



SCARSDALE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE (NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2016)

Superintendent's Message (Dr. Thomas Hagerman)

Academic Rigor and Student Wellness (Lynne Shain, Asst. Supt. for Curriculum)

The Tenure Class of 2017 (Drew Patrick, Asst. Supt. for Human Resources)

Holiday Stress (Eric Rauschenbach, Dir., Special Education and Student Services)

Construction Work to Begin (Stuart Matthey, Asst. Supt. for Business)

Online Student Registration (Rachel Moseley, Director, Information Technology)

K-12 Update (Ray Pappalardi, Director, Physical Educ., Health, and Athletics)

Classroom Technology (Jerry Crisci, Director, Instructional Technology and Innovation)

"Happiest of holidays, from our school family to yours."

From Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Schools



Dear Mr. Trump

Dear Mr. Trump,

As the President-Elect of the United States of America, I am confident that the gravity of your new title, along with the responsibilities inherent therein, are at the forefront of your thinking. As you continue to formalize your Cabinet and transition plan, I wanted to take the opportunity to address a few of the issues that formed the basis of the education platform that you shared as part of the campaign process over the past many months. As a public school educator and administrator for nearly 25 years and Superintendent of one of the finest school systems in the country, I hope you take these comments as intended: in support of the efforts in my own community, but also to ensure that public education serves as a level playing field for all American children and youth far into the future.

School Choice

In a recent quote you said, "As your President, I will be the nation's biggest cheerleader for school choice. I want every single inner city child in America who is today trapped in a failing

school to have the freedom - the civil right - to attend the school of their choice." For me, perhaps the most significant question you raise in this statement is, why are schools (whether urban, suburban, or rural) "failing"? Public schools have become the mechanism to address the holistic needs of children and their families. We educate children, of course. But we also feed, shelter, protect, transport, administer health care, provide social and psychological services, ensure art and athletic enrichment, and so much more. And, for the most part, we do this in an environment of high expectations, limited resources, and a staggering number of regulations, restrictions, and accountability systems.

As you advocate for choice for American children and families, I would encourage you to ensure that these are all legitimate and equally supported choices. Said another way, rather than simply diverting dollars away from public schools through vouchers or tax credits, all school options (public, private, magnet, or charter) should be subject to the same rules, regulations, and funding opportunities. If this isn't possible, then the requirements that apply only to, and therefore bind, public schools, should be lifted, so that all options share a similar focus of providing the best educational opportunities for our students. This is the only way to offer true choice to families.

Local Control

Another staple of your educational platform to date has been a call for the decrease of the national government's influence over education in favor of more local control. Some specific examples that you have provided to achieve this goal include eliminating the Common Core and diminishing or dismantling the Department of Education. Generally speaking, I suspect that many, if not most, people would agree with the idea that more local control over educational decision-making is a positive step forward. Moreover, large-scale governmental accountability solutions (No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, etc.) have not proven to be especially effective catalysts for positive change. Although individual states are charged with the education of their children, the federal government still has an important role to play. Its official mission is "to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access." The significance of these national unifying dual roles, public discourse on excellence and ensuring equal access and opportunity for students, should not be overlooked or minimized.

As you look to shift educational responsibility and influence back to state and local communities, I urge you to make this more than a filial or fiscal duty, but instead a moral obligation. The education of our most precious commodity cannot continue to be used as leverage to accomplish other, unrelated, political ambitions or outcomes. I urge you to protect this sacrosanct responsibility, in turn, allowing local communities to make thoughtful, informed, and meaningful decisions about how to improve the educational experiences of the children in their care.

Mr. Trump, with much to think about in your new role, please consider our children first.
Warm Regards from Scarsdale, New York,

Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Scarsdale Schools



Academic Rigor and Student Wellness

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

The District-wide Leadership Team has reaffirmed that any version of a Scarsdale Education for Tomorrow 2.0, would prominently feature wellness and education of the "whole child." Among others, these elements complement our continuing dedication to offering a classic education that is taught in a progressive fashion.

