SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

Dear Parents, Staff, and Community Members,

Welcome to the first edition of the 'Dale Dispatch! This is a new District e-publication intended to increase and enhance communication with our entire community around teaching and learning, goals and initiatives, and operations. As with all new endeavors, we appreciate your feedback as we continued to improve our efforts.

Dr. Thomas Hagerman

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman
Superintendent of Schools

"It looks bad, Batman. This brassy bird has us buffaloed." - Robin

A few weeks ago I decided to head into the city to visit the *Superheroes in Gotham* exhibit at the New-York Historical Society. For me, in the lobby, was the highlight of the exhibit: the Batmobile. Well, Batmobile No. 3 (versions two and three were apparently built to go to events promoting the show). Nonetheless, it was impressive in scale, design, and "wow factor."

As I moved through the rest of the exhibit, I was struck by the historical context of the

comic book characters. I didn't realize that most of the Gotham City superheroes dated back to the late 30's and early 40's. In the words of the exhibit materials, "Since their introduction... superheroes have been powerful role models, inspirational and enviable. Based on mythological archetypes, they reflect, respond to, and offer ways to navigate the twists and turns of modern life."

Perhaps a more cynical view of superheroes is that they were created to respond to social and political upheaval of the time, especially wartime. Individually and collectively, they affirmed our national strength, unwavering patriotism, and moral superiority. Of course, this could only happen through the creation of foils with far differing values and viewpoints (a.k.a. "supervillains"). These anti-heroes were forever trying to destroy the city through their diabolical schemes, but rarely were they a match for our masked crusaders.

As I was on the train heading back from the city, I found myself reflecting on the contemporary context of superheroes. Certainly, they are still relevant, permeating television, film, and social media. But there has also been a co-opting of this genre-- an attempt by power brokers and politicians to step into these roles.

In more recent contexts, public education, teachers, student performance on standardized assessments, pensions, and the like, have been vilified in order to create the need for saviors. Not unlike the historical context in comics, doubt and fear have been the primary weapon of control: our students aren't prepared or college-ready, schools don't know how to ensure accountability, tax dollars are being squandered, and on and on. However, unlike actual superheroes, who have some specialized tool, skill, or talent, many of these would-be heroes have no substantive experience or knowledge on educational issues, and make poorly conceived policy or budgetary decisions that do far more harm than good. They, themselves, become the supervilains by not only paralyzing schools with untenable regulations, but also by creating divisiveness and distrust among communities, turning otherwise content folks against one another (a common plot for villains in comic books of my youth).

It likely goes without saying at this point that I am a fan of superheroes. As a child, I was captivated and inspired by them, but not more so than by my teachers and my schools, those people and places that I knew were having a transformational effect on me and my peers alike.

As an adult, superheroes still hold a strong appeal for me, but for somewhat different reasons. Superheroes are not perfect or infallible, as I once thought. Each has foibles and weaknesses that expose his or her humanity. What they also share in common is that they have a strong sense of purpose and keen desire to make the world a better place. It is the same belief that I know our teachers and staff hold about the work they do every day with our students. Their deep commitment inspires children and youth to even higher levels of achievement, but more importantly to lead lives of purpose and influence.

In these modern times, when the rhetoric of gloom and doom in and around our school community mimics that of any Marvel comic, it might behoove us all to remember the superheroes who are really inspiring us and our children and the real villains-those trying to undo them.

Center for Innovation Awards Grants

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

STEAM Day

The Center for Innovation awards two kinds of grants - Development and Implementation.

Development: For teams of Scarsdale educators who have a project idea they'd like to explore, but which needs to be refined before qualifying for an Implementation Grant. Development grant funds may be requested for such costs as consultants, expenses associated with taking a team on a site visit, supplies, and materials.

Implementation: For funding a team project proposal that is ready to be implemented and meets criteria established by the Center. These grants cover costs like supplies, materials, equipment, consultants, an evaluation component, and submission of an article to the *eJournal of Innovation.*

For the 2015-2106 grant year, teams were encouraged to submit project ideas in Design Thinking, STEAM, Making, Coding, and Entrepreneurship. Of 10 proposals submitted, five are currently approved for funding:

Digital Manipulatives and Object Fabrication in the High School Math Classroom
(Implementation Grant)
Joe Nista High School Mathematics
Monica Palekar High School Mathematics

This project's goal is to use digital manipulative devices with students in the Math454:Honors InterdisciplinaryMathApplicationscourse. The project will provide an opportunity for students to broaden and deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts. For example, students will learn how to construct geometric objects using fabricated components created with a 3D printer. This team hopes their work will provide project ideas that can be incorporated into other High School mathematics courses.

