

'Dale Dispatch

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The Norm:

Schools have long been considered microcosms of the broader society in which they exist. This is perhaps more true today than ever before. From politics to public health, schools are influenced by a myriad of internal and external drivers which directly impacts both its management and governance functions. In the best of times, there is always a path forward. We rely on familiar strategies of shared vision, mutual respect, stakeholder feedback, appropriate negotiations, agreements, and even necessary concessions. At other times, we find ourselves in "contested spaces," those in which we struggle to move forward together. In these moments, differing viewpoints and perspectives are too wide to make meaningful progress as a full community. We have been faced with many challenges together, and while there have been difficult moments, thankfully, through trust and collaboration, we have been able to achieve many, if not most of our past goals.

Covid-19 Complications:

This global pandemic has shaken our globe, nation, and Village at its core. It has destabilized every aspect of our lives from our livelihoods, to our relationships, to our mental health. While undeniably difficult for all of us, the effects of Covid-19 on our children have been both pervasive and profound. This recognition has guided our restart efforts to date, including our wrap-around approach of tending to their health, safety, academic, and well-being needs.

Although imperfect in many ways, our plans have been focused on addressing these needs at each step in our work, as we move forward incrementally towards more in-person learning as health metrics allow. This goal has been further complicated in recent weeks by the resurging numbers of Covid-19 cases in Westchester County. Although contact tracing to date has not shown evidence that infections are being spread in our schools, it is clear that external activities are leading to increasing



positivity rates in our area. In turn, these increases directly affect our ability to maintain the current hybrid model and our hope for continued improvements.

The Pros and Cons of “Contested Spaces”:

The notion of contested spaces has been applied to a variety of situations from disputed land claims to ideological divides and, in today’s world, everything in between. In many ways, this concept is folded into the idea of democracy itself. It suggests that people have inherent freedoms to think independently, speak openly, have access to public discourse and decision-making. In its best versions, it creates spaces to understand multiple perspectives, empathize, and work together towards common outcomes--both in the short- and long- term. In extremely challenging and stressful situations, the ability to work together may be diminished by polarization. It is important to note that disagreement and polarization are distinctly different. Disagreements are a natural part of human interactions; it is simply a matter of having differing opinions than our friends, neighbors, or colleagues. These are subject to, and often can, change. Polarization, on the other hand, moves from disagreement to competing against each other without the willingness to negotiate or compromise. As we have seen at both the national and local levels, the latter has the ability to become an enduring and destructive force, affecting the equilibrium of entire communities.

From “Contested Spaces” to Community Compact:

In a recent article in [The Atlantic](#), Thomas Wright reminds us, “Even after a vaccine is available, life will not go back to normal. Covid-19 was not a black swan and will not be the last pandemic. A nervous world will be permanently changed.” Said another way, while this has been perhaps our most monolithic challenge, it will certainly not be our last.

There is no doubt that the repercussions of this pandemic will continue to reverberate through our lives for a very long time with lasting ripple effects. There is also some certainty around the idea that other struggles--large and small--lie ahead for us, individually and collectively. That is the inherent nature of life.

Towards the end of summer, the District created and shared the Scarsdale Schools Covid-19 Family-District Compact. This was developed to highlight our priorities and obligations as a school district and to solicit the support of our students and families in this work, recognizing our shared responsibilities to one another for keeping our school and broader community safe and healthy. This Compact comports with long-held beliefs that our schools are the heartbeat of this community and that we are all stewards in its preservation and continued improvement. Towards this end, it is my greatest hope that we continue to work together throughout this year in the ways we have in the past: with trust, respect, civility, and common purpose. Our children need us now more than ever; as importantly, we need one another.

May your Thanksgiving holidays be filled with joy, loved ones, and good health.

Warm regards,

Dr. Thomas Hagerman

Staffing our Schools During Covid-19: A Fragile Enterprise

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

This pandemic has put incredible stress on our entire society, and our school community is no exception. Among the many challenges facing the Scarsdale Schools community during this pandemic is being able to effectively and sufficiently staff our instructional program and the myriad supporting responsibilities essential to running a school district this size. Each and every day, we ask our faculty and staff members to fulfill the pivotal role each plays, educating our students and creating a safe, secure, clean, and productive environment for learning, all during a global pandemic. We all understand that to work in proximity to other people, especially for long durations, carries an inherent risk during this time. There is no other way to say it- our educators and support staff are doing this work at great personal risk.



Thus, it is a remarkable thing to report that, outside of mandated quarantines and days our staff members require for emergency childcare needs due to school closures in the region, **our attendance rate has improved** to date when compared to the past few years. This speaks to the dedication and commitment of all of our employees to the in-person education of students in our community. We must remember, however, that the situation we find ourselves in is a fragile one, and cannot be taken lightly or for granted. Our staff, like the population as a whole, is contending with a host of issues that make coming to work a significant challenge. Over one hundred staff members have requested an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act due to underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk.

