



SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The 'Dale Dispatch

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News and reflections from the Superintendent and Cabinet of the Scarsdale Public Schools



Per Aspera ad Astra **By Dr. Thomas Hagerman** **Superintendent of Schools**

When we think about defining our individual purpose, we often think about our families, careers, spirituality, and other dimensions of our lives that we deeply value and consistently prioritize. At an elemental level, we sometimes refer to these as our *North Star*. In keeping with the namesake, these are the static and enduring aspects of our lives that represent our core beliefs and those which we depend on even as the rest of the world constantly changes around us.

For many individuals, these North Stars can translate over time into a sort of personal mission statement. For example, Nelson Mandela's lived experiences lead him to a life-long pursuit to deliver people out of poverty, suffering, and discrimination--in all its many forms. For any of us, this could mean striving to be the best parent or teacher possible; to eradicate hunger and homelessness in our regional communities; or to empower children and adults with disabilities to reach their fullest potential. The impact of these mission statements can purposefully range from very intimate to rather broad.

While we all, no doubt, achieve a sense of accomplishment when we make progress on a significant goal, some might argue that the measure of success in this work is not necessarily the goalpost itself, but rather the acts of continued commitment and incremental progress--the deliberate and ongoing attempts to be our best selves, especially in service of others (*non sibi*).

A couple of years ago, Oprah Winfrey interviewed New York Times best-selling author and spiritual leader, Eckhart Tolle. As their conversation was wrapping up, Oprah asked Tolle: "*So, what is your interpretation of these troubled times we are living in?*"

Tolle responded by saying that, "*There is a Latin saying going back 2000 years: "per aspera ad astra" which translated means "through adversity to the stars". So whenever an obstacle rises that seems to block the path forward, in reality the obstacle has an essential function. And that is, it forces me or it forces humanity to generate more — either more strength, more energy or more consciousness.*"

Under the vicissitudes of Covid-19, it was easy, and perhaps even essential, to retreat into a survival mode and mentality. After all, we needed to attend to the most essential needs and functions of our lives and families. But the horizon ahead is, once again, promising. Health metrics, vaccinations, and the lessening of risk mitigation efforts all seem to be clearing a path towards more normalcy for everyone. As we prepare ourselves for the new reality ahead, Tolle reminds us of the opportunity before us: the ability to recalibrate our priorities in a way that brings us back to *ad astra*, or, more specifically, to our individual and respective North Stars.

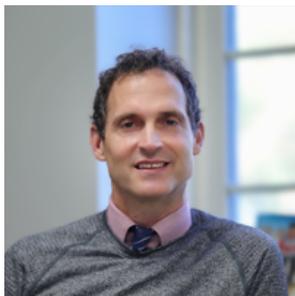
As we delve into this work, he encourages a *generative* approach, one which utilizes our past experiences and trauma as an opportunity for growth: to become stronger, more engaged, and more mindful. Not only do these practices serve to promote individual healing, but they also create the conditions that allow us to come back together as a community with a renewed sense of common purpose.

Extrapolating this idea out more broadly, prominent developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson, reminds us that, in his field, *generativity* necessarily involves a concern for the future, a need to nurture and guide young people and contribute to the next generation through concerted caring, modeling, teaching, and creating community. Undoubtedly, parents and educators play a vital, if not the most significant, role in this development process.

As we continue to reach for the stars, individually and collectively, our goal should include ways to leverage our past adversity to inspire a better future for all of us, but especially for our children and youth.

Warm regards,

Thomas



The Ways Scarsdale Educators Learn

By Dr. Edgar McIntosh

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

We pride ourselves on our culture of learning in Scarsdale. Our focus, of course, is on student learning. We know that the best way to provide our students with the highest-level, most responsive learning environment is for the teachers, specialists, administrators, and policy makers to also be continuously learning.

The education world has migrated from using the term *professional development* to the term *professional learning*. *Professional development* was representative of many trainings often “done to” teachers like one-time workshops, seminars, or lectures with a one-size-fits-all approach. *Professional learning*, in contrast, means the experiences are interactive, customized to teachers' needs, and sustained over time. This model supports and celebrates teachers' agency over their own learning. Participants are also inspired to apply this learning to their practice in ways that best improve student outcomes.

Teachers have different needs and in Scarsdale there are flexible models and opportunities for professional learning. This variety leans into the science of learning, and engages high quality resources with both internal and external expertise.

We go outside our learning community

Our teachers attend, and frequently present at, national conferences in a variety of subjects. These learning opportunities allow for idea sharing and networking that is brought back to team, grade level, and department meetings. While much has been organized virtually of late, Scarsdale educators' participation in conferences, professional visits, and the collegial discussions woven throughout the time together, facilitate a deeper, more impactful experience.

