



SCARSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The 'Dale Dispatch

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News and reflections from the Superintendent and Cabinet of the Scarsdale Public Schools



Understanding Equity, Access and Multiculturalism

By Dr. Thomas Hagerman

Superintendent of Schools

The saying “what is old is new again” has been attributed to many different sources, but regardless of its origins, it serves as an important reminder of the cyclical nature of time, along with the idea that enduring priorities and values resurface at regular intervals for our renewed attention. This phenomenon was brought to light again for me last week when I reviewed an old article by Thomas Sobol, former Scarsdale Superintendent and NYS Commissioner of Education. In this ASCD publication, entitled, *Understanding Diversity*, Sobol identified 7 areas which must be addressed as part of a holistic approach to addressing issues around multiculturalism within our schools. These included the following (in an excerpted format):

1. *Revising syllabi to make them more reflective of our diversity....Life and history are complex, and good education helps students understand its complexity.*
2. *One of the central missions of the American public school is to develop a shared set of values and a common tradition to which we can all belong...at the same time, we need to help each child find his or her place within the whole, and create more tolerance and understanding of those who are different.*
3. *We would be shortchanging our children if we failed to ground them in the values of our democratic society--respect for the individual, the rule of law, the tolerance of difference, free election, free speech, free trade unions, freedom of religion.*
4. *A multicultural curriculum is appropriate for all children. All children in our society should learn about the society as a whole, in its diversity as well as its unity.*
5. *We must start when children are very young. Attitudes toward self, family, and others are developed very early. Children must be helped to take pride in themselves and to respect those who are different.*
6. *We must also attend to instructional materials, teaching methods, teacher training and support, along with the composition of the school staff, school organization and operation, assessment practices, and all the rest.*
7. *Whatever we do must be characterized by a high level of scholarship and historical accuracy.*

As we view this list, it is heartening to recognize that these “best practices” have been priorities within the New York State education milieu for decades. They have and continue to affirm the necessary focus on institutional approaches, pedagogical practices, and instructional materials, along with the responsible cultivation of students and adults in the long term work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Although not stated directly in this article, it is certainly implied that the most important aspect of this work is our ongoing commitment to it.

It is interesting to note that most of the areas that Sobol identified back in 1990 are practices that we continue to explore, implement, and scale in our schools today.

As an institution we are in the process of developing policies, codes of conduct, and practices that ensure equity of access and opportunity for all individuals. We have adopted the State’s Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education framework for our planning purposes. Both the Board of Education and District administrative teams are engaged in deep learning around

issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Each school level has created annual goals, along with appropriate metrics to gather data towards progress. We have also started a partnership with Dr. Derrick Gay to provide consulting services, training, and long-term planning advice with the District.

In the area of teaching and learning, we deeply value and continue to support professional development for all educators and administrators as we work towards developing common vocabulary, creating aligned understandings, and addressing areas of improvement. We support our educators in this work by providing individualized and grade/content specific learning to enrich their instructional practices. The structures of STI courses, ST@CS (mini teacher taught courses on demand), and internal grants also inspire and enrich this learning.

In the cultivation of self- and other- awareness with students and staff, we understand the importance of exploring identities along a continuum of unity and diversity. In our youngest learners, of course, we start with concepts of self, family, friends, and local community, identifying similarities and differences within the contexts of kindness, compassion, and character-building. As our students reach higher developmental levels, personal identities are viewed in more complex and nuanced ways and their sense of community is expanded nationally and globally, providing even more perspectives and experiences of *otherness*.

The work of faculty and staff has been bifurcated, splitting focus between personal and professional growth around a host of issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and creating powerful learning experiences that help to amplify every student's unique identity, voice, perspective, and understanding.

While solid progress is being made within our schools on the aims that Thomas Sobol described so many years ago, it is also important to acknowledge the complexity that the past few years have added to this work. Edgar will continue with this idea in his article below.

We look forward to continuing this dialogue with our school community in the New Year ahead. In the meantime, on behalf of the entire District, we wish you all a safe, healthy, and restorative break.

Warm regards,

Thomas



Opportunities for Equity

By Dr. Edgar McIntosh

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

As Thomas described above, Thomas Sobol's words are important and reflect the time in which they were written. In 2021, there are wider inclusions, complexities, and opportunities that have revealed themselves.

