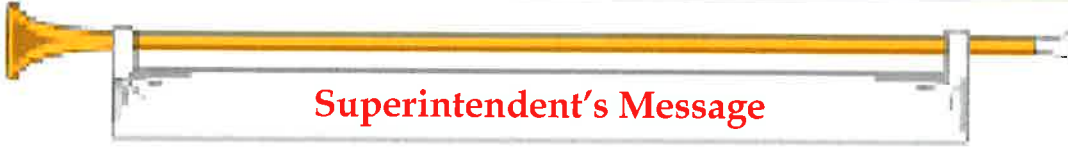




Newsletter



Superintendent's Message

What Goes Into Developing A School Year District Calendar?

Recently, I was asked how the district develops its school year calendar. I thought I'd take the opportunity to explain how that's done in this edition of the district newsletter.

To begin with, the major parameter that drives the calendar is the minimum number of school days mandated by law, 180 days. We add to that the days for state mandated annual professional development (requirements for affirmative action, suicide, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB), Right to Know, Substance Abuse, Hostile Work Environment, Child Abuse, etc.). All educators are mandated to have 20 hours minimum per year of professional development, in order to maintain their certificates, similar to other professionals. Inclement weather is up next. We start with 4 days and if more days are needed because of severe weather conditions, we pull them from the spring break in April. And let's not forget that if we don't use the weather dates, we have to consider how to give the snow days back to the staff and students. Depending on the calendar, these dates are usually added to the Memorial Day Weekend or for use on a Friday or Monday after Memorial Day to create three day weekends.

Now, consideration is given to the holidays that we celebrate. We start the year off relative to the Labor Day weekend and depending on where it falls, it determines when the first day for staff and students are. Then we add the Jewish holidays, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving, NJEA Convention, Dr. King's Birthday, Memorial Day, a winter break in December/January (around the time of Christmas, Kwanza and Hanukah) and a spring break in April (usually around the time of Good Friday, Easter and Passover). The week off in February was removed from the calendar because of the testing schedule a number of years ago and it's been reduced to the President's Day Holiday. Now, we have to consider the non-negotiable days that have to fit into the calendar; the days for state mandated assessments. While most of you are familiar with the annual PARCC tests (previously the NJASK Assessment), are you aware that from November through June, some group of students somewhere in the district is having one form of assessment or another, other than an assessments taken for a class? The assessments include NJASK (Science), APA, DLM, PARCC (ELA and Math), AHSA, ACCESS, NAESP, NJBCT and any other federal or state test that we've been "randomly selected" to take (i.e., NAEP, the nation's report card assessment). Many of these are spread out over a two or three week period of time (including make-ups) and are usually peaking between February and April.

Are you still with me? Now, we have to consider closing the school year. You must graduate your high school seniors on the last day of school, so graduation is officially the last day of the school year. We cannot graduate on a Friday because of the Jewish Sabbath, which would prevent many of our students from being able to celebrate graduation with their peers. Because of the final exam schedule, the preferred day to graduate is Thursday. When that isn't possible, Monday or Tuesday are the next best days.

Now that all of the parameters are set, you have to average the number of days equally into four marking periods for the middle and high schools and into three marking periods for the elementary schools. Lastly, because of all of the items that go into closing the fiscal school year, the last day of a school year does not go past June 25, because our fiscal year ends on June 30. When all is said and done, students will have a school year of 184 days and the staff will have approximately 186 days on the calendar.

As you can see, the school year calendar has changed quite a bit since most of you were in school and don't get me started talking about how much it's changed from when I was in school!! In the past, we've explored eliminating some of the holidays but it always comes down to whose holiday don't you celebrate? While the consensus is that more holidays cannot be added, it is hard to reduce the ones we have. My prediction is that in the future, we may see a further reduction in holidays and an expanding of the school year because of the additional curricular requirements, but that will be your child's dilemma with their children and nothing you'll probably have to deal with.

And if all of that doesn't make your head spin, consider that the state has attendance requirements for children that school districts are mandated to manage and hold students and their parents responsible for. So if your child isn't in school for the requisite number of days, you may find yourself in front of a judge explaining why, but that my fine parents, is another column. Maybe I'll tackle student attendance in the next newsletter.