We invite experts and educational partners into our learning community

Through grants, teachers have also engaged visiting academics and artists to work alongside them to model, share, and inspire innovative practices. We maintain partnerships with academic institutions and expert consultants for ongoing support and training. We are also fortunate to have connections through our Scarsdale families and educators to engage local, national, and global experts in a range of areas.

We learn from each other

When there are shared expectations for attention to student learning standards and progressions, teachers work collaboratively and alongside instructional coaches across the grade and discipline. Time is allotted through department, faculty, and grade level meetings to facilitate this type of learning. Teachers also take advantage of common planning blocks and conference days for this essential collaboration.

The Scarsdale Teachers Institute is built on the power of *teachers teaching teachers*. Courses are designed and proposed by Scarsdale & Edgemont educators. These courses take on a variety of forms and have a common purpose: to provide meaningful, ongoing, and in-depth opportunities for teachers to deepen their content and pedagogical expertise in ways they have self selected to best meet the needs of students. Facilitated and taught by teachers, there are rich opportunities for cross grade/content collaboration, flexible and creative application of learning, and real and ongoing ways of turning theory into practice.

We learn from our students

Our students teach us every day in multiple ways. Collecting and reviewing the continuous data our students provide us is another fine way to improve one's practice. Given the technological advances that offer us immediate access to facts, alongside an emphasis on critical research skills, our students can contribute knowledge to the discussions that elevate everyone's thinking.

We continue to learn and grow through these robust and important learning pathways. This is particularly essential as Scarsdale students prepare for a complex, multicultural, and ever-shifting world. This is also how we, as educators, model the value of being curious, flexible lifelong learners for our students.

A Guide to CSE Meetings

By Eric Rauschenbach

Assistant Superintendent for Special Education & Student Services

As we anticipate winter recess, we look forward to Spring and all the promise it brings for new growth, warmth, light and... CSE (Committee on Special Education) meetings! Spring—otherwise known as CSE season to special education teachers and parents—is a time where we look at the year as a whole for each student, and determine our direction forward.

There are a number of websites and articles one might access that give advice on preparing for a CSE meeting, but here are a few suggestions to make these meetings productive, amicable, and effective.



First and most important, please ask questions before, during, and after your meetings. The special education staff is always willing to hear your concerns and explain their point of view. However, our staff conducts over 450 meetings in a span of three months; we can fall into the trap of speaking in acronyms or just plain making assumptions about what you know about our programs. If, during a meeting, you feel unsure or don't understand a program, term, or plan, please ask. Often CSE meetings are packed with information and it can be hard to digest everything you are hearing in a relatively short period. Do not hesitate to call the special education teacher or chairperson after the meeting to clarify or double-check what you heard.

Second, please keep in mind that this is a working meeting and everyone brings a different perspective. You may not agree with some of these perspectives, but they all bring valuable information to the table. Everyone on your child's team wants your child to succeed, but might see your child in a different setting and come to different conclusions as a result. I ask that everyone at the meeting be respectful and listen, but don't be shy about questioning points of view or delving deeper into the reasons why someone might feel the way they do. Our goal at the meeting is to find common ground, clarify on the issues, and determine what is best for the student.

Finally, the goal of special education is to help students become independent learners who both understand the concepts being taught, but who also understand and feel confident about their abilities. The CSE's primary responsibility is to provide enough support to help your child make progress and access the general education curriculum, but the CSE is also required to look at how to enable your child to become more independent, and when it would be appropriate to reduce support in order to foster that independence. This is especially true through the secondary years of middle and high school.

CSE meetings bring caring professionals and invested parents to the table; emotions and assumptions are varied and the discussions can be quite complex. However, they are an effective way to summarize, analyze and plan in a collaborative way. Our special education students have outstanding outcomes, and those are made possible through collaboration and discussion. We look forward to working with all of our parents over the next few months and planning for your child's educational career.



How is the Scarsdale Schools Calendar Determined?

By Dr. Drew Patrick

**Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
& Leadership Development**

This is the time of year when many members of the community begin looking toward the next school year. In fact, the Board of Education adopted the [2022-23 School Year Calendar](#) at the February 14, 2022, Board of Education meeting. As a result, we tend to get questions about how the school calendar is developed. People wonder what the factors are that go into the calendar that is ultimately adopted, and we often get the same, or similar questions, year to year. Many of these questions are answered below, following a "Q and A" type format.

What are the external factors that influence the calendar?

