



SCARSDALE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman

Superintendent of Schools

"Connecting the Dots":

Scarsdale Strategic Planning



Henry Mintzberg, Canadian academic, McGill University professor, and prolific author on business and management, once said, "Strategic planning isn't strategic thinking. One is analysis, and the other is synthesis." In this worldview, the two concepts are, at once, both distinct and interdependent. Strategic thinking is aspirational, imagining a future of possibilities for our students, educators, and schools. Strategic planning, on the other hand, is a backward design challenge: creating a scaffolded approach to prepare all individuals within our school community for this desired future.

Mintzberg also tells us that the key to this work is synthesis (i.e., "connecting the dots") rather than analysis (i.e., "finding the dots"). He explains that this requires a deep dive into both the individual experiences of key leaders and the experiences of others throughout the organization. It is only after this work that effective synthesis can occur, leading to a defined vision and clear direction for this work.

Last year, the District administration began the process of strategic planning in earnest as the Transition Plan (2015-2018) came to its natural conclusion. The initial work in this process included discussions and data gathering through stakeholder focus groups; surveys of students, teachers,

parents, and community members; a Superintendent's Conference Day dedicated to strategic planning with all District teachers; and ongoing administrative team reviews.

The synthesis of all of this data gathering, our internal process of connecting the dots, led to the identification of seven broad, thematic areas, or pillars, that link our past priorities with further areas to explore and develop. These pillars are:

- Student Autonomy & Responsibility
- Educator Autonomy & Responsibility
- Cohesive Community
- Effective Learning Organization
- Sustainable Infrastructure
- Personalized Learning
- Wellness & Well-Being

Last March, we used a digital platform to collect and organize educators' feedback related to the pillars. This allowed us to break down the responses into categorical themes and collect both quantitative data through frequency analysis and qualitative information from the narrative responses.

Initially, in our early planning, we assumed that our goals would simply flow out of each pillar area, and there would be a beautiful and seamless symmetry to this work. As we learned through the process, however, while the pillars affirmed our collective values and priorities, they were not ends unto themselves. Said another way, they provided focus, but not direction. The late Steve Jobs seemed to have figured this out before us, when he said, "you can't connect the dots looking forward you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future...Because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off a well worn path." Along with trust and the confidence that this work brings in terms of clarifying our values and priorities, we also collected literally hundreds of pieces of evidence in the form of feedback from our students, teachers, parents, and community members that informed our aspirational future, which in turn, has influenced this process and its expected outcomes.

After months of data gathering and analyses, we arrived at the strategic goals for the next five years. They are as follows:

### Scarsdale Schools 2019-2024 Strategic Plan Goals

#### **Balanced Literacy: Creating the Foundations of Learning**

Assure cohesion of effective, student-centered literacy practices while integrating digital, visual, and text approaches.

Curricular and Co-Curricular Approaches to Health, Wellness & Well-Being

Identify and develop curricular and co-curricular wellness experiences and articulate common expectations for educators/coaches for assured experiences for all students.

#### **Gardens & Biomechanical Innovation**

Assure common, site-specific, innovative and integrated garden experiences across grade levels through a coordinated, community-involved and collaboratively designed K-12 curriculum.

#### **Global Citizenship Education: Competencies & Ethical Responsibilities**

Utilize international travel, digital platforms, hosting, global partnerships, community diversity in the furtherance of language acquisition, ethical development, cultural understanding and competencies, and performance and service opportunities.

#### **Libraries, Learning Spaces & Curated Resources**

Expand, improve, and reimagine configuration, design and resource allotment of learning spaces, throughout our schools to inspire student learning.

## **Next Generation Standards Development & Implementation**

Engage in the interpretation, implementation, adaptation, and extensions of rigorous standards to meet the learning needs of all our students.

### **Professional Culture of Lifelong Learning**

Establish a connected, coherent, and well-communicated professional learning plan that aligns supervision processes, establishes a sequence of professional development opportunities, and aligns with District goals.

