



SCARSDALE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman

Superintendent of Schools



### The Year Ahead

I would like to officially welcome everyone to the 2016-17 school year.

It is remarkable to me how summer seems to get shorter each and every year, this one being no exception. I can vividly remember just sending off our graduates into the world -- although it was months, it seems like only days ago. And, here we are again, already opening our doors to a new crop of young scholars.

Although many associate the summer months with "down time" -- travel, beach, and cookouts -- Scarsdale's staff, teachers, and administrators continue to work arduously on behalf of students and families, engaged in both their own training and education, and in the development and implementation of programs and services. From an array of classes and workshops across content areas, to District-wide facility upgrades, to technology infrastructure improvements, folks in Scarsdale are deeply committed to creating optimal learning environments for our

students, both inside and outside the classroom.

The group that I worked with most closely this summer, my Cabinet (the three assistant superintendents and four department directors), spent the last many months engaged in hiring and onboarding new staff, reviewing curriculum, implementing new programs and inclusion classrooms, attending to District-wide facility issues, and optimizing both instructional and operational technology.

As we have done now for the past couple of years, during the first week back with students and teachers, my Cabinet paired up and toured all of our schools. Common themes that emerged during our debrief of these visits included: excited, engaged, and happy students; energized and prepared staff; and a very smooth opening in terms of operations. In fact, this positive energy around those first few days continued on into that weekend. Although not widely publicized, some of you are aware that the Scarsdale High School chorus and orchestra, under the direction of John Cuk and Amedee Williams respectively, performed at the Westchester County 9/11 Remembrance at Kensico Dam. Our students were the only groups asked to perform, and they certainly made us proud in sharing their beautiful and poignant pieces.

On Monday, September 12<sup>th</sup>, we held our second official Board meeting of the year (the first was the re-organization meeting back in early July). For those unable to attend, the agenda contained an array of topics that have and will continue to occupy our time and attention. Notable topics included the latest hires, enrollment reports and historical comparisons, financial summary reports (for last year), District-wide facility projects, 2014 Bond project updates, and, of course, the fate of Greenacres School. Throughout the discussion on these topics, it became quite clear that, as a school community, we have many operational and logistical needs.

Even so, I want to be clear that, although it might appear that we lean heavily towards operational issues at the Board and District levels, we are, first and foremost, committed to the highest quality education of all of our students. In both public meetings and in daily practice, we will strike the appropriate balance between students, as our primary charge and most precious commodity, and the bricks and mortar around them that create effective learning environments. Toward that end, we will continue to have Education Reports on months with two formal Board Meetings. We will also be keeping this priority at the forefront of our decision-making at all times, as features in our regular meetings, and, of course, in this year's budget deliberations. It's easy to spend time and energy on tangible projects that have immediate returns or rewards. The development of our children, however, is nearly always more art than science, and it requires our constant tending.

I look forward to the year ahead, and feel privileged to be a part of this truly remarkable community.

With warm regards,  
Dr. Thomas Hagerman



## District to Reconsider Middle School Mandarin

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

In the 2016-2017 school year, we will once again convene the District World Language Committee.

The charge to the Committee is to review our current world language program, research world language programs considered exemplary, including Middle School Mandarin, and recommend revisions and/or additions to the program.

The Committee's review of the world language program will include the possible addition of other languages at any level, possible changes to the current Elementary World Language Program in Grades 2-5, and the possibility of adding an additional language offering at the Middle School, starting in Grade 6, to commence in the 2017-2018 school year. Mandarin has been discussed as one possibility at the Middle School. Other languages will also be considered, based on current student interest for appropriate beginner-level courses.

Any changes for the Middle School world language program in 2017-2018 will be predicated on student interest as evidenced by world language enrollment numbers for incoming 6th graders (current 5th graders) from the December 2016 registrations. Based on those numbers, the Committee will make recommendations to the administration for consideration prior to the budget process.