A wider inclusion includes the following:

- Today's multicultural lens is more explicitly inclusive than in 1990, expanding the affirmation of LGBTQIA+, gender expression, neurodiversity, and the intersectionality of multiple identities, for a few examples. This broader approach certainly more accurately reflects the experiences of our students and families, but also requires us to think more broadly about representation in our classrooms. Many examples of this review are evident throughout the District at this time such as classroom library audits, department discussions on texts and other resources, and professional development opportunities that focus on greater inclusion.

A complexity includes the following:

- Social media, polarizing politics, "alternative facts," and "fake" news have greatly distorted historically-valued scholarship and accuracy, and students' ability to discern the difference in fact and fiction is becoming increasingly blurred. In Scarsdale this has translated into the need for the explicit teaching of media literacy and, more specifically, a deeper understanding of bias and the psychology of news consumption. We do this through specially-designed instruction by our Library Media Specialists, incorporating aspects of media influence into existing courses, and expecting our students to regularly analyze source materials and utilize vetted and trusted sources for reliability and accuracy.

And opportunity includes the following:

- There are many more authors and resources that amplify historically-marginalized voices that provide authentic and respectful representation. This change has allowed us to enrich the student learning experience by revealing the complexities of the human experience, engaging critical skill sets and mindsets, and ultimately leading us to a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the world and its people. A great example of this is through the adoption of hundreds of relevant, representative, and recent texts in Scarsdale elementary school classrooms and school libraries.

These evolving considerations continue to influence and impact our longer-term planning process in DEI. As a District, we are energized to continue this important work and move forward with intention, meaningful partnerships, and a deeper understanding of the complexities of our DEI landscape.



Covid, School, and a View to the Future

By Eric Rauschenbach

Assistant Superintendent for Special Education & Student Services

Covid:

Recent weeks have brought signs of the season, with the usual trappings of the holidays. Many things are starting to feel normal: the Great White Way is back, concerts are happening, and restaurants are packed. In our schools, classes are back in session, field trips are underway, and we've seen a return to live performances at the schools. All of this is lending itself to a better mental outlook for many, myself included.

Unfortunately, the season has also brought with it a disconcerting rise in COVID cases across the County, State, and region. As of this writing, the data is trending up in all areas, including infection rate, cases per 100k, hospitalizations, and positivity rate. The District itself has seen a major rise in cases and quarantines from outside contacts over the last four to five weeks with no sign of slowing. Happily, the death rate in our county remains very low, but across the country there is still an average of over 1,400 people dying daily. Suffice to say, we are making progress but the pandemic is far from over.

Almost all of this progress has been due to the ready availability of vaccines. On that front, the District has worked in conjunction with White Plains Hospital and the Scarsdale Volunteer Ambulance Corp to offer opportunities for elementary age students to receive the vaccine. All of these events have been full and many of our families report getting their students vaccinated. Ultimately, vaccination will provide our pathway out of the pandemic and back to normal activities. We must be mindful that vaccination protection is unfortunately finite, and the need for boosters has become apparent. Currently, the booster is available to all individuals over 18 and we strongly encourage all of those eligible to get the booster and be part of the solution. The District will continue to work with our physician and the Westchester County Department of Health to monitor cases and implement any new or adjusted guidance.

School:

Over the fall semester we have been able to successfully run our programs with few interruptions and with a limited number of people quarantined by cases in school. Our afterschool activities and sports programs are running with record participation, and students are reporting they are happy to be back. Happily, we have not seen any significant in-school spread and only very limited individual cases of spread that could be connected to school activities. As such, in the past month we have relaxed some of our protocols around field trips, live performances, and snack. The relaxed protocols are going well, and we plan a full return to elementary snack after the December break. As a whole, the school year also feels much more normal, even with the masking and other mitigation measures in place.

We are continuing to run our testing program through the County, and our nurses are following up on all absences to make sure we are testing those who are symptomatic before they return to school. Overall, families have been extremely cooperative and recognize the importance of making sure students with symptoms do not come to school.

Up to this point, we have been successfully able to fill our quarantine tutoring needs with our own faculty, which has led to an overall positive experience for students. It is important to recognize, however, that these tutoring resources are finite and if cases and quarantines continue to rise, we may have to find additional solutions to tutoring. We encourage all parents to keep their kids home when feeling ill and to encourage them to engage in behaviors that will reduce the risk of quarantine. Working together, we can continue to provide high-quality tutoring and keep quarantines to a minimum.

A View to the Future:

The past weeks have certainly reignited fear around the spread of COVID and the possibility of losing some of the ground we have gained. This is made worse by our collective fatigue around mitigation and the ongoing