



Hackensack Public Schools

# Newsletter

## *Superintendent's Message*

### STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Last month, I tackled the making of a district's school calendar. I hope you found it informative. I also mentioned that I would review student attendance in this month's column. There is a lot of information that relates to this area, certainly more than the space I have available to me here. I will do my best to be as concise, yet as thorough as possible with this overview. I highly recommend that you review the district's attendance policy, **Policy 5113, Attendance, Absences and Excuses**, in its entirety, when you have a minute. Here is its link:

<https://goo.gl/urm1gg>

**"The board of education believes that the regular attendance of students in each class and in school in general is critical to its educational mission. The district shall endeavor to achieve the ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC)" (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-9.3)"**

This is how the district's policy begins and the important points mentioned in these sentences are the 90% attendance rate and the fact that it is a QSAC requirement. If student attendance falls below the 90% rate, there are consequences that befall the district and the individual student.

While state law refers to students between the age of 6 and 16, the understanding of the state is that if a parent has chosen to enroll their child in a pre-K or kindergarten program in a public school, they are obligated to conform to the district's attendance policy, like every other student.

"An absence is considered an "excused absence" for the purpose of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance." There are only 14 reasons that the state recognizes for the purpose of an absence being excused. As you can probably guess, illness is there, as well as religious holidays (only those that appear on the state's list, however), court appearances, etc.

"An "unexcused absence" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed as excused absences in the section above. An unexcused absence may be counted toward retention, truancy, loss of course credit, ineligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance." Absence is expressly not excused for reasons like family travel, performing household duties like babysitting, etc.

"The orderly conduct of class activity depends upon the prompt and precise beginning of the program. Tardiness hinders the proper conduct of school activity. Students are expected to arrive to school and class on time." With respect to tardiness, the area that parents have some confusion with is the grace period for tardiness. Every school has a required start time. Coming to school after that time and you are recorded as late. On the elementary level for example, students are expected to be in school, in class and participating by 8:30 AM. The late bell rings at 8:30 AM and a final late warning bell rings at 8:40 AM. Some parents think that as long as they bring their children in by 8:40 AM, the child is on time, because of the last bell. Actually, the late bell is the 8:30 bell.

There are consequences for absences or tardiness at three points in the attendance record, as directed by district policy; 4 days, 9 days and 14 days. Failure to comply with proper attendance procedures at each of these steps brings on consequences that range from a conference with the principal to create an action plan, all the way to notifying state authorities or the DCP&P (formally known as DYFS) of the excessive absences or tardiness. On occasion, if the tardiness or absence rate is high enough, parents have had to go to court and explain to a judge why they are depriving their child of his/her rights to an education. There was one extreme case during my career, where a parent was remanded to jail for 30 days for failure to comply with the judge's order to follow the attendance laws. Given the focus on the cost of education today and the impact that chronic absenteeism and tardiness has on a child's education, judges in family court have had very little tolerance when adjudicating these cases.

As a district, we regularly are above the state's threshold for attendance and that's very good for the district and its children. We do however, have some children whose attendance do go below the 90% marker (18 + days of unexcused absences) and those are our constant challenges.

As was said earlier, the policy has a wealth of information in it that will fill in the gaps that my essay may have created for you. A read through of it will fill in those gaps for you.

We don't wish that parents send their children to school sick. This just spreads illness to other healthy students and staff members. We would prefer that parents be aware of the attendance code and policy and work with us to provide the best education for their children. It is their right, after all.

Sincerely,

*Joseph V. Cicchelli*

Acting Superintendent of Schools

**MARCH 2017**  
**Volume 1, Issue 4**



### IMPORTANT DATES:

#### **March 7th**

12:30pm Dismissal—All Students  
PD for Staff

#### **March 28th**

BOE Regular Meeting—7:30pm

#### **April 10th—14th**

Spring Recess— School Closed

#### **May 2nd**

BOE Regular Meeting—7:30pm



## Fairmount School

### Read Across America 2017

Fairmount School's faculty and administration kicked off the month by encouraging all students and adults to participate in the March Reading Challenge. Other fun Read Across America Week activities took place during the first week of March. Each class celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday with activities in their classrooms. In the Media Center, Mrs. Picone assisted students to create book reviews of their favorite Dr. Seuss books and shared them with each other. To tie up the celebrations, the entire school community stepped out of their classrooms and offices to read together for ten minutes - we dropped everything to read! We even had the wonderful surprise of a guest visitor to join us, Curious George! Fairmount spent the rest of March completing their 20 hour reading challenges faithfully. Students and adults who completed their challenges are featured on bulletin boards right outside the main office for the month of April! The culminating Read Across America activities took place on March 31<sup>st</sup> in the Fairmount School Auditorium. Many students took the stage to showcase their reading abilities and all students who completed the Reading Challenge were asked to stand to be recognized by their Fairmount Family.



## Nellie K. Parker School

### And the Winner Is...

Nellie K. Parker School awarded the coveted **He Reads to Me Mantle of Literacy** to the police officers of the Hackensack Police Department! The HPD sent over 15 officers to participate in Parker's semi-annual He Reads to Me literacy event. Because they showed up in such full force, they were awarded the honor of displaying the beautiful banner in their building. It is great to know that our officers support our students.