### **SET 2.0, STEAM & Design Thinking**

Provide assured opportunities for students to participate in STEAM and Design Thinking activities that promote active learning and critical and creative thinking.

### **Student-Centered Opportunities & Environments**

Ensure students are active participants and engaged learners through instructional and content choices, authentic inquiry opportunities, and multiple pathways to learn and demonstrate learning.

### **Student Supports**

Assure cohesive identification, assessment, and support practices for all students while thoughtfully increasing our continuum of special education environments.

### **Sustainable Schools & Systems**

Engage our students in assured learning experiences and expectations related to sustainability through a clearly articulated vision, guiding principles, and action areas.

### **Unified System of District-Wide Goal Setting**

Establish a unified, system-wide process for setting and communicating goals at the individual, school, and District-levels.

### **Technology to Transform Teaching, Learning & Assessment**

Ensure that students at all levels have access to and ethically and responsibly use technology as a tool for teaching, invention, coding, design, research, engagement, creation, and assessment.

Reading these goals in isolation may cause some confusion relative to the formerly described influencing pillar themes. To better describe the connection between these "dots" we offer the following example:

The fifth goal, Libraries, Learning Spaces, and Curated Resources, speaks to non-traditional libraries, flexible use of space, and resource availability for the learning needs at hand. When presenting this work to the Board of Education on September 23, we included a slide of the VAC Library in Hanoi, Vietnam. This library, designed by Farming Architects, is a self-sustaining ecosystem on a miniature scale, one that unites three components: gardening, aquaculture, and animal husbandry. The acronym 'VAC' stands for the first letters of the Vietnamese words vườn (garden), ao (pond) and chuồng (cage). The library itself contains a climbable wooden structure with a small collection of books and a mini-ecosystem comprising a garden, a fish pond, and a chicken coop-all connected through aquaponics. Waste from the koi pond is used as fertilizer to help vegetables grow, which cleanses the water and returns it to the pond. Chickens raised in cages within the structure provide eggs and waste that also help the plants flourish. Visitors can lounge and read the books stored in cubbies beneath the library's solar panel-fitted roof, and children are welcome to clamber up the beams.

From this simple example, you can see that reimagining the functionality of a traditional library naturally creates multidisciplinary approaches to curricula across content areas, including literacy, biology, STEAM, physical education, and environmental studies, to name a few.

For our purposes, we see this goal as bringing together the thematic issues of Student Autonomy & Responsibility; Educator Autonomy & Responsibility, Personalized Learning, and Cohesive

Community. In other words, our work within this goal will: (1) Allow students to become critical consumers of information; (2) Help teachers and students make effective use of libraries and librarians to support research projects and student presentations; (3) Provide students with the opportunity to choose from the broadest possible selection of appropriate reading material, in a variety of formats, to personalize their learning; and (4) Support opportunities to reconfigure instructional spaces that foster flexible learning activities and collaboration.

This article is jointly written and will continue under Edgar McIntosh's section.

Warm regards,  
Dr. Thomas Hagerman



## "Connecting the Dots": Scarsdale Strategic Planning

*By Edgar McIntosh, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Co-Director, Center for Innovation*

*[Continued from Superintendent's article, above]*

It is important to recognize that some of these Strategic Plan goals will have predetermined outcomes. For example, the Next Generation Standards Development & Implementation goals engage students and teachers in the interpretation, implementation, adaptation, and extensions of rigorous standards to meet the learning needs of all our students. Other goals, like Libraries, Learning Spaces & Curated Resources, will focus on process with potentially very different outcomes in individual classrooms or schools. For an expanded list of goals and accompanying information, please refer to our District's webpage section for the Strategic Plan, 2019-24 under Superintendent, [here](#).

With 13 Goals (each having multiple subgoals), we acknowledge that we are being ambitious, but refuse to be superstitious. In our work to date, triskaidekaphobia (fear of the number 13), actually gives way to the enthusiasm and excitement of authentically engaging in this work with both our school and broader Scarsdale communities.

