

Superintendent's Report
November 2014

This week we mailed home parent reports for our NWEA Measures of Academic Progress assessment results. This assessment is administered to all students in grades K-8 to establish growth targets and monitor student progress. Mr. Piccarella and I will be providing presentations for parents at the Centre Avenue and Rhame Avenue PTA meetings Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

This year Ms. Crowley's class has joined our junior/senior high school students at Molloy College "Music Therapy" sessions. During the sessions, therapists provide interactive music therapy interventions to help children with their communication and thinking skills.

The "Healthy Action Team" and "Newscasters" have partnered up and started a school-wide "JAMs" initiative. JAMs are "just a minute" of exercise breaks that are designed to incorporate more physical activity into the school day. Each Friday, the newscasters broadcast a "JAM session" and the entire school participates.

The 5th and 6th grade "Student Council" members worked with the PTA to organize a "Treats for Troops" drive in early November. Students donated extra Halloween candy that will be sent to our troops by the American Legion.

Our "Community Service Action Team" and "Peer Group" have joined forces, as well, to help support local charities in need during the holiday season.

PTA reflections are taking place this month at Rhame Avenue. This year's theme is, "The World Would be a Better Place If.....?" Students have made their submissions and judging will take place on Friday, November 21st.

The Literacy Action Team is kicking off the "Caught Ya Reading" Campaign which will feature our teachers as readers. Creating a school-wide reading culture is important to promote reading as a lifestyle. Students need to see their teachers as readers, and a bulletin board will be created to display pictures of teachers reading in various interesting and unique locations.

The Centre Avenue Student Council is sponsoring a Thanksgiving food drive in conjunction with Island Harvest. Last year over 300 pounds of food was collected and they are looking to surpass that goal for this year. Collection is taking place through November 24th with student decorated bins outside the main office.

Thanks to reading teachers Ms. Tener, Ms. Schaetzle, and Ms. Lugo, Centre Avenue School students celebrated National Family Literacy Day on November 1st as a follow up to the Centre Avenue PTA Parents as Reading Partners Campaign. Students read a favorite story with their parent responded to the text read. Visit the display at Centre Avenue

Centre Avenue will be celebrating American Education week by holding a parent Visitor's Day this Friday family members can visit and participate in the classroom learning with their children. This is also supported by the PTA.

This month both elementary PTAs sponsored "Family Fun Nights." These were enjoyable events which also raised money to support PTA initiatives throughout the year. Thank you to our PTAs for all you do for our students.

Jr./Sr. High School

The PTA held its first annual dinner/dance at the Hewlett Point Yacht club on Friday, November 7th. A great time was had by all.

The PTA sponsored a CPR certification course at its last monthly meeting on Thursday, November 13th. The session was run by Mr. Vulpis and had nearly 30 participants.

Thank you to all for making the transition to online scheduling for parent-teacher conferences at the high school a smooth one. Many parents were greatly pleased with the convenience of the service.

On Monday, November 17th, our students participated in the Youth Development Survey, which gathers data on student attitudes and behaviors across the county. We look forward to seeing the results and using the data to plan next steps to support our students.

Please be advised that due to a scheduling oversight the spring Parent-Teacher Conferences at East Rockaway Jr./Sr. High School failed to appear on the calendar. They are in place for Tuesday, March 24th from 6:30 – 8:30.

There are 88 students in grade 7. Looking at the first quarter grades for English and Social Studies (duplicated, total of 176 students) 76 students scored an 85 or higher on their report cards. 42 students scored between 80 and 84. Our students seem to be responding very well to the heterogeneous groupings.

Mr. Schloen was honored by the Education Foundation this past Friday with a dinner dance fundraiser. It was a lovely event and we thank the Foundation for all they do for our students.

I had the pleasure of attending the NYS School Boards conference in Manhattan this year with all five of our board members. I would like to thank all of you for giving up your time to attend this informative conference. I am very proud that our entire board could attend. We all brought back a great deal of useful and relevant information that we can apply in our district.

November 4th was Superintendent's Conference Day. Our teachers all participated in various workshops provided by consultants, our own administrators and teachers on a variety of important topics including data analysis, evidenced based instructional practices, differentiation and co-teaching models just to name a few.

Student Engagement Survey

During our summer retreat, our administrative team identified several priority areas for improving teaching and learning across the district and termed these as instructional premiums/instructional best practices. One of the priority areas is the improvement of student engagement. Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education. The concept of student engagement is predicated on the belief that learning improves when students are inquisitive, interested, or inspired, and that learning tends to suffer when students are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, or otherwise disengaged. In order to improve student engagement, a subcommittee of our administrators designed a student survey that would provide our teaching staff with insight into how to best engage our students in learning. We refer to this as "the hook." The student engagement survey consists of thirty questions broken into four parts: Student Background, Equity, and Diversity, School Experience and Co-Curricular Participation:

Extra–Curricular. The results will be shared with the teaching staff to provide them with an enhanced picture of how to best meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms. We will also be administering a learning styles inventory. This information will empower teachers with valuable insight into what interests students have and what learning styles meet their needs. The survey will be voluntary and a parent letter will be sent home to introduce parents to this initiative. The survey will be offered to students in grades 7-12 with an elementary version to follow at a later date. In addition, as part of our work with student engagement, we will be identifying instructional strategies and approaches for increasing cognitive engagement which requires students to interact with the curriculum/content in a deeper and thoughtful manner and seeks to create cognitively complex and engaging activities and tasks that balance the responsibility for learning between the student and teacher.

Mr. Robinson will provide a status update on FEMA and a brief status report on the budget development process which is underway and a brief overview of the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Robinson began his review with a review of the Affordable Care Act and the ramification and potential financial impact the District was facing in order to be in compliance with the requirements of this new legislation. He described the details of how the measurement periods the Board was adopting would work and some of the background work that had been done by the business office in preparation for implementing the district's plan.

Mr. Robinson then provided a status report regarding the districts' work with FEMA and the ongoing effort to recover significant funding in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Mr. Robinson reviewed a recent meeting the District coordinated with a team of representatives from FEMA to review the status of our claims, the ongoing restoration work, and the outstanding balances of funding that are pending from FEMA. Dr. Colvin and Mr. Robinson were joined by Mr. John Grillo, our District Architect, to review the entire scope of work being conducted. In addition, the pending scope of work that includes replacement of the concrete slab floor in the Tech Building, as well as the erosion behind the athletic field bleachers, along with some of the proposed remedies was reviewed and witnessed by the FEMA team via an on-site walk through conducted during the meeting. Mr. Robinson emphasized as a reminder to the Board and the community, this is now the tenth team, "yes, 10", from FEMA that has been assigned to our District since the storm two

years ago. As a result, it is necessary to review all of the work that has already been conducted along with the advice and determinations that have been provided by previous FEMA teams. Mr. Robinson elaborated, as can be imagined, sometimes the previous determinations made have been in conflict with what the current FEMA team believes is the proper approach. As a result, it requires a great deal of effort to ensure that our plan remains on a steady course.

In addition, the district was just made aware of a FEMA Public Assistance Match Program Technical Assistance training session that is being coordinated and conducted by the organization, NY Rising. This training is mandatory in order to participate in the “Match” program. Mr. Robinson indicated that while the promise of funding remains, he cautioned the community that the timing of receiving this funding was very vague.

Mr. Robinson then provided a brief summary of the budget development process and indicated that a preliminary presentation would be forthcoming to the Board at the December 16th meeting. Mr. Robinson indicated that the overall process was well underway and that individual meetings with budget developers would be commencing shortly.