## Fanny M. Hillers School

### "Hillers School Celebrates Read Across America Week with a SPLASH of FUN!"

Children and educators across the United States joined together to celebrate Read Across America Week in early March. Hillers School students, parents, and teachers were in that number. The theme in the Library/Media Center for the week was **"Reading Fun Under the Sun"**. Upon entering the Media Center you felt as if you were on a beautiful warm oasis with palm trees, beach chairs, ocean music, beach balls and sunglasses. To celebrate and promote reading, Hillers School Stars and staff engaged in a week-long celebration with many fun activities. They dressed accordingly to celebrate Dr. Seuss' books and students had a blast with "Reading Fun Under The Sun". They read Independently in their Media Center with Mrs. Hayek as parents and teachers visited. The students also participated in a school wide reading challenge, visited the school book fair, were engaged in classroom activities and completed many online literacy activities. To conclude the week's celebration, the students enjoyed birthday cupcakes during lunch to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss, a man whose books make us laugh and smile!

*Written by Len Hayek, Hillers School Media Specialist*



## Jackson Avenue School

### *JAS March Madness*

Jackson Avenue School celebrated women's history month with a wonderful assembly put on by the third grade students. The show was inspired by the movie *Hidden Figures*; a movie which showcases women who were not so "well" known, but whose contributions changed the world. To honor women, the third grade students researched other hidden figures. During class time the students practiced reading nonfiction texts and researching information about various hidden figures. Then, teachers and students created an award show. An announcer named the categories, introduced the figures, and revealed information about each person.



***3rd grade students honor hidden figures Ellen Ochoa, Mae Jemison, Sacagawea, and Amelia Earhart under the category of famous travelers!***

Hackensack Public Schools celebrated Youth Art Week at the Bergen Town Center in Paramus. This very special week showcases all the talented students in Hackensack. We are so proud of our Hackensack students in grades 2-12, whose work was showcased. Research has shown impressive benefits of arts education--especially student motivation, attitudes, and attendance. Arts education encourages students to stay in school, succeed in school, succeed in life, and succeed in work. We are especially grateful to our art teachers who work tirelessly mounting, displaying, and organizing this wonderful event. Thank you.

## Hackensack Middle School

### HMS Students Take PRIDE in their Literacy Achievements

Students in the 5th grade were recognized during a Literacy Night Awards Ceremony held in Hackensack Middle School's Media Center on Thursday, March 30th. The event was sponsored by Hackensack Education Association and NJEA PRIDE, a campaign that brings schools and communities together. Students were nominated for one of two awards - the Awesome Achiever Award or the Incredible Growth Award.

During the program, each student received individualized certificates honoring their accomplishments in Language Arts, with messages from the teachers that nominated them. Additionally, students were awarded a book of their choice for their home library. During the ceremony, participants also enjoyed dinner catered by local businesses.

The evening began with a discussion of the initiatives of the HEA and PRIDE committee in bringing the school and community together to celebrate student accomplishments and to foster a love of reading. Guests were also informed of the exciting educational programs launched at the Middle School's Media Center. Also in attendance were representatives from Johnson Public Library who provided an overview of the programs available and offered library card registration to any families seeking a public library card.

HMS administration thanked all guests for attending, and urged students to keep working hard. The sentiment of the evening was that to ensure continued success, students should be encouraged to read just about anything, from chapter books to graphic novels. Parents were also encouraged to read aloud to their children, even if in their native language.

Smiles were abundant as HMS celebrated these deserving students!



## Hackensack High School

### *Hackensack High School Students Earn Distinguished New Jersey Seal of Biliteracy*

In 2017, The State Seal of Biliteracy was established to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more foreign languages in addition to English. The State Seal of Biliteracy shall be awarded by the local board of education to graduating high school seniors who meet the criteria established by the State Board of Education.

Hackensack High School is proud to recognize the following students:

Ledwin Acosta Martinez

Lisbel Almanzar

Allison Aranda

Juan Pablo Arroyave Cortes

Jennifer Calle

Jessica Chaca

Edwin Contreras

Estiven Osmin Cordova-Castillo

Sofia Delgado

Vanessa Delgado

Kiana Delvillar

Andres Fernandez

Mikaela Garcia-Conde

Alexandra Jauregue

Iris Ocasio

Kimberly Pena

Alexander Antonio Rivera

Katherine Rodriguez

Oliver Santos-Paulino

David Suescun

Daniel Ugalde

Nayeli Vicente De La Cruz



# Early Childhood Developmental Center



### Sweethearts Dance

2/10/2017- The ECDC PTA hosted a Sweethearts Dance in the ECDC gym that was well attended by ECDC Students, Families and Staff. The event was a great success!

### Healthy Heart Activities

2/24/2017- ECDC hosted Healthy Heart Activities for students and parents to promote healthy lifestyle choices with emphasis on nutrition and exercise.



# March

Forward, March  
And welcome Spring,  
When bunnies  
bounce  
And birds all sing!



When March winds blow  
The winter away,  
They get the world  
ready for  
April and May.

By: Helen H. Moore