An essential part of this work, of course, is maintaining focus on these goals over time and appropriately aligning District resources for full implementation. This necessitates careful budgeting, professional development, and guided curricular revision and program improvement.

As with most planning endeavors, it also requires effective and ongoing communication. To that end, we will be reporting the progress of our goals through education reports at Board of Education meetings and through the 'Dale Dispatch. In these future communications, we will go into more depth about our process in goal development, highlighting areas of collaboration, adaptation, and inspiration.

As the African proverb goes, it takes a (Scarsdale) village to ensure our students are safe, healthy -- and we would add -- "well-educated." We recognize that work is only as strong as our collective thinking, and we appreciate your questions, feedback, and comments throughout the process. Feel free to send either or both of us your thoughts via email. Also, please join us in person or online at the upcoming November 18th Board of Education meeting, where we will be finalizing our goal



statements.

Warm Regards,

Dr. Thomas Hagerman, Superintendent of Schools  
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&

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## A Culture of Lifelong Learning

*By Dr. Drew Patrick, Assistant Superintendent  
for Human Resources and Leadership Development*



Each year, I am reminded of the power that the cycle of a school year holds to refresh and rejuvenate students and staff members alike. The energy and excitement is palpable, as students meet their teachers, old friends reconnect, and the promise of new learning and new opportunities is at its peak.

I believe that part of what invigorates these early days of the school year is the simple experience of change. That change is felt most intensely, I suspect, by the students starting in a new school -- entering kindergarten, or starting in the middle school or high school -- as new routines are constructed in new spaces, and new friendships and relationships for learning are forged.

However, there is another group that experiences this change intensely as well--our new faculty members. Even though we are fortunate to be able to recruit experienced educators to Scarsale, starting or continuing a career here can be disorienting. The expectations are exceptionally high, and our students demand high degrees of challenge and engagement. One of the keys to helping our new faculty gain their footing and get oriented to the Scarsdale culture comes through our clear message around lifelong learning. This basic thought exercise can help illustrate this message:

Think for a moment about our youngest students -- in some cases not yet five years old -- as they start their journey in our public schools. What will the world be like for those youngsters, thirteen long years from now? What will they need in order to be confident and capable learners in our complex world? And, what will be required of each educator to ensure these students are able to fulfill our mission and become, "effective and independent contributors in a democratic society and an interdependent world?"

Taken even further, what must we do now to be able to say with confidence that a newly hired kindergarten teacher will be ready to teach her students on the first day of school in the *last* year of her career, some thirty years from now? It is September of 2049. Those kindergartners are part of the class of 2061! Even if we are unable to imagine the shape of education in 2060, we must be prepared to learn, to grow, to adapt, and to change, if we are to meet that challenge. I believe that, perhaps more than anything else, this has been the secret to Scarsdale's success over these many decades -- a deep and abiding commitment to career-long professional learning, professional

renewal, collaboration, partnership, and community.

It is this culture of lifelong learning among our teachers and leaders that has maintained the strong tradition of innovation in our schools. The A-School, Advanced Topics, SMS Core, maker spaces, and our digital literacy work are all excellent examples of innovations. Our ability to innovate relies on our ability to foster new thinking over time. This is why I would argue that the Scarsdale Teachers Institute (STI) is perhaps the most ingenious innovation of all. As the STI celebrates 50 year in 2019, we are reminded again of this critical core value --that lifelong learning and reflective practice is the means to the end of a successful career that touches the lives of our students in most important ways now, and into the future.



## Teens and Vaping: Deja Vu All Over Again

*By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services*

Five years ago, most school officials, including myself, would have told you that nicotine was becoming a non-issue in schools. Rates of usage had plummeted through the early 2000s and students' perception of risk around tobacco had skyrocketed. Even tobacco usage in adults was at record lows. New technology was on the rise for tobacco cessation: e-cigarettes, which both reduced the number of harmful toxins inhaled during smoking and allowed smokers to satisfy their nicotine addiction while slowly tapering their usage. Victory over cigarettes had all but been declared.