It is a given here that students, parents, and faculty recognize the high level of rigor associated with a Scarsdale education. For some students, this intensity is motivating and fosters high quality work and performance. For others, a Scarsdale education causes unhealthy stress levels.

Lately, concerns have been expressed about the balance between academic rigor and wellness, often representing these as opposite poles on a continuum. However, we wonder whether viewing these elements as dichotomies is warranted or helpful. Could it be possible to have both rigor and well-being?

At a recent District Strategic Planning meeting, educators explored ways to lessen stress while still fostering academic rigor. One promising strategy that emerged is to give students more control over the way they engage in challenging academic experiences. Giving students more choice and voice over their learning is often referred to as student "agency."

Agency is the capacity and propensity to take purposeful initiative -- the opposite of helplessness. Young people with high levels of agency tend to seek meaning and act with purpose and even passion to achieve the conditions they desire in their own and others' lives. 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 to express their learning preferences and giving students choice, such as type of learning environment, subject matter, or pace.

Authentic assessment, experiential or project-based learning, and self-directed learning all provide opportunities to increase student agency. With more student agency can come higher levels of engagement and commitment to the learning process. Student agency is a valuable asset in itself, and all the more so if it can also help counteract stress. The District will be looking into ways to bolster student agency, keeping an eye on how this approach may also support student wellness.

The Tenure Class of 2017

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



Achieving tenure is a significant accomplishment in the career of an educator. Put simply, tenure marks a change in employment status which affords that educator the right to keep his or her job, and requires due process for discipline or dismissal. Similarly, granting tenure, upon recommendation from the Superintendent, is among the most serious and significant responsibilities of the Board of Education. Interestingly, Boards of Education are empowered only to approve, or reject the recommendation of the Superintendent, and cannot award, or deny, tenure without such a recommendation. Importantly, none of this can happen before a teacher or administrator successfully completes a trial, or probationary, period of employment. The intent of this article is to explain, if only briefly, what occurs during this probationary period to inform

such an important decision.

As I shared in the last *Dispatch*, the probationary period commences after a rigorous recruitment and selection process. Once a teacher or administrator is granted a full-time appointment, the clock starts on the probationary period, which can now range from two to four years. Prior to July, 2015, the established probationary period in New York was three years. An exception to this requirement is made for teachers (though not administrators) who have been granted tenure by another New York State public school district prior to being employed in their current school. These individuals have a reduced, two-year probationary period. However, on July 1, 2015, the law changed to extend the probationary period from three to four years (and from two to three for those with prior tenure). The administrator exception applies here, too -- four years to tenure for administrators. There is one final exception to note. In rare cases, the three (or, in the near future, four) year probationary period is not deemed sufficient to make a tenure decision. In those cases, the educator can request an additional probationary year. If granted, the trial period continues. If not, a recommendation for tenure is withheld, and the educator either resigns, or is terminated.

The quality and effectiveness of a probationary educator's performance is gauged against professional standards. Each school district in New York is required to identify which of several model standards it uses to evaluate teachers and administrators. In Scarsdale, we use Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching to guide our teacher evaluation process. The Framework describes effective practice across the domains of Planning and Preparation, Classroom Environment, Instruction, and Professional Responsibilities.

For administrators, we use the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. ISLLC Standards cover six broad categories of leadership, including vision for teaching and learning, instructional leadership, management and safety, collaboration, ethical practice, and educational context.