Others have privately expressed deep concern and reservation about coming to work because they care for older parents who are in the highest risk pool, and now work to overcome this fear daily. Some of our teachers decided that they had no choice but to take an unpaid leave of absence this year due to these legitimate health and safety concerns; some of our teacher aides resigned for the same reasons. We granted some teachers remote work accommodations, knowing risk mitigation for them was too difficult to overcome even with our health and safety protocols, and we have hired and/or assigned a teacher aide to provide classroom supervision while these teachers Zoom in from home.

These factors, coupled with added positions and the replacement of retirees, have resulted in the onboarding of 79 new staff members since July 1 (20 teachers, 7 long term substitute teachers, 35 teacher aides, 11 custodial staff members, 2 middle management staff, 2 secretarial staff, 2 bus drivers). Perhaps needless to say, this is an unusually high number, and reflects the difficulties this pandemic has created.

Now, each and every day, as quarantines emerge and regional school closures require teachers who are also parents to scramble to find childcare, we are piecemealing our program and operation together to maintain as much normalcy and continuity as possible. The faculty and staff of Scarsdale Schools are stepping up to support one another, and to make it work for our students, even as we look toward increasing opportunities for in-person learning. Every single bus driver, custodian, grounds person, secretary, and teacher aide; every single teacher, central office staff member, technology team member, and administrator is working under extraordinary conditions for this community.

I must reiterate, however, that the situation is fragile, and requires the entire community to work together. In-person learning requires responsible behavior in every part of our lives- mask wearing, social distancing, hygiene, and early recognition and communication of exposure and symptoms. Even a small number of Covid-19 cases can create the need to quarantine a critical mass of staff members that will cause a school to go remote for two weeks or longer. It is happening in districts all around us, and all across the country. Our in school protocols appear to be working, so please help us keep schools open, and keep our faculty and staff safe and able to come to work each day. We are counting on you.

Data Privacy and Security

By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology, Chief Information and Data Protection Officer



In January, the Board of Regents formally adopted Part 121 of the Commissioner's Regulations to implement Education Law 2-d. The regulations outline requirements for school districts to:

- protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of students, as well as some teacher and principal information;
- adopt and post a Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security, with supplemental information about each written agreement with a third-party contractor (vendor) that involves disclosure of PII;
- adopt and post a Data Security and Privacy policy;
- implement the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework;
- train individuals who are authorized to access student or teacher/principal data annually;
- create and publish a unauthorized disclosure complaint process;
- follow reporting and notification procedures when unauthorized disclosures occur; and
- appoint a Data Protection Officer to oversee all of these efforts.

Schools had until July 1st to appoint a Data Protection Officer and until October 1st to adopt and publish a Data Security and Privacy policy. In light of these deadlines, I presented the legal requirements and proposed policy modifications at Board of Education meetings throughout spring of 2020. The policy revisions were based on recommendations made by the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) and by the Board of Education lawyers, Thomas, Drohan, Waxman, Petigrow & Mayle, LLP.

In June, the board formally adopted revisions to [Policy 8635, Information and Data Privacy, Security, Breach, and Notification](#), to the [Parents' Bill of Rights](#), and appointed me to the role of Data Protection Officer. This set the foundation for important work that lays ahead.

In this new role, I am responsible for the implementation of the required processes and procedures, and I also serve as the point of contact for data security and privacy for the District. As such, please do not hesitate to contact me at dpo@scarsdaleschools.org should you have any questions or concerns related to data privacy.

Civic Education in a Hybrid World

By Dr. Edgar McIntosh,
Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment



Recently, I had the pleasure of watching a webinar hosted by the League of Women Voters of Scarsdale and facilitated by Leah Dembitzer. Its annual "Food for Thought" lecture focused on Action Civics and featured John Harrison (Scarsdale High School social studies teacher), Steve Goodman (Scarsdale Middle School social studies teacher), Simran Ruta and Claire Scarcella (Scarsdale High School senior and Junior, respectively) as well as DeNora Getachew and Martin Mintz from the nonprofit organization. Generation Citizen. This organization's

mission is to work alongside teachers to build the “skills, knowledge, and motivation students need to create positive, systemic change in their communities through civic and political action.”

It was inspiring to listen to our students describe the experiences they have had in their classrooms that have inspired their interest and active engagement with political systems at all levels. Simran and Claire described the power of classroom discourse and the opportunity to develop their opinions in environments that invited divergent opinions and actively engaged different perspectives.

