

# 'Dale Dispatch

*January/February 2021*

## In This Issue:



### **Hurdles, Highlights and Hope**

By Dr. Thomas Hagerman,  
Superintendent of Schools



### **The Tenure Class of 2021**

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



### **Covid Cases and Quarantine**

By Eric Rauschenbach  
Asst. Superintendent for  
Special Education and  
Student Services



## **Finding the Familiar in a Hybrid World**

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



## **Budget Planning for 2021-22 School Year**

By Stuart Matthey,  
Assistant Superintendent for  
Business & Facilities



## **Coding and Computational Thinking**

By Jerry Crisci,  
Director of Instructional  
Technology & Innovation

## **Hurdles, Highlights and Hope**

By Dr. Thomas Hagerman,  
Superintendent of Schools

I suspect all of us share the common hope that the new year ahead will bring a welcomed respite to the trials and tribulations of 2020. After so much turmoil, it finally feels like there are signs of hope with the onset of 2021: people are getting vaccinated against Covid-19; our planet is recovering from greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants; and individuals and families alike are reevaluating work/family dynamics and striking a better balance. While many of the challenges of the past year are beginning to give way to exciting possibilities ahead, we are not quite there yet...



In fact, our first few days of the new year have demonstrated that we are still confronting some major hurdles, particularly a politically-divided country that is struggling with the transition of power between presidents. Last week, this chasm erupted in the form of a riot at our Nation's Capital, leading to high tensions, anxiety, and fear among many, including our students. It is not surprising that they wanted and needed to process their reactions as part of classroom discussions with teachers and peers.

Over the course of last weekend, I received some questions and concerns regarding the District's approach to teaching "controversial" issues, particularly those that touch on personal/family political beliefs. Some of the communications expressed concerns about the District's role in addressing political matters at all with students. These exchanges provided the opportunity to remind folks that an essential component of public education, in general, is to prepare students for lives of responsible citizenship. Beyond that, our own motto within the District has been to, "...seek to sponsor each student's full development, enabling our youth to be effective and independent contributors in a democratic society and interdependent world." Much of this work, particularly over the past few years, has been codified as part of Scarsdale's Education for Tomorrow initiatives in which we have actively sought to educate our students to be critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers.

In order to achieve these lofty aims, Scarsdale classes do address relevant and timely current event issues. We understand our obligation to provide fair and balanced discussions, and our teachers are committed to assuring that complex issues are thoughtfully presented, allowing students to share their individual perspectives. We also recognize that these can be difficult conversations, particularly when actions are construed very differently by different individuals (as evidenced by last week's riot). Nonetheless, we believe these conversations are an important part of developing fully-actualized learners, those who are able to apply a critical lens to the events affecting their lives.

In the Education Report at last month's Board Meeting, Dr. McIntosh and a number of Scarsdale teachers presented some of our many District efforts around issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. As explained in the introduction of this talk, our local work has been predicated on the New York State Department of Education's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework, which aims to improve learning results for all students by creating "...well-developed, culturally responsive-sustaining, equitable systems of support for achieving dramatic gains in student outcomes." An essential component of the vision for this work is that students are sociopolitically and socioculturally responsive. In other words, we expect our students to understand both the scope and limits of their own viewpoints, while developing empathy, understanding, and appreciation for others's perspectives and ideas. The goal is that this will lead our students into interactions with others that are consistently characterized by increased cooperation, collaboration, and communication, even when disagreements or conflicting ideologies exist.

Amongst other things, this past year has certainly reminded us of some of our limitations as parents and educators. It is clear that we cannot protect or insulate our children from the harsher realities of life. But, what we can do, is give them the mindsets and skills to effectively cope with life's difficulties and challenges, both as individuals and as members of a larger democratic society. And this is one more thing that should surely give us hope for the year(s) ahead.

Happy New Year to you and your families!

Dr. Thomas Hagerman

## The Tenure Class of 2021

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

Achieving tenure is a significant accomplishment in the career of an educator. Put simply, tenure marks a change in an educator's employment status which affords that educator the right to keep his or her job, and requires due process for discipline or dismissal. Similarly, granting tenure, upon recommendation from the Superintendent, is among the most serious and significant responsibilities of the Board of Education. Interestingly, Boards of Education are empowered only to approve or reject the recommendation of the Superintendent, and cannot award or deny tenure without such a recommendation. Importantly, none of this can happen before a teacher or administrator successfully completes a trial, or probationary, period of employment.