Music Maker Museum Revisited
(Implementation Grant)
Jessica Slotwinski Middle School Music
Michael Pincus Middle School Technology

This project builds on a highly successful student experience funded by a CFI grant last year. Teachers will develop a Music Maker Museum in which 80 sixth grade Exploring Music students will design, create, and display electronic instruments and "electrified artwork." Students will work with Ototo microprocessors, sensors, conductive paint, foil tape, and other materials. They will design, research, and create instruments or programmable artwork to display in an interactive museum, and write descriptions of their projects, and instructions to help visitors understand their

instruments or how to interact with their work of musical art.

Tinker Spaces
(Implementation Grant)
John Calvert, Quaker Ridge Technology
David Liebowitz, Quaker Ridge Fifth Grade classroom
Mark Winston, Quaker Ridge Fifth Grade classroom

The goal of this project is to redesign the traditional classroom by creating dedicated Design Thinking areas of 300-400 sq. ft. within two existing fifth grade classrooms (to be called "Tinker Spaces"), and by weaving a Design Thinking approach into student learning that will take place in these spaces. This project builds on previous elementary MakerSpace initiatives by taking Design Thinking into the fifth grade classroom. Students will employ the same Design Thinking language that is used at the Stanford University D-School: emphasize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The plan includes a weekly "Genius Hour" for check-in and sharing among students, as well as time for students to work on their passion projects.

Exploring the Future of Storytelling
(Development Grant)
Emily Block, High School Social Studies
George Olivier, High School English
Katja Rossi, High School Librarian
Chris Sipe, High School Science

This team plans to collaborate with Lance Weiler and Magalis Martinez of the Digital Storytelling Lab at Columbia University, to design and implement a digital story experience for students. Participants will come to understand that a writing activity can move beyond passive reception toward complete and active immersion. An example might be a response to the refugee crisis (a connection to current events) in which students play specific roles in a simulation. A final outcome of this project may be a prototype for a new writing course, or a schoolwide activity that would be focused on Grade 10 students.

STEAM Rock-n-Roll!
(Development Grant)
Katherine Bescherer, Heathcote Music
Andrew Brown, E/F/Q Music
Matthew Fitzpatrick, Edgewood Art
Lisa Forte, Edgewood Music
Erik Holvig, Greenacres Technology
Peter McKenna, Fox Meadow Technology

Inspired by the Scarsdale Schools Makerspace Initiative, this team of six music, art, and technology colleagues is excited to work together in a collaboration among the five elementary schools. This project will focus on Design Thinking, allowing students to brainstorm, engineer, and create electronic audio "puzzles" that incorporate music, art, and technology. These puzzles will be constructed using conductive materials, and powered by computer code developed in Scratch. Students will experiment with audio synthesis tools in the music rooms to create original, authentic sounds for audio sampling and musical motif composition. These samples and motifs will be coded to

respond to Makey Makey external circuit boards that will support the design of their interactive puzzle boards.

Elementary Co-Teaching: Mastering Practice

By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services

As the saying goes, *two heads are better than one.* This is especially true in the case of our elementary co-taught classes that pair a general education and special education teacher.The goal of co-teaching is to provide targeted instruction that addresses each student's unique needs in an environment that allows all students to flourish academically and socially, while enjoying the rich discussion and interaction found in any general education classroom.
Our co-teaching pairs spend a lot of time planning and coordinating their efforts. The fruit of this work has a dramatically positive effect on learning for both special and general education students.

The co-teaching program has been in place for ten years, and has played an integral role in how we support students with academic challenges. Although teacher pairings and building assignments change year to year, the District has amassed a tremendous amount of knowledge about what works in these types of classroom settings.

This year Susan Goodman, our Special Education Teacher-in-Charge, along with the other faculty in the program, wanted to take our co-teaching even further.   This fall, all of our co-teachers participated in a two-day intensive workshop on advanced co-teaching models, followed by consultant visits to view and strengthen practices in each classroom. This professional development has challenged us to think about space in different ways, focus more intently on how we differentiate within mixed groups, and make our direct instruction more focused.

While observing classes, our consultant noted the ease and enthusiasm with which our teachers incorporated new techniques and ideas into their classrooms. Examples of this may be seen in our first and fourth grade classrooms. The first grade class has taken station teaching to a new level, rotating through three stations for small group instruction in word study, writing workshop, and comprehension. Two of these groups are facilitated by the teachers and allow students to get targeted instruction in a class grouping of six students.The third group, facilitated by the aide, is focused on literacy and independence, using iPads - always a hit with the students! It's important to note that this type of teaching takes an enormous amount of planning and coordination, which our teachers make look easy, but belies the work involved.