What happened?...Well, effective marketing happened!

E-cigarette companies realized they had a marketable "less dangerous" nicotine product that could hook a younger generation (see Stanford Medical School Research [here](#)). The two examples of advertisements above come from the early 1990s and the present. Over the past few years, vaping has been marketed directly to our kids without regard for the fact that the products are highly addictive and are particularly dangerous for the adolescent brain. Whether through peer pressure-type ads as pictured above, or through packaging and flavors that [mimic popular candies](#) (arguably targeted at pre-adolescents), our kids are being sold poison. Fortunately, there have been moves to stop this type of advertising and curtail the worst of these practices, but the damage has been done.

Even with the recent focus on and understanding of vaping and its dangers, the [usage](#) among high school *and* middle school students has become astoundingly high. While research is still limited on the health impact of chemicals found in vaping liquid (aside from nicotine), there have been many reported cases of pulmonary disease and other symptomatology attributed to chemical exposure. Additionally, nicotine is a well researched and highly addictive substance for the adult population but especially so for children and teens. There is also research indicating that nicotine addiction during adolescence makes teen brains more susceptible to addiction to other drugs in later life.

So, as parents and school systems, what do we do? We need to beat them at their own game and market better and start younger!

As a school system, we have added the dangers of vaping into our curriculum around tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs; we have run a number of presentations for students and parents on the dangers of vaping; and we've started a nicotine cessation group in the High School. The District is also making an effort to alert the community to the dangers associated with vaping through partner agencies. These steps are essential in showing students the dangers around vaping and setting expectations, at least within the schools, that the practice is unacceptable. However, no school program can do this alone. We need parents!

Contrary to popular belief among parents, our kids do hear what we say. This is true especially when we are talking to them before they engage in the behavior we want them to avoid. It is imperative that parents discuss vaping with their kids prior to middle school, and outline the dangers involved. In addition to the health risks, speaking to them directly about the way companies like Juul are fooling them into an addiction to fill their pockets. My experience is that older elementary schoolers and middle schoolers are particularly sensitive to being manipulated and fooled, and as parents we can use that to our advantage. Of course, there is an extremely important aspect of keeping our kids off these products: they can't see us doing it!

Here are some helpful links:

[Teen Vaping Linked to Teen Health Risks](#)

[Teens & Vaping: What to Watch for and How to Talk with Your Kids](#)

[Video: Identifying Vape Products](#)

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## Operations Update

*By Stuart Matthey,  
Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities*



### ***Budget and Finance***

At the Board of Education meeting held on November 4th the Audit Committee, comprised of all seven Board Members, reviewed the FYE 2019 external audit which officially closes the 2018-19 school year. Moving on, budget planning for the 2020-21 school year is now in full swing. Prior to 2020-21 budget work starting in January, there will be a public forum on November 14th at 9 a.m. to give District residents an opportunity to provide input on budget priorities, and a presentation at the December 16th Board meeting on financial projections.

### ***Facilities***

Projects funded by the 2018 Bond made significant progress this summer, most notably at Greenacres, where external construction work on the addition along Huntington Avenue got underway. Work on the addition will continue through the school year and is scheduled for completion in late summer of 2020. Also, 11 existing classrooms were completely renovated, resulting in brighter and more functional instructional spaces. Renovations on remaining areas of the building will take place in the summer of 2020. Elsewhere in the District, Bond-funded project work completed this summer included roof replacement at Heathcote and boiler replacements at the High School. Other Bond work scheduled for next summer includes renovation of Dean Field at the High School, replacement of portions of the High School roof, and installation of mechanical fresh air systems at Edgewood and Fox Meadow.