Our appraisal system during the probationary period relies on a wide variety of inputs to inform a decision to recommend tenure, including:





- Four formal classroom observations annually, which include a discussion, reflection, written report, and rating, conducted by supervisors (i.e., department chair) and administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal).
- An observation by an Assistant Superintendent and/or Director, annually.
- Numerous informal “drop-in” observations by supervisors and administrators.
- Formal and informal mentoring.
- A portfolio of materials documenting professional practice, with written commentary.
- A year-end conference, written appraisal, assessment of progress, and rating, annually.
- A parent survey, as well as ongoing feedback from members of the community.
- An administrative review panel attended by District administrators, building administrators, supervisors, and Board of Education members, annually.

It is our expectation that the rigors of the tenure process are commensurate with the importance of the achievement. With this in mind, the candidates eligible for tenure this year are listed below, along with a timeline for the process, and an invitation to the community for input. To learn more about this process, [please visit our website](#).

### **Tenure Timeline**

January, 2021: Overview of tenure process; tenure candidate list shared via ‘Dale Dispatch, website. Public input invited on tenure candidates. Parent survey distributed electronically.

February, 2021: Administrative review panel meets to discuss tenure candidates.

April, 2021: Tenure recommendations completed. Administrative review panel meets to discuss all other probationers.

May, 2021: Continuation decisions made. Board of Education tenure vote (tentatively May 10, 2021)

### ***The Tenure Class of 2021:***

Tucker, Sarah; Edgewood, Remedial Reading  
 Yang, William; Edgewood, Elementary Assistant Principal  
 De Lorenzo, Sharon; Greenacres, Elementary Assistant Principal  
 Rosenfeld, Elizabeth; Greenacres, Elementary tenure area  
 De La Garza, Kathy; Heathcote, Elementary Assistant Principal  
 Drexel, Benjamin; Scarsdale High School, Science  
 Sapione, Adrienne; Scarsdale High School, Art  
 Comerford, Catherine; Scarsdale High School, English  
 Rastegar, Nicholas; Scarsdale High School, Foreign Language  
 Greenberg, Sam; Scarsdale High School, Mathematics  
 Li, Li (Michael); Scarsdale High School, Mathematics  
 Mooney, Aaron; Scarsdale High School, School Counseling & Guidance  
 Lee, Brendan; Scarsdale High School, Social Studies  
 Paulison, Christopher; Scarsdale High School, Social Studies  
 Fass, Jessie; Scarsdale Middle School, Art  
 Molloy, Meaghan; Scarsdale Middle School, English  
 Guido, Jean Marie; Scarsdale Middle School, General Special Education  
 Rotjan, Matthew; Scarsdale Middle School, Music  
 Williams, Michael; Scarsdale Middle School, School Counseling & Guidance  
 Sassone, Nicole; Scarsdale Middle School, Science  
 Kelly, Meghan; Scarsdale Middle School, Social Studies  
 Troy, Meghan; Scarsdale Middle School, Middle School Principal  
 Carroll, Kristen; Quaker Ridge, Elementary tenure area

***Members of the community are invited to share their experiences with these individuals by email to [apatrick@scarsdaleschools.org](mailto:apatrick@scarsdaleschools.org) or writing to: Drew Patrick, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, 2 Brewster Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583***

## Covid-19 Cases and Quarantine

By Eric Rauschenbach

Asst. Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services



I would be remiss if I didn't start with thanks to the community for its support during this pandemic and its willingness to engage honestly with the needed protocols around contact and quarantine. We understand that these quarantines have and continue to cause difficulty for families of both students and staff. I would also be remiss if I did not highlight the fact that with nearly 70 cases of COVID experienced in the school community, we have only had only one instance of possible school spread. That one instance was traced to an unmasked contact between adults. With that said, as cases rise in frequency so do the quarantines, creating more hardship for families and making staffing extremely difficult. This has resulted in some intermittent school closures and the need to use remote learning more often in the last month.