Our appraisal system relies on a wide variety of inputs that inform the decision to recommend a teacher for tenure, including:

- Four formal, clinical observations annually, inclusive of a discussion, reflection, written report, and rating, conducted by supervisors (i.e., department chair, teacher-in-charge) and administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal)
- An observation by an Assistant Superintendent or Director, annually
- Numerous informal "drop-in" observations by supervisors and evaluators
- Formal and informal mentoring
- A portfolio of artifacts documenting professional practice, with written commentary
- A year-end conference, written appraisal, assessment of progress, and rating, annually
- An administrative review panel attended by District administrators, building administrators, supervisors, and Board of Education members, annually
- Feedback from other parts of the school community

It should be noted that the information-gathering used to gauge the performance of principals and other building and district leaders varies somewhat from those listed above due to differences in the nature of these roles. For example, formal, clinical observations are replaced by school visits, classroom walk-throughs, observations of faculty meetings, and the like. Feedback from faculty and staff is also a part of the picture for leader evaluation.

In addition to these structured inputs, the progress of all probationers is monitored on a continual basis, enriched by dialogue between teachers and leaders, and ongoing participation in

meetings, events, professional development activities, and parent-school communications and events.

In sum, it is our belief that the rigors of the tenure process are commensurate with the importance of the achievement. The work of supervision and evaluation is ongoing, and is essential to the continuous development of all educators. Critically, that development does not end with tenure! In a later issue, I will share information about the process of professional growth that is essential to ongoing improvement in a rapidly-changing field.

Tenure Timeline:

- December, 2016 Overview of tenure process sent via *'Dale Dispatch*
- January, 2017 Tenure candidate list available on website; Parent survey sent via Infinite Campus (first week in January); Public input invited on tenure candidates
- February, 2017 Administrative review panel meets to discuss tenure candidates
- March, 2017 Tenure recommendations completed
- April, 2017 Administrative review panel meets to discuss first and second year probationers; Continuation decisions made
- May, 2017 Board of Education tenure vote (tentatively May 8)



'Tis the Season...

By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services

Nearly every adult can relate to the idea of holiday stress. Work doesn't stop, and a litany of responsibilities invade our lives -- gift buying, coordinating time among family members, hosting, and trying to make the holiday live up to the most recent Instagram post's set of expectations. For some children, especially young ones, this time of year is magical and they are shielded from the season's stress. However, other children can experience heightened levels of stress and may act out or withdraw in anticipation of the season's activities.

Children and teens who are in stressful situations prior to the holiday season often see those stressors increase during this season. They experience a level of dissonance between how they are supposed to feel and how they really feel. This tends to be most prevalent in students who are experiencing family trauma such as divorce, death, or substance issues. These types of issues can make the usual holiday gatherings fraught with fear about how relatives will act or questions they could be asked. Each one of these situations is unique and it is beyond the ability of this article to address the intervention needed, but there are a number of great resources on the web; a few can be accessed [here](#).

A sometimes overlooked group of children at risk for increased stress during the holidays are those going through ordinary transitions such as moving from one level of schooling to another

or applying for college. Excited relatives and friends eager to hear about our children's lives will ask questions. In some cases, children will find every adult they speak to asks about school or college. These well-meaning adults might regale them with their school/college experience, give them school recommendations, or even critique some of their choices. Under normal circumstances children might like the attention, or suffer good-naturedly through it, but when a child is having a difficult transition or has anxiety about the upcoming change, this can become overwhelming. In these cases, parents need to help set their child's expectation and help them develop ways to engage these questions and strategies to change the subject. Further, it may be important to directly ask some relatives to refrain from asking questions about a particular topic, so everyone can enjoy the holidays.

Finally, our disabled students often experience the holidays as anxiety-producing due to sensory, schedule, or social disruptions to their routine. Many students with disabilities thrive on routine and unchanging expectations. During the week off, families often engage in activities that differ widely from a regular week. In these cases, students may act out or have difficulty living up to expectations they may not fully understand. Previewing these activities for children can help mitigate the anxiety they feel about the unknown. Make sure your child knows the schedule for the week and that it is OK if he or she wants to take a break during family gatherings or activities that involve an increase in sensory input. Taking along quiet activities and snacks that the child prefers are often ways to help them cope with increased demands on their social skills.

