Our District is fully committed to ensuring that all students feel included, valued, and affirmed.

The topic of transgender can make people uncomfortable. In the absence of understanding and information, it can conjure stereotypes, and leave us unsure of what we can and can not talk about. Much of the media coverage is currently focused on whether people who identify as transgender should be able to use restrooms that align with their gender identification rather than their assigned gender at birth. However, this is just one small piece of a much more complex issue. Unfortunately, the coverage of this particular aspect often focuses less on understanding and compassion and more on headlines that sell.

Given these omissions, here is some Transgender 101: Transgender refers to those whose gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth, or those who do not feel they fit either gender. Transgender people sometimes decide to transition from the sex assigned at birth to their gender identity, in order to align their gender expression with their gender identity. This could include using new pronouns, dressing or using facilities aligned with their gender identity, and/or

medical gender transition treatments. Transgender people often feel strongly about their gender identity from an early age, and many spend much of their school careers hiding who they are. The nomenclature around transgender can often feel confusing, both for transgender people and for their friends and family, even for those with the best of intentions. Just as we do with names, in general, it is often best to just to ask what their preferences are for gender naming. ([Click here for more information on transgender issues](#))

Although bombarded from a very early age with body image and role stereotype messages, it is my experience that most people have given very little thought to gender as a construct, one which has a lot of fluidity and nuance. Until we start to think carefully about gender and really analyze how it plays a part in our social norms, we don't realize how being transgender plays an enormous role in a child's development. Research shows that transgender students suffer from dramatically higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide than non-transgender students. Given that, it is important to note that recent research suggests that parental, school, and community support decreases the incidence of these mental health issues. As a public school district, we have a responsibility to provide a safe and affirming space for all children, including transgender students. As a community committed to inclusion, diversity, and *non sibi*, we also have an obligation to value and celebrate every person who is a part of the dynamic mosaic that is Scarsdale.

Recently, U. S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced a lawsuit combating a North Carolina law restricting restroom use. She stated:

This action is about a great deal more than just bathrooms. This is about the dignity and respect we accord our fellow citizens...And it's about the founding ideals that have led this country - haltingly but inexorably - in the direction of fairness, inclusion and equality for all Americans.

Schools play an instrumental role in building a society that strives to be inclusive of all races, religions, abilities and disabilities, sexual orientations, and genders. The acceptance exhibited by children, especially young children, of people's differences reminds us of our common humanity and our propensity to be inclusive prior to learning how not to be. To this end, over the next year the District will review our educational, logistical, and communication systems: we will explore whether they foster inclusivity, while keeping in mind the need to serve all students efficiently. With the help of experts and community resources, the District will develop principles for engaging our students, faculty, and families with regard to transgender issues. This work must also strike a balance in fostering an accepting community while not calling attention to

particular students or families.

While the national narrative may focus on headlines, bathrooms, and political positions, we will continue to choose to focus on the children in our community. Our students each experience their own unique story as they become the people they are meant to be. At Scarsdale, we are fortunate to see that manifest in innumerable ways. However, these journeys will be uniquely affected by the messages we deliver to them as individuals and, collectively, as a District and as a community. Scarsdale has long been an open, welcoming community, and this remains true for our transgender students.

Mindfulness and Mindset:

A Socio-Emotional Approach to Achieving Wellness

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

Stress can be overwhelming. While some thrive under stressful conditions, many people do not. In fact, people under stress can experience physical, mental, and emotional symptoms. The stressed are more prone to injury, to exhibit fatigue, and to suffer from illnesses. Consequently, the stressed have higher absentee rates and lower levels of productivity.

Exceedingly high expectations within a high-achieving school district with very hectic schedules can exacerbate stress. More and more often, we are seeing confidence and perseverance in our children succumb to fear and anxiety. Sadly, the love of learning may be lost while our children are "doing school," trying to keep up with expectations in a successful, but intense, community. Understanding our holistic responsibility for our students, the District is employing mindfulness and mindset training to help our community cope with stress and its contributors.

To offset the effect and alter the perception of stress, mindfulness and mindset can be useful tools. Mindfulness is a therapeutic tool that is now being infused into school programming at all levels. Focusing on the present without judgment and acknowledging one's thoughts, feelings, and physical state of being is at the core of being mindful. The result of "being present" and paying attention to your well-being has several positive results. By understanding your physical, emotional, and mental states, you are better equipped to focus, connect with others, and reduce brain chatter. Ultimately, you are able to slow down and allow your brain to function at a manageable pace.

Mindset, specifically referring to a growth mindset, provides needed perspective: much of life and living is under our control; and further, we should focus on the things that we can control. Mindset offers a framework for approaching challenging situations, dealing with mistakes, and "growing

forward." Using a positive attitude, embracing criticism, viewing failures as challenges to overcome, along with trying new things, are all part of a growth mindset. Having a growth mindset allows challenges, obstacles, criticism, and the success of others to fuel the love of learning. It is not surprising to learn that grit, perseverance, and resilience are by-products of having a growth mindset, as are hope and happiness.

Balancing work/school and home life has become an omnipresent task in the life of our community. It is my hope that we can work together to become mindful and accept growth mindsets as tools to empower ourselves and our children.



Technology Plan is District's New "Learning Plan"

By Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and In

Our new Technology Plan was presented to the community at the May 4th Board of Education meeting. The Plan is the District's core technology document that follows the latest National Technology Standards and serves as the cornerstone for all of our work in instructional and information technology. This year's plan represents a collaborative effort among the members of our K-12 Technology Committee, as well as art teachers, science teachers, and elementary ELA Helping Teachers. In many ways, the inclusion of several academic teams in the planning process makes this comprehensive Technology Plan our new "Learning Plan."

Three associated "integrated components" will also be published to supplement the core Technology Plan. They include:

- K-12 STEAM Sequence Draft #1 (early May)
- K-5 Digital Literacies with grade level expectations (June)
- K-12 Coding Sequence (SMS and SHS early May, elementary this summer)

The publication of these integrated components will allow parents and community members to understand our comprehensive approach to technology instruction. Their publication will also address important goals in this year's Transition Plan. Members of the public are encouraged to download and review the new Technology Plan [here](#), as well as the integrated components (when they are released).

Along with the launch of the new Technology Plan, the District has also launched a new mobile app to help parents and the community connect with District resources from their iPhones, iPads, or Android devices. You can download the free "Scarsdale App" from the Apple store or the Google Play store. Along with our Website and Facebook page, the app will help everyone keep in touch with the Scarsdale Schools community. When you

download the app, be sure to go into settings to select the schools which you would like to receive information about.



[SIGN UP FOR EMAILS](#)

[SHARE THIS EMAIL](#)

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