It was equally powerful to hear how Mr. Goodman and Mr. Harrison and their departments nurtured classroom environments in which they have curated the resources and created the space to push students' critical thinking in the areas of civic engagement and political action. Mr. Harrison even admitted that when the politics of the classroom were swinging in only one direction, progressive for example, he would introduce a counter-perspective, “a conservative viewpoint may be...”. It reinforced a vision of Scarsdale classrooms, ones not designed to be echo chambers single points of view, but rather chambers of passionate intellectual engagement in which debates are supported, respectful, and clearly articulated.

Ms. Simran, a member of the High School Diversity and Inclusion Team, mentioned that she would be addressing the Board of Education to express her critiques of elements of the District curriculum. We welcome this kind of student expression and voice. It is evidence that a Scarsdale civic education is working in its primary goals. Our educators work to nurture students who are confident, engaged, knowledgeable, and willing to dedicate time and energy to causes that are important to them. We encourage our students to “lean in” and recognize and celebrate the thoughtful instructional strategies that have them do it passionately, ethically and skillfully.

Wrapping up the 2018 Bond

By Stuart Matthey,
Assistant Superintendent for Business & Facilities



The end of last school year was disappointing to say the least however there was at least one bright spot. We couldn't have had better timing to finish many of the important upgrades included in the 2018 Bond. More than a quarter of the Bond was spent on heating and ventilation upgrades. New mechanical fresh air systems were installed at Edgewood and Fox Meadow where this was particularly important, as the old method for bringing in fresh air did not meet state requirements. These new and much-improved systems are essential now as we try to keep children safely in school. Upgrades to the heating systems were also quite timely, given the demand they'll face as we work to keep buildings warm this winter and keep air flowing with open windows. Two new boilers each were replaced at Edgewood, Fox Meadow and Greenacres, while four boilers were recently replaced at the High School. Heathcote will receive new boilers in the summer of 2022.

As you may recall, the biggest portion of the Bond went towards the expansion and renovation of Greenacres School. The goal at Greenacres was twofold: preserve the historical significance and feel of the building, while also easing space constraints being faced by the school. The renovation extended and expanded classroom spaces and also created new music, art and maker spaces as well as the new Learning Commons flexible space. A full-service kitchen and cafeteria were also added.

We also completed ADA compliance repairs around the District, replacing non-compliant handrails, widening doorways to accommodate wheelchair access, installation of electric door openers, and

replacing doors with uneven leaves. No students in our District should ever be limited by physical constraints while in our buildings.

Another major aspect of the Bond was roof repair and replacement, as most roofs District wide were more than 25 years old. Substantial sections of roofing were replaced at , Greenacres, and the High School. Edgewood, Quaker Ridge and the Middle School will see major roof repair next summer. At Heathcote, a full roof replacement was completed in summer 2019. These repairs and replacements will help ensure the safety and stability of our buildings for decades to come.

Field & Site Work was also an important aspect of the Bond scope. We mitigated and rectified drainage issues at all schools. At Scarsdale High School the complete restoration of Dean Field is near completion. Serious electrical service upgrades and engineering systems upgrades have also or will take place in every District building.

Although there are still two summers remaining in the capital work associated with the 2018 Bond we are pleased with the progress so far, and how this work has enabled us to help keep children safe during these trying times.

Technology In The Spotlight

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



During the past few months, instructional technology has been an essential learning platform for the K-12 instructional program. Our teachers have redesigned their instruction to adapt to new tools that they have been using with their students. As everyone knows, Zoom was adopted as the District's video conferencing platform, and teachers standardized communications around tools that are appropriate for each level.

For example, primary grade students have been using SeeSaw as their "eHomeroom," while Middle School students and teachers use Schoology. Upper elementary students and High School students use Google tools to communicate with teachers and collaborate with each other. In addition, teachers have been using a host of new technology tools to design online experiences. Using tools like Screencastify and Edpuzzle, teachers have been adapting and augmenting their academic units to hybrid and remote instruction.

Moving our Scarsdale instructional program, which focuses on critical thinking, hands-on projects, and collaboration, to a hybrid model has been challenging. Our teachers have spent countless hours rethinking the traditional classroom experience, and technology has played an important part of this work. The District purchased additional hardware, including document cameras, and other technology to augment the instructional program. We also moved to a 1:1 program in grades K-8, where students were provided with iPads and Chromebooks that they could take home to support their learning.

Our technical services team, our data services team, our computer aides, and our computer teachers have been instrumental in supporting the preparation of deployment of student devices, as well as the other hardware we are using in our classrooms.

In addition to teaching classes, the computer teachers have also gone above and beyond their traditional responsibilities by providing support to parents and students who are working remotely.


Finally, I started a collegial communications group with technology directors in other local districts this fall. This group meets in the evenings, and allows my colleagues and me to discuss effective practices and other ideas as we continue to adjust our use of instructional technology during the months ahead. I am grateful to have the opportunity to share information and explore new resources with my peers in the region, and I look forward to continuing to work with our computer teachers as they support their faculty's use of technology.





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