Budget-funded capital improvement projects completed this summer include installation of air conditioning in the Quaker Ridge and Fox Meadow libraries, as part of a District-wide three-phase



plan to provide cool learning spaces on high heat days for all students; completion of the field access stairs at Fox Meadow; and at the Middle School, replacement of two hot water heaters.

### ***Safety and Security***

Security vestibules, also funded as part of the 2018 Bond, were constructed early this school year, with only some electrical work remaining before completion. The new vestibules, in concert with the addition of Safety Monitors stationed at the vestibules, have greatly improved our visitor management process. Before starting the new school year, all Safety Monitors received training to familiarize them with our schools, our culture, and duty expectations, which include patrolling the grounds, adding another layer of safety and security.

### ***Transportation***

The District's 60+ bus drivers started off the new school year with their annual safety training session. Our drivers travel over 700,000 miles per year, safely transporting our students to their schools, field trips and athletic events.

### ***Food Service***

This is the second year that the District has provided lunch service to Edgewood, Greenacres, Fox Meadow and Heathcote. After working through some challenges in its inaugural year, this service is growing steadily in participation. The same can also be said at our other schools as students enjoy Chef Glenn Garew's culinary creations.



## **A New Look For Campus Portal**

*By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology*

We are pleased to let you know that Infinite Campus has two new and improved mobile apps: **Campus Student** (for high school students) and **Campus Parent** (for all parents District-wide). Download your app to review your child's attendance, schedule, transportation information, immunizations, progress reports and report cards, and more.



Download the **Campus Parent** mobile app from [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#).

To access your child's reports, click the menu icon within the App, click "More," and then click "Campus Backpack."

You can also continue to access the [Campus Parent Portal](#) from a computer by clicking the Campus Portal link in the top right corner of the District website.

For technical support, parents may contact the District's IT Data Services team by email at [parentportal@scarsdaleschools.org](mailto:parentportal@scarsdaleschools.org) or by phone at (914) 721-2407.

High School students should download the **Campus Student** mobile app to view their attendance, schedule, progress reports and report cards, and more.

Download the **Campus Student** mobile app from the [Apple App Store](#) or [Google Play Store](#).





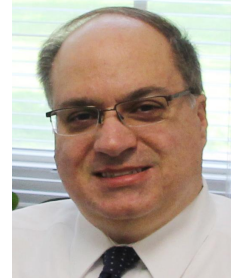
Students need to click the "Active Directory Login" button and use their Active Directory username and password to login.

Students can get technical assistance in Room 350 in the High School.

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## Fostering A Healthy Digital Lifestyle

*By Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation, and  
Co-Director of the Center for Innovation*



The emergence of smartphones and other personal digital devices has made technology an increasing part of our lives. In the last two years, some parents have expressed concerns regarding excessive "screen time," broadly defined as the amount of time their children use any kind of technology. Other parents have expressed concern about the excessive use of social media, that could potentially lead to issues with self-esteem, isolation, and what one researcher refers to as "FOBLO" (fear of being left out). One reason parents have been anxious about these issues is the publication of articles and books about the harmful effects of excessive use of mobile devices, not only by students, but also by adults.

This year, our District technology team will be looking at all of these issues, helping to make sure that we encourage a "healthy digital lifestyle" for our students. Our examination of this issue will clarify appropriate technology use, balanced with self-awareness about potentially harmful issues that can occur when using technology.

Using a K-12 focus, we have been reviewing research and best practices around the use of mobile devices in and outside of our classrooms. We are talking with experts in this domain to help us understand all aspects of this issue and have reached out to our colleagues in other districts who are also grappling with the same issues. In addition, the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center is also hosting a series of speakers who are experts on healthy uses of technology, including a recent conference that featured a leading expert in cyberbullying, as well as a professor from Harvard Medical School who is leading a research initiative in this domain.

We are also planning to engage with our parent community to share our findings and help parents understand what they can do to help their students embrace a healthy digital lifestyle. Additional information will be provided in the next issue of the 'Dale Dispatch.



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