Sincerely,

Joseph V. Cicchelli

Acting Superintendent of Schools

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017

Volume 1, Issue 3



IMPORTANT DATES:

January 16th

MLK Jr. Day—School Closed

January 17th

BOE Regular Meeting—7:30pm

February 7th

12:30 Dismissal—All Students
PD for Staff

February 20th

President's Day
(School Closed)

February 28th

BOE Regular Meeting- 7:30pm

March 7th

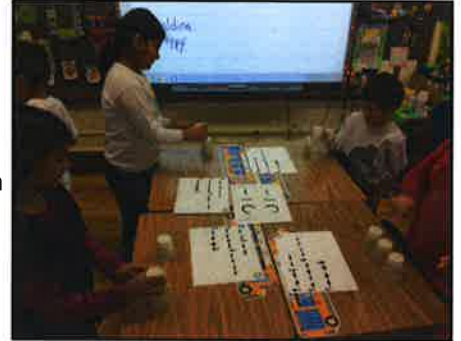
12:30 pm Dismissal—All Students
PD for Staff

Fanny M. Hillers School

Hillers School 1st Graders Learn to Code

Mrs. Heerema's first grade class celebrated Computer Science Education Week with the "Hour of Code"! They completed a lesson called "My Robotic Friends" in which they learned and practiced coding instructions with symbols. The students came to understand the need for precision in following the coding steps to achieve the final product. They had an absolute blast using paper cups as the tools to demonstrate the code and giving coding instructions to their partners. The end product was a great time of learning, listening and fun in following directions. Watch out world..there's a group of 1st graders ready to become the next generation of computer engineers!

Article submitted by: Dina Heerema



Fairmount School

2016-2017 Teacher of the Year

Mrs. Erin Scordo was nominated and selected as Fairmount School's Teacher of the Year for 2016-2017 School Year. Mrs. Scordo began her teaching career in 1998 at Fairmount School. After graduating from Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, IN, with a Bachelor of Arts in Education, she was hired to teach basic skills math and reading to grades 2 to 5 by former principal, Ms. Ann Small. The following year she taught third grade and then second grade the year after that. Mrs. Scordo spent 8 years teaching second grade. She often was the inclusion teacher and she quickly learned that working with students with disabilities was her passion. She received her Masters in Special Education from Saint Thomas Aquinas College in 2003. In 2006, Mrs. Scordo began teaching the first grade MD class at Fairmount School. She spent the next ten years (minus a few years to stay home on maternity leave) in the self-contained classes. An opening came up in first grade and Mrs. Scordo decided to go back to a regular education classroom. She continues to use differentiation strategies to ensure that her students are learning at their academic levels. In her spare time, Mrs. Scordo enjoys spending time with her husband, Vincent, her 7 year old son Tommaso and her 4 year old daughter Amelia.



Mrs. Scordo was presented with flowers by Mrs. Ashton-Loeb and Mr. Whiting upon announcing that she had been awarded the Teacher of the Year honor. Congratulations Mrs. Scordo!

Nellie K. Parker School

Nellie K. Parker Elementary School has taken the Edcamp model and turned it on its head!

Edcamp is a form of unconference designed specifically for teachers and their needs. Unlike traditional conferences which have schedules set months in advance by the people running the conference, **Edcamp** has an agenda that's created by the participants at the start of the event.

Mrs. Whitaker and Mr. Giorgio recognized the need for teacher voice and have turned the traditional staff meeting into "Edcamp NKP". Upon entering the office, staff members are greeted by a large chart aka "Idea Board" where teachers can use sticky notes to post ideas about what they want to share, learn, or talk about.



Ultimately, the sticky notes become sessions where staff members meet to share, discuss, and problem solve issues based on their wants and needs as a school community. Finally, sessions notes are curated using Google Docs in order to provide access to the entire staff. At this point staff members are able to add their ideas and resources. These notes are dynamic and used as a source of reflection.

This new spin on the traditional faculty meeting has been widely received and staff look forward to the next meet up to continue conversations and grow their professional practice.