The State Education Department provides guidelines through the office of State Aid (see [here](#), and [here](#)) for calendar development based on laws and regulations that apply to all public schools in the State. The major factors are summarized in the list below.

- Commencing with the 2018-2019 school year, for the purpose of apportionment of State aid, any school district must be in session for at least 180 school days, and during such 180 days the school district must meet the following minimum annual instructional hour requirement:
 - For pupils in kindergarten through grade six, a minimum of 900 instructional hours.
 - For pupils in grades seven through twelve, a minimum of 990 instructional hours.
- Included in the 180 days are days on which attendance is taken (i.e., a half-day counts as a day of session), days on which Regents examinations, State Assessments, or local examinations are given, and days on which superintendent's conference days are held.
- School year session days counting toward the 180-day requirement may not be scheduled on any day in July or August, except that superintendent's conference days may be scheduled during the last two weeks of August.
- Up to four (4) superintendent's conference days may be scheduled.
- Session days should not be scheduled after the June Regents examination period.
- School district officials may not schedule days of session on a Saturday or a legal holiday, except Election Day, Washington's Birthday, or Lincoln's Birthday. (Education Law 3604(8)).

The New York State Education Department recommends that schools design a calendar that includes a number of days beyond the minimum of 180 that reflects the average number of inclement weather days over the past five years. During the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, the State has adopted a [pilot program](#) that allows schools to hold remote learning on emergency closing days. This pilot will be evaluated at the end of this year.

Impact: Basically, this constrains the 180 day school year to between September 1 and the fourth Friday (usually, but not always) of June. The last day of session allowed is called "Rating Day". Further, there are two requirements that must be met in order to receive the full apportionment of State Aid. First, school must be in

session (for any duration of a day) for a minimum of 180 days. Second, the total hours of session must meet the 900 or 990-hour requirement.

What legal holidays must Scarsdale Public Schools observe?

- Legal holidays include: New Year's Day, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Flag Day (second Sunday in June), Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Election Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day.
- Pursuant to NYS General Construction Law Section 24, if a legal holiday falls on a Sunday, the next day becomes a legal holiday. For example, if New Year's Day falls on a Sunday, Monday January 2nd would be a legal holiday on which a school district may not be in session.

Impact: The district cannot schedule school on certain legal holidays. We have traditionally used Election Day as a superintendent's conference day, which counts as a day of session toward the 180-day minimum.

What are the internal factors that influence the calendar?

The agreements that exist between the Board of Education and the seven unions that represent employees in the District influence the development of the calendar in important ways, and there are traditional practices that have also played a role in calendar development. These are summarized in the list below.

- Article 32 of the [Scarsdale Teachers Association \(STA\) contract](#) states, "During the months of November and December of each year of this Agreement, the Administration and the Association shall meet to determine the school calendar for the following year." Past practice establishes that the calendar can be no more than 185 days of session, inclusive of all of the days outlined in the second bullet above.
- Each of the contracts with our Civil Service unions has a collection of paid holidays which vary by union. Collectively, there are 17 paid holidays which include Independence Day, Labor Day, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day, day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, and Juneteenth. The remaining four days are determined through discussion with the unions.
- We have traditionally held two superintendent's conference days prior to the school year, one on election day, and either a half or full day in March, while staying within the maximum of four allowed days.
- Several half days have been built into the calendar as part of the agreement with the STA, including the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, December 23 (when it is the last day of school before December break), and during the final week of the year when Regents Exams are given.
- The timing and duration of school recess in December/January, February, and April are based on the contractual holidays and the 185 school day maximum.

Impact: We collaborate with the STA, by contract, to establish a draft of the school calendar before it is presented to the Board of Education. The calendar is typically structured to include February and April breaks that coincide with contractual holidays. We also avoid scheduling the April break at a time that would interfere with the annual grades [3-8 state tests in ELA and Mathematics](#).

What are some of the other frequently asked questions?

How many snow/inclement weather/emergency closure days are built into the calendar?

Our past practice agreement with the STA of scheduling at most 185 days of session means there are— at most — 5 emergency closure days in the calendar. If we exceed that number, we typically restore days from April break as days school is in session.

Can the half-days in June be restored as full school days to create longer breaks (December, winter, spring)?

As outlined in the first section, any day on which attendance is taken, Regents Exams are given, or superintendent's conference days are scheduled, count toward the 180-day requirement. The only reason we would need to extend scheduled half-days to full days would be to meet the 900/990-hour instructional requirement.

Why is the December break 2 weeks some years, and shorter other years?