On January 11, 2021, the Westchester County Department of Health released [new guidance](#) to Superintendents which adjusted the quarantine protocols for schools. It lessened quarantine requirements for those in "proximate contact" with a positive case.

Until yesterday, the County DOH required quarantine for two types of contact with a positive case, identifying them as "close contact" and "proximate contact":

*"Close contact"* is defined as spending more than 10 minutes six feet or closer to a positive individual over a 24 hour period, regardless of masks. This definition is unchanged in the new guidance.

*"Proximate contact"* was defined as spending 10 minutes in an enclosed space (room) with an infected person, regardless of masks.

The definition of "proximate contact" has changed. It now requires proximate contact to be unmasked in order to require quarantine. Most of the quarantines imposed over the last months have resulted from "proximate contact" and most of those quarantines were due to masked contact. These quarantines would not be necessary under the new guidance. The DOH distributed this guidance on the 11th, but made it effective as of January 3, 2021. This required us to adjust a number of quarantines imposed during the week of January 4, 2021.

On first read, this change may seem counterintuitive in an environment of rising cases and new COVID-19 variants, however, it is based on the data collected to date around school transmission. Over the course of the last months, hundreds of Scarsdale students and staff have been quarantined along with thousands of other students and school staff, in that time there has been little to no evidence of in-school spread of the disease. That data has led the DOH to conclude that lessening quarantines will not increase the spread of COVID while giving schools relief from the operational challenges resulting from multiple quarantines for staff and students alike.

This change is for school based contact and the DOH is more subjective in the wider community when determining “proximate contact”. As such, this change should not be seen as evidence that there is a lower risk of spread in the overall community. Schools use multiple layers of mitigation including but not limited to mask wearing, distancing, cohorting, and staggered movement. These mitigation strategies are also more easily enforced in the school building due to the supervision of engaged and loving teachers and staff. These factors make school very different from most other congregant settings. It is important to note, this change will only be sustainable if the community spread remains within controllable limits. Please continue to practice good hygiene and limit contact in your outside of school life in order to give us the best chance of staying open.

All available evidence points to this change being positive, it should decrease the number of people needing to quarantine due to low risk school contacts and make staying open for students easier while not decreasing our health and safety. However, we will remain vigilant in tracking any school cases to make sure there is no increasing evidence of spread in our schools.

As more and more of our community members receive the vaccine we look forward to more normal times and a pathway that leads us out of the current pandemic. Please stay safe.

## Finding the Familiar in a Hybrid World

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



So much has changed this school year. What has stayed the same?

Ask an administrator what the favorite part of their day is and most will respond that it is time spent in classrooms, laboratories, libraries, gyms, playgrounds, even (on occasion) lunchrooms. It is time spent in the company of teachers and students while learning is happening and the reason we got into educational leadership in the first place. We are here in service of student learning, and to see it in real time is a joy. It is also wonderful to see our educators thoughtfully at work and know the strategy, creativity, knowledge, flexibility, and empathy that goes into creating the best learning environments for our students.

It is certainly a different experience to walk through the hallways of our schools this year. There are circles to stand on, lines not to cross, plastic barriers to look through, specials teachers on Zoom, teachers with Madonna mics, and classrooms full of masks. When I enter a classroom now, I’m careful not to exceed capacity or stay too long. I overheard one elementary teacher instruct her students lining up after recess to “stand like a zombie!” The dutiful children stood stiffly with arms raised straight in front of them. Some even groaned like zombies but ALL were immediately safely distant and ready to enter the school in an orderly (if not slightly creepy) line. A creative and playful alternative to constantly reminding students to “keep your distance.”

While the world inside our schools has shifted, there is much that remains familiar. Here are a few examples.

Student Engagement: Walking through the language wing at the High School is like walking through a bustling cafe in Paris, a busy town square in Barcelona, a market place in Beijing. Student voices carrying out into the hallways as they fully immerse themselves in their world language classes. The truth is that with or without surgical masks, our students are engaged and learning throughout the



Purposeful Instruction: While adapted for online, hybrid, socially distance learning, our learning goals have not changed for our students. A middle school teacher waved me into a science lesson and I sat in an available desk with materials set out for me: an eye dropper, pepper flakes, a small dish of water and some dishwashing soap. In a usual year, students may be working in pairs or gathered around the teacher while they explore the concept of liquid surface tension. It may look different, but the learning goal is the same.