Jackson Avenue School

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

Jackson Avenue Elementary School celebrated its fall academic achievement ceremony on Wednesday, January 25. Students were awarded certificates based on grades, but also on character. Many awards were given to students who achieved high test scores in different areas, but teachers also took into consideration the student's character. Students were awarded certificates based on perseverance, citizenship, positive attitudes, and determination in coordination with high grades. We believe that school is more than just test scores. At Jackson Avenue we take care to build good citizens too. Congratulations to all the award recipients.



Students in Jackson Avenue School 1st grade presented an assembly to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We thank Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for making the world a better place for all students. Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed of a world where people could walk together, talk together, share food together, and love one another in peace. Each year we thank him and are reminded that fighting for the rights of others and treating people with respect and kindness is an ongoing fight.

Early Childhood Developmental Center

Touch a Truck Event

ECDC participated in a Touch a Truck Event in which students had the opportunity to see and climb into various community service vehicles. ECDC Students had the opportunity to interact with representatives of the Hackensack Police, Fire, Public Works, Construction and Ambulance Departments.



Hackensack Middle School

Hackensack Middle School Gifted & Talented

The Hackensack Middle School Gifted and Talented class sent three teams (Comets, Mavericks and Circuits) to participate in this year's First Lego League Competition themed Animal Allies. The teams' researched a real-world problem on animal and human interactions and were challenged to develop a solution to improve that interaction. They also designed, built, and programmed a robot that competed on a table top playing field against other teams in the state. The teams had fun while they learned to apply science, technology, engineering, and math skills (STEM). Along the journey they also developed critical thinking, team-building, and presentation skills. At the Qualifying Tournament held in late November 2016, team Circuits was awarded the Judge's Award and team Mavericks was awarded 2nd place in Core Values. Both teams were invited to compete in the State First Lego League Championship Tournament. Team Circuits was awarded the 1st place trophy for their Research on developing a solution to Shark Attacks.



Hackensack Middle School Administration, teachers, and students are proud of the hard work, creativity, and excellent representation of our community these students were able to achieve.

Hackensack High School

Hackensack High School Hosts Annual Pep-Rally

Hackensack High School's Student Government hosted our annual pep rally in late November. The event, coordinated by our senior leadership and student council, honored all fall sports teams, band members, and cheerleaders. The event promoted school spirit, recognized the accomplishments of our seniors and held class vs. class dance and banner competitions. The event was voted the favorite school memory for 2016!





LGBTQA + HACKENSACK

On Wednesday, January 25th, the Hackensack High School - Drop-In Center, a School Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP), facilitated a free panel titled, **LGBTQAI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Questioning, Asexual/Allies, Intersex and more) Hackensack: A Conversation and Resources for parents, students and teachers.**

The evening took place at the Hackensack Cultural Arts Center and was a collaboration of the Hackensack High School Drop-In Center, the Department of Cultural Arts and the Tri-Arc Community Development Corp. Additionally, the Hackensack High School Drop-In Center, the Cresskill Congregational Church, UCC, the Hetrick-Martin Institute New Jersey, GLSEN Northern New Jersey, the Bergen County Division of Family Guidance: Reflections Program, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, HiTops, and PFLAG of Bergen County, presented information regarding their respective programs and participated in a panel discussion.



The purpose of the panel was to educate the public about the LGBTQAI+ community, to promote equal rights for these students and to facilitate optimal positive youth development within their community. The panel members shared their programming and resources available throughout the New Jersey area. Professionals and community members gathered and had conversations regarding LGBTQIA+ youth and safe spaces available in school and community environment.

The Hackensack High School Drop-In Center will facilitate another LGBTQAI+ free discussion; **LGBTQAI+ Hackensack Part II of the Conversation**, on Wednesday, March 29th from 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm at the Hackensack Cultural Arts Center- 39 Broadway, Hackensack, NJ.

If you have any questions about this free event, please contact Susan P. Fenker, MS, LCSW, Director of the Hackensack High School Drop-In Center, SBYSP, at s.fenker@hackensackschools.org.

The Hackensack High School Drop-In Center, SBYSP is funded by the New Jersey of Children and Families and the Hackensack Board of Education.