The duration of the December break is heavily influenced by the overall boundaries of the school year. Generally, in years when Labor Day occurs earlier in September, there are more than 185 days available to schedule school. Similarly, in years when NYS sets a date later in June as the last day of school, more days are available to reach the 185-day calendar. In such circumstances, a longer December break gets scheduled. In other years, this is not possible.

Food Service Expansion & Highlights

By Stuart Matthey

Assistant Superintendent for Business & Facilities

As so many things return to normalcy, so too does our Food and Nutrition Service program. In addition to expanded offerings at all of our schools, we have also been able to offer food that is fresh and locally- sourced. While many school districts have been hobbled by supply chain challenges that have made some staples hard to



get, our partnership with Chartwells and good relationships with local suppliers have enabled us to overcome many of these challenges and deliver healthy and whole foods, sometimes direct from the farm.

Our District Dietician Hannah Kutzin, Food Services Director Tara Cook, and Culinary Institute of America-trained Executive Chef Glenn Garew have worked closely to build menus at all grade levels that are delicious, popular with students, and meet dietary needs and restrictions. Each school has vegetarian, dairy-free, and nut-free options available almost daily. We're also offering a wider variety of foods including sushi at all grade levels!

At Scarsdale High School, students have enjoyed the return of hot entrees and a more typical food service offering, including the reintroduction of specialty menus. One such menu was a week of Farm-to-School meals, sourced from providers in Nanuet, Milton, Clintondale and Norwich, NY and Pennington, NJ.

At the Middle School, students have enjoyed a return to their House cafeterias, and a return to the regular, pre-Covid menu format, including hot entrees. They've also been introduced to the Deli and salad pre-order apps, previously only available to high school students. The apps were essential for meal distribution at the height of the pandemic, but in addition to being popular with students, they have also shown themselves to help reduce food costs, waste, and wait times in the cafeterias.

Working closely with the kitchen managers, the Middle School menu has been frequently adjusted according to student taste, while also incorporating new concepts, such as Indian, Japanese and vegetarian options. Thanks are extended to the Quaker Ridge kitchen manager Wendy Decker who has also provided additional, outstanding support to the Middle School team.

In our elementary schools, cold lunch options include vegetarian options, and snacks that are available three times per week. The bagged lunches and bento boxes have been a popular choice, especially the sunbutter and soft pretzel bites box. Desserts are also offered every Wednesday and Friday. Our food service team has also worked to help encourage healthy eating outside of school, implementing the Discovery Food program. Each month features a new theme with coordinating menu items, fun kitchen demonstrations with take-home recipes, and activities sheets students can complete, like vegetable word searches and smart snack matching games.

The return to a more normal food service experience also means the return of in-house catering for District events such as continental breakfasts, sports banquets and professional development events. Catering in-house is not only a fun and different experience for our food service staff, it also saves the District money by not utilizing outside vendors.

Parents at all grade levels can purchase their students' lunches via the [MySchoolBucks](#) app, which can be set to auto-replenish for even greater convenience. Please remember custom sandwich and salad orders must be placed by 8 am for High School and Middle School students, and two days prior for elementary students. Menus and pre-order options are available via [NutriSlice](#).

The Food Services team is thrilled to be part of providing a more normal experience for our students, and look forward to serving more of them in the months to come!



Online Tools for Parents

By Rachel Moseley
Director of Information Technology,
Chief Information and Data Protection Officer

Transportation to Private and Parochial Schools

Requests for transportation to private and parochial schools for the 2022-23 school year must be received by the District no later than April 1, 2022. All requests have to be submitted via the Infinite Campus Parent Portal Online Registration system.

The District uses the Infinite Campus database system for managing student information. The Infinite Campus Parent Portal ("Campus Portal") is a confidential and secure website which allows authorized parents and guardians to access information about their children in real-time. It also allows parents and guardians to update contact information in order to receive notifications about school closings and delays.

Please visit www.scarsdaleschools.org/TransportationRegistration for instructions on how to request transportation. If you have questions about transportation, please visit the District's transportation website at www.scarsdaleschools.org/Transportation.

Kindergarten Registration

While the official kindergarten registration window closed on January 31, the registration system will remain open for new families, as well as for those who missed the deadline. Please visit www.scarsdaleschools.org/PublicSchoolRegistration for instructions on how to register online.

Children whose fifth birthday falls on or before December 31, 2022, may be registered for the 2022-23 school year. Parents who have not yet registered their child are encouraged to complete this process

as soon as possible to ensure a smooth screening and placement process.

For questions, please call the District Registrar, Nunzia Mauro, at (914) 721-2444, or send an email to registrar@scarsdaleschools.org.