The World Language Committee has established a Fifth Grade Parent Communication Timeline, as follows:

- Tuesday, November 1st - Eblast to fifth grade parents detailing the Committee charge and timeline information.
- Tuesday, November 15th - 7:30 p.m. - World Language presentation for fifth grade parents, with information posted on Middle School and District websites.
- Monday, November 28th - Fifth grade parents will receive World Language/Music course registration forms.
- Wednesday, December 14th - World Language/Music registration forms due for incoming sixth graders.
- Thursday, December 15th - Wednesday, December 21st - Finalize World Language/Music registration.

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## Preparing for the Class of 2060?

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



The season of recruitment and selection of new staff has given way to the activities associated with induction and development. The first such activity took place on August 30, when we officially welcomed a group of thirty new educators to Scarsdale at New Staff Orientation. With a mentor beside each new educator, the morning included introductions that highlighted the incredible talent possessed by both those new and returning. As I have since shared with others, I wish I could take credit for recruiting such an impressive group of educators! Short of achieving that claim, I am thrilled to share the experience of starting my Scarsdale career along with this class of educators.

In my words of welcome at the Orientation, I asked all assembled to pause and reflect on the journey they were about to embark on in Scarsdale, and the changes that might occur during the arc of their careers. To illustrate what I meant, I wondered aloud about our youngest students--in some cases not yet five years old--who are just starting their journey in the Scarsdale Schools. What will the world be like for those youngsters when they graduate, thirteen long years from now? What will they need to know and be able to do in order to be confident and capable 21st century learners? How can we ensure they will be ready to graduate as informed, contributing members of society?

Taking this line of thought further, I asked everyone to imagine the first day of school thirty years from now, when some of our newly hired educators might then be contemplating retirement. For those teaching kindergarten, the students greeted on *that* first day of school will walk across the stage to accept their diplomas as the class of 2060! What must *we do*, together as a community, to make sure we are ready--then as now--to engage our learners in the most meaningful, relevant, challenging learning possible?

It may be virtually impossible to imagine how education will look in the future, but we know for certain that we will have to be committed to engaging in new learning if we are to meet students' needs. Although I have only been here a short time, it seems to me that the secret to Scarsdale's success over these many decades has been the persistent commitment to continuous learning, professional renewal, collaboration, partnership, and community. I and my fellow newcomers to the Scarsdale Public Schools are prepared to join you in the embrace of lifelong learning and reflective practice as the means to the end of a successful career that touches the lives of our students in the most important ways.



## Providing Supportive Learning Environments

*By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services*

The Scarsdale School District maintains the expectation that all students should be treated with respect, dignity and kindness. Last May, I wrote a 'Dale Dispatch [article](#) outlining the District's philosophy regarding students who are transgender, reaffirming Scarsdale's long history of inclusion. As we begin the school year, I want to provide an overview of how Scarsdale will be addressing student requests to use facilities that match their gender identity.

The State Education Department has provided [guidance](#) to school districts related to the treatment of transgender students, setting a clear expectation that transgender students should

have access to the gender-specific bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity. Over the past year, more transgender students across the region have become comfortable with openly expressing their identities. Scarsdale is no different. Given our philosophy and the State's guidance, the District will be honoring such requests by transgender students.

When these requests are made, it is inevitable that students will have questions and may ask their teachers or parents for information. To that end, the District will continue to provide teachers and administrators with training on effective ways to talk with students about transgender topics. Furthermore, the District's Student Services Office, along with school principals and psychologists, are available to discuss with parents how to talk to children about transgender issues. Please feel free to contact any of us. Please note that a student's gender identity is confidential under State law, making it inappropriate to inform the wider community when an individual student has made a request to use facilities related to their gender identity.

As a District, we also realize that the topic of gender identity can make some people uncomfortable and that everyone has the right to feel comfortable in their school. Therefore the schools will be providing alternate facilities or private changing areas for any students who request them.

The conversations taking place in the news media and around the soccer field are often fraught with misleading information, one-dimensional stereotypes, and cultural taboos. However, most people find gender identity to be a much less intimidating topic once they spend some time understanding the basics (as discussed in my May article), and reviewing some of the resources provided [here](#).