Our fourth grade class is using parallel teaching to bring science to life. In this model, each teacher is working with half the class during the same period. The method allows for the teachers to shrink the size of the class and give students more hands-on time, particularly in lab work. This gives students a chance to compare results of multiple trials on any given experiment, leading to the creative and critical thinking that is at the heart of a Scarsdale education.

These classrooms are an amazing tapestry of different types of abilities. Students

constantly learn from one another and see that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. It is wonderful to see the growth in all the students who are taking part in these classes. It is also amazing to see our faculty constantly striving to improve their practice and modeling the attitude we want our students to have - to make good great and great even better.

Personnel Update

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

During the five months that I've served as the Interim Personnel Services Administrator for the Scarsdale Public Schools, I've spoken with many people about who should succeed Joan Weber and me in the successor position of Assistant Superintendent for Human Services and Leadership Development.

Those five months have taught me much about Scarsdale's leadership needs. My many conversations have taught me more. Accordingly, look forward by April to the appointment of a permanent HR administrator who is:

- *A discerning thinker, comfortable with complexity and capable of charting strategic pathways through system challenges and issues*
- *A close listener and coalition builder who creates common cause around a vision of public service sector human capital for the 21st century*
- *A resourceful colleague within a leadership team dedicated to system stewardship*
- *A trustworthy leader with the relational skills to engage others and sustain productive working relationships across layered roles and constituencies*
- *A skilled writer and speaker --- in varied settings and for varied purposes*

The search for such an individual begins immediately.

Facilities Update

By Stuart Mattey, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities

The fall season is now upon us with its beautiful foliage and crisp mornings. This time of year also provides time to reflect back on all of the hard work that went into preparing our schools for another exciting year. This is especially true for our non-instructional departments who took advantage of these months to work on many important projects.

The Transportation Department focused its work during the summer on laying out the transportation plan for its 1800+ students that ride to and from school on a daily basis. Buses and all vehicles also received special attention as mechanics prepared them for the long school year ahead.

The Food Service Department used the summer as an opportunity to take advantage of professional development opportunities and to begin menu planning for the school

year. Many of the great healthy foods initiatives and ideas that are put into place for the new school year come from these types of opportunities.

The summer months allowed the Facilities Department to complete much needed maintenance projects including painting, roof and sidewalk repairs and boiler work. It also provided time for larger projects such as the Quaker Ridge roof project and renovations to the Fox Meadow office area. Other work completed included the extensive cleaning of all building spaces and the waxing of all floors.

Those final weeks of summer are always a frenzy of activity as finishing touches are applied and all departments are readied for students to return. As the year unfolds, these departments take satisfaction in knowing that they have done their best to assure students are provided an outstanding educational environment.

Technology Update

By Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation, and Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology

The 2015-16 school year will be an exciting time for the Scarsdale technology program. The technology staff has been reorganized to address the tremendous growth of technology, and to plan and implement initiatives. The team is now organized into two departments: instructional technology and innovation (supervised by Jerry Crisci) and information technology (supervised by Rachel Moseley).

Over the next three years, the instructional technology program will focus on several key initiatives, including:
- Developing a new Technology Plan
- Creating the SMART Schools bond plan
- Ensuring alignment of K-12 coding and STEAM expectations
- Formalizing the technology professional development program
- Developing grant proposals and plans for the Center for Innovation, in partnership with Lynne Shain, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction
- Launching a new website and community communications workflow, in partnership with Vicki Presser, Public Information Officer

All these initiatives are designed to enhance the use of technology, which is rapidly becoming the learning platform for all students.

Information Technology (IT) is working on several large-scale projects to address increased use of technology and the need to analyze student data. Over the next three years, IT will plan and implement several projects, including:
- Enhancing our technology infrastructure to provide students and staff with increased access to technology resources
- Implementing large-scale WiFi upgrades to provide improved access and bandwidth for mobile devices
- Implementing an electronic ticketing system that will support the ever-increasing number of devices more efficiently

- Implementing online student and census registration
- Enhancing the Finance/Personnel systems with additional functionality

The IT department completed major projects over the summer, including the replacement of network switches in all schools, and installation of a new phone system. In addition, IT also moved into a renovated space that provides collaborative workspaces, and more room for the student computer club.

The Technical Services team is preparing for the installation of network cabling and new wireless access points at the Middle School and High School.This upgrade will increase wireless network speed and provide the foundation to accommodate an increasing number of mobile devices.

The Data Services team has been working to address Federal and State reporting requirements. They are also working on development of the new elementary report card based on specifications developed by curriculum groups.

The Scarsdale technology team is looking forward to working with all stakeholders as they use technology to transform the instructional program and enhance District operations.

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