Often our children find the activities over the holiday break to be fun, but their stamina may be lower than would typically be expected; knowing your child's limits can help avoid behaviors that can come from over-stimulation. Planning breaks throughout the day can be helpful in giving your child the space he or she needs to enjoy the activities. There are many great resources out there (see the link above).

Although the holidays can be stressful they are also a time when we get to be thankful for all we have, and to reconnect with family. It is a time to enjoy each other and hopefully relax. The perfect holiday is not necessarily one that is Pinterest-worthy but, one where the bonds of friendship and family are strengthened and renewed.

Construction Work To Begin

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



Construction bids for projects approved by voters in December 2014 have recently been approved by the Board of Education, paving the way for work to begin. The projects that were awarded are as follows:

- Heathcote - Improve the existing multi-purpose room/lunch area; add a student services office corridor; and construct a new multi-purpose room;
- Edgewood - Replace/expand/renovate library; relocate office within existing building footprint; construct new portico at front of building to define main entrance from the street;
- Middle School - Add additional orchestra rehearsal room and storage area to northeast corner of Middle School; renovate former custodial offices to create new instructional

- music space;
- High School - Renovate existing space in and around gyms A/B to create a Learning Commons; Improve courtyard and kitchen areas

In addition, the Scarsdale Schools Education Foundation pledged to donate \$1.8 million in support of a new Design Lab and an additional \$800 thousand to build a new Fitness Center, both of which are also scheduled for construction this year.

In order to assist in familiarizing yourself with the entire project, listed below are estimated construction periods, from start time through substantial completion, at each of our affected buildings.

HIGH SCHOOL

Fitness Center:	December 5, 2016 - May 5, 2017
Design Lab:	June 26, 2017 - November 3, 2017
Learning Commons	December 5, 2016 - August 25, 2017
Courtyard & Kitchen Area	June 26, 2017 - August 25, 2017

HEATHCOTE

Existing Multi-purpose, Occupational and Physical Therapy Spaces	June 26, 2017 - August 25, 2017
New Multi-Purpose Room	June 26, 2017 - March 30, 2018

EDGEWOOD

Library Reconstruction	June 26, 2017 - March 30, 2018
Office Relocation	June 26, 2017 - August 25, 2017

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Music/Multi-Purpose Space	December 5, 2016 - June 24, 2017
Existing Music Room Renovations	June 26, 2017 - August 25, 2017

All construction areas will be marked and secured for safety and any areas requiring asbestos removal will have that work completed during times that schools are closed. If visiting one of the campuses impacted by construction, you may notice contractors' trailers in cornered-off areas which will serve as their office during construction. Please note that all of these areas are designated as construction zones and are off limits to students, parents, and the public. If you have any questions regarding any of these projects please contact me at smatney@scarsdaleschools.org



Online Student Registration

By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology

The Information Technology team has been busy on all fronts; for this update, I will focus on the Online Student Registration system. The objective of our work on this is to allow families to register their children online instead of filling out and submitting paper forms, thus eliminating the need for school secretaries to enter that data into the student information system. This is part of

our overall objective of using technology to increase the efficiency of operations and improve parent services.

We received the test site for the Online Student Registration system in October; it is an add-on module to the Student Information System, Infinite Campus. Over the summer, the Infinite Campus development team customized the Online Student Registration system to our specifications. The system will not only allow new families to register and existing families to register additional children, but it will also allow families to verify and update data annually.

Since we received the test site, we have been testing all possible scenarios. Here are just a few tasks that this system can handle (in addition to registering students who will attend one of our seven schools), just to give you an idea of its complexity and scope:

- It accepts census registration and transportation requests for students who will attend private or parochial schools;
- It accepts registration of preschool children who were referred to the District for special education services;
- Families can upload proof of residence and birth verification documents;
- Families can enter parent/guardian contact information, and opt-out of the District sharing their contact information with the PTA;
- Families can enter emergency contacts, student health conditions, and medical provider information;
- Families will be able to upload the Home Language Questionnaire for all new students, and the Athletics Transfer Notification form for new students entering the High School (both forms are required by New York State);
- Parents and guardians of High School students can opt-out of the release of directory information to higher education institutions and the military;
- Families will be able to submit their Photo Release Objection and to agree to the District's Acceptable Use Policy.

We have been in daily contact with Infinite Campus to resolve issues and tweak functionality. We hope to sign off on the application within a week, have it moved into production by mid-December, and pilot the system with several families between December and February. The goal is to have the system, including Central Registration, fully implemented before Kindergarten registration, which takes place in March.

K-12 Update

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



As we transition from the fall into winter, I'd like to provide a brief update on our work in K-12 physical education, health, and athletics.

Elementary Physical Education

The elementary physical educators have been focused on revising and implementing our Movement Enhanced Learning (MEL) program. MEL applies current research on exercise and how it affects the brain. Activities focus on learning readiness, integrating movement with mental

processes, cross-lateral exercises (which allow for students to cross their anatomical midline), and increasing cardio-respiratory activities. Since the first grade meets for three periods per six-day cycle while other grades meet for two, the elementary physical educators selected first grade as the appropriate grade for implementation.

Elementary Health Education

For the fifth grade, instruction in human growth and development will begin after the New Year and extend through March. Parent meetings to learn about this important unit have been scheduled for Wednesday, January 4 from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the New Meeting Room at Quaker Ridge Elementary School, and Thursday, January 5 from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the New Multi-Purpose Room at Fox Meadow Elementary School.

Middle School Health

Mindfulness training has become an integral part of our Middle School health program. Techniques to reduce stress and anxiety and increase focus are being used on a daily basis across all the grades.

High School Physical Education and Athletics

Construction is slotted to begin this month at Scarsdale High School that will result in short-term inconvenience, but will provide long-term benefits for physical education, health, and athletics. The construction will include demolishing the current Weight Room and reconfiguring Gyms A/B to accommodate the new Learning Commons. While the closure of the Weight Room will affect our ability to offer some traditional training programs, we expect Gym A to serve as a temporary fitness center starting January 30 through May. We are eagerly looking forward to a new state-of-the-art Fitness Center which is scheduled to open in May of 2017.



Technology and Learning Spaces

By Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation

As part of our effort to enhance Scarsdale's educational technology program, the educational technology team is reviewing the presentation technology used by teachers in their classrooms. Several years ago, the team launched an initiative that resulted in the placement of interactive SmartBoards, or data projectors, in virtually all classrooms and instructional spaces in the District. We now need to replace this older technology with new LCD flat panel displays, for a number of reasons:

- The SmartBoards and projectors are nearing their "end of life," meaning that the technology will no longer be supported.
- SmartBoards and their projectors are becoming expensive to maintain, requiring additional repairs and the ongoing replacement of projector lamps.
- SmartBoards use an older computer screen format instead of widescreen displays that are common in today's LCD displays.
- SmartBoard projectors use more energy and have a dimmer image than LCD displays.

The District technology team has looked at a variety of display technologies, and we will be purchasing some test models in January. Our technology team will be considering a number of options for the new displays, including:

- Mounting displays on walls or on mobile stands
- Determining the optimal size of displays for our classrooms
- Considering whether screens need to be interactive, or if the interactivity should be controlled by a teacher's presentation device.
- Cost per unit and reputation of the manufacturer

The SmartBoard replacement initiative is a large-scale project that will involve teacher input and will take place over several years. This project is an important part of our instructional program because technology is increasingly used as our students' learning platform.

The community will hear more about our plans as we move into the budget planning season in February.



[SIGN UP FOR EMAILS](#)

[SHARE THIS EMAIL](#)

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