Although the research on transgender youth is in its relative infancy, many studies point to the psychological stresses associated with living a life in gender dysphoria, citing higher levels of depression, anxiety, and suicide. More happily, new studies (mainly from the Netherlands) show that children allowed to express their gender identities in a supportive environment lead to much better psychological outcomes.

There has been skepticism that some transgender requests may be motivated by a desire to enter the opposite sex's locker rooms. Although that is theoretically possible, a student attempting this for untoward reasons would be identifiable. Each of these requests is the culmination of many conversations between the family, school, and clinicians. We must keep in mind that the decision to express a transgender identity is replete with social and emotional risk and, even with that risk, these children are internally compelled to be who they are. When a student makes this choice, it is incumbent on the school and the wider community to provide, at the very least, tolerance, and, more appropriately, acceptance. Given Scarsdale's longstanding commitment to inclusion, I ask for everyone's help in providing a learning environment that is safe and welcoming for all of our students.

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## Summer 2016 Projects and the Master Facilities Plan

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



The summer of 2016 has been a very busy one in and around the District's facilities, as many plant improvement and capital projects were completed or moved toward completion.

Funding in the 2016-17 budget allowed the District to address a variety of infrastructure-related work items, some of which are more visible than others. One of the first things that a visitor to our buildings might notice is the extensive re-paving of many of our parking lots, sidewalks and playgrounds. Related to paving, and with a particular focus on safety, we have added safety crossing areas at Fox Meadow and a sidewalk between the parking lot and playing fields at the Middle School. In addition, the bus compound area was expanded and paved, a long overdue project that finally provides the District adequate space to safely park all of its 70-plus vehicles.

Also completed this past summer was the upgrade of the Edgewood fire alarm system, part of a multi-year plan to upgrade all five elementary schools. Also at Edgewood we completed the replacement of stairs at the southwest entrance of the building that had fallen into disrepair.

In the coming months, the District will continue work on development of a Facilities Master Plan, which will be comprised of work identified from five major sources. These sources or components of the Master Plan are the Building Condition Survey, Roofing Master Plan, Fields Master Plan, previously identified work, and educational space or building improvements as identified by building committees and as recommended by the administration. Once complete, the Facilities Master Plan will be used as the primary tool in guiding all future plant improvements, capital projects, and future bond projects.



## Instructional Technology: The Road Ahead

*By Jerry Crisci,  
Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation*

The 2016-17 school year will be an exciting time for the Scarsdale technology program. This year, we expect to build on the work that we completed last year, which included the following accomplishments:

- We developed a new Technology Plan that was presented to the community and approved by the Board of Education. The plan was also recently approved by the BOCES Regional Information Center and has been sent to the New York State Education Department for final approval.
- We continued to increase access to technology resources for students with the addition of a 1:1 fourth grade Chromebook initiative, additional iPads and Chromebooks at the Middle School, and the purchase of Chromebook carts for all English classes at the High School.
- We launched a new website with a focus on social media and a new "Scarsdale Spotlight" section to highlight stories of our schools.
- We funded grant programs for innovative projects submitted by teachers through the Center for Innovation, in partnership with Lynne Shain, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction.
- We developed a plan to ensure the alignment of K-12 STEAM expectations.

Of course, the most important focus of our daily work is supporting instruction through the integration of technology in virtually all subject areas. This work helped teachers to enhance and

transform teaching and learning, increasingly making technology the learning platform for all students.

This year, we are launching a number of new technology initiatives:

- Once again, we increased student access to technology resources with the initiation of a 1:1 Chromebook program for all third grade classes. We also upgraded technology at the Middle School and purchased Chromebooks for all High School Social Studies and World Language classrooms.
- We expanded our social media presence with the creation of Tagboards for each school, as well as a District Tagboard. This technology allows us to aggregate our social media, providing our community with real time updates about teaching and learning in our schools, and provides a snapshot of the exciting work happening in our classrooms.
- Teachers participated in summer professional development and program improvement projects, including summer STI courses, which will have a significant impact on classroom work this year.

Looking ahead, we will continue work on the goals outlined in our three-year Transition Plan. These goals include the creation of a SMART Schools finance plan, allowing us to access over \$400,000 in hardware provided by New York State; and the implementation of our STEAM program, including new classes that launched at the High School this fall.