Joy: "Science is my third favorite subject after recess and lunch," a second grader told me. A Kindergartener stopped a lesson midway to turn to me and ask me which lunchbox did I think was hers. (It was the one with the unicorn). When I ask a room full of 4th graders to give me a thumbs up if they are smiling behind their masks, it's unanimous. Jumping into a middle school book-talk breakout zoom, while a student excitedly describes her recommendation for "the most exhilarating historical fiction" she's ever read. "You will feel like you are in Salem in 1692!" And it turns out that you can still hear High schoolers laugh through their masks (even up a flight of stairs).

There are, of course, restrictions, obstacles, and safety measures to navigate- but it is heartening to see how much learning, happiness, excitement continues. A testament to the resiliency of our student, and the tireless and creative work of our teachers and administrators. We have even found some innovations to take with us into more normal times. That, however, is an article for another time.

## Budget Planning for 2021-22 School Year

By Stuart Matthey,  
Assistant Superintendent for Business & Facilities



Although it doesn't quite seem possible, we are already well into the 2021-22 budget planning process. Informally commencing as far back as this past school year and through the fall the District has been focused on development of the 2021-22 budget.

Principals and other administrators work with their teams to develop budgets that support the continuation of their work, and any new initiatives that may require additional staffing or funding. Meetings are then held in October and November with District-level Cabinet members, when staffing and other significant funding requests are presented and discussed, taking into account District-wide instructional consistency and financial impact.

At a public forum held on November 18th, the Board of Education and Administration invited public comment on the upcoming year's budget. Formal presentations to the Board of Education and community continued in December with a presentation of 2021 year-end financial projections that have been greatly impacted by Covid-19, and other 2021-22 budget planning factors. At the most recent Board of Education meeting on January 11th, the Administration presented staffing recommendations, a draft strategy to fund future Covid-19 related expenses and an overview of the preliminary proposed budget. Additional presentations and discussions are scheduled for the Board of Education's calendar throughout the winter into early spring, leading up to the statewide school budget votes on May 18th. The timeline for these important budget presentations and discussions are as follows:

- February 1st - Budget Plan Overview, and focus on Debt Service, Transportation, and Employee Benefits Budgets.

- February 8th - Budget Plan Update, and focus on Instructional, Facilities, Athletics, Special Education, and Technology Budgets
- March 8th - Budget Plan Update, and Full Budget Review including Revenues and Tax Projections.
- March 22nd - Special Meeting - Budget Forum
- April 12th - Board of Education adopts 2021-22 Budget
- May 18th - Budget Vote

We invite all community members to participate in the discussion by providing comment at the Board of Education's meetings or e-mailing the Board at [boardofed@scarsdaleschools.org](mailto:boardofed@scarsdaleschools.org).

## Coding and Computational Thinking

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



One of the goals of the [Scarsdale Technology Plan](#) is to provide opportunities for all students to engage in activities that involve Computer Science with an emphasis on coding. The media typically talks about the benefits of teaching students coding concepts in economic terms, pointing out the need for programmers in a fast-growing field with potentially lucrative career paths.

While this may be true, the District's philosophy for teaching coding is to allow students to develop skills in critical thinking and problem solving. Work in this area focuses on the intellectual benefits of having students formulate problems, break up problems into small tasks, and identify, test, and implement possible solutions. All of these skills are part of a mindset where we encourage students to embrace risk-taking and iteration, understanding that experiencing failure is often part of the learning.

There is a widespread belief that coding, or computer programming, is an advanced intellectual pursuit, mostly suited for students who only have an advanced understanding of mathematics. In Scarsdale, we have focused on creating accessible points of entry for all of our students to experience the benefits of computational thinking. This is why even our elementary and Middle School students use programs like Tynker, which offers a visual approach to learning basic coding concepts. At the High School, students can take AT Computer Science, which is a more advanced course. We do offer classes in App Design, as well as an Introduction to Computer Science, to provide these important experiences to students who may not be interested in a mid-level or advanced Computer Science course.

We are looking to expand offerings at all levels as interest in this field continues to grow.



## The Scarsdale Schools

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