All these initiatives are designed to enhance the student learning experience. To see how technology impacts our classrooms, be sure to visit our District Tagboard at <https://tagboard.com/scarsdalepride/309075>.

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## Vision for The Future

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



On several recent occasions, I have been asked, "What is your vision?"

Generally, my vision is that the programs for which I am responsible will be a source of pride for Scarsdale. What this means is that the programs will serve the interests and needs of our students in the areas of wellness and physical activity; that the programs will be inclusive and developmental in nature; and that the individuals who provide those programs will model best practices in the ways they work with our children. Best practices in communication, motivation, feedback, and program structure will be a hallmark of our programs and anything less will become universally unacceptable.

Here are some examples of the work that has been done so far toward these goals:

### **Physical Education and Health**

Early last year, the combined departments of Health and Physical Education defined their work broadly under the concept of wellness, with three subcategories: physical wellness, family and social wellness, and mental and emotional wellness. Over the course of the year, two main areas of focus emerged: the mind-body connection for physical educators, and mindfulness for health educators. This year, physical educators are surveying research on the brain, specifically related to exercise and its benefits, and are developing ways to incorporate that research into their professional practice. Health educators are continuing their work developing mindfulness skills

with faculty and students. Although the focus of each department is defined differently, the common view is that the body performs optimally when all of its systems are working in synergy.

### **Intramurals**

Last spring at Scarsdale High School, we were able to offer a golf program for girls who would not normally compete as part of the varsity program. We are pleased that we were able to facilitate the development of interest and skill inclusively and appropriately for these participants, and are currently evaluating the program to insure its efficacy.

Last year, 51 High School students expressed interest in a dance program, specifically in hip hop and modern dance styles. This year, we will be offering a Dance Club for all students who are interested; we expect the program to reflect the interests and abilities of the participants.

### **Club Sports**

We are expanding our support of the student-led Ultimate Frisbee program, bolstering their efforts to have Section 1 and the New York State Public High School Athletic Association recognize Ultimate Frisbee as an official sport.

### **Interscholastic Athletics**

Based on our assessment of interest and ability, we have added JV Ice Hockey and both JV and Varsity Boys' Volleyball. These teams were added for the specific purpose of providing opportunities for students.

Last year, we implemented the first iteration of a comprehensive coaching evaluation process; this year, we are rolling out a student-centered search and selection process for Varsity coaches. We are also in the process of establishing a mentoring program for new coaches.

Initially, we have focused our efforts on the work of the physical education and health teachers, and added extracurricular opportunities. My expectation is that continued reflection and evaluation will allow future iterations to evolve over time. Our ultimate goal is to establish and encourage an understanding of the value of physical activity, sport, and wellness for our children across their lifetime.



## **Information Technology: Life in the Trenches**

*By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology*

I am always amused when people ask me about my extended summer vacation. They believe that our offices are closed when school is not in session, and assume that we spend July and August at the beach.

Not so! The summer is as busy for the technology team as it can possibly get.

The summer is the time when we implement new systems, update databases and user accounts, and finalize State reporting for the previous year, while starting reporting for the next year. This is also the time when we upgrade networks and servers, repair hundreds of computers and printers,

and receive thousands of new pieces of equipment.

For example, this summer we purchased 1,737 Chromebooks and 52 mobile carts. The carts had to be assembled and each Chromebook had to be unpacked, inventoried, registered, and placed in a mobile cart. Add to that the MacBooks, PCs, laptops, printers, monitors, and scanners that were also purchased and installed before school started.

We also worked on the implementation of My Learning Plan (professional development), Active Directory (central user management system), Online Student Registration, Enrollment Reports, FitnessGram (fitness assessment) upgrades, SMARTS (finance and personnel system) enhancements, Tableau workbooks (data visualization), and much more.

Everybody worked really hard and showed real dedication. I am tremendously proud of the team!

The Information Technology team is looking forward to supporting our students, parents, and staff and we wish everybody a successful and enjoyable 2016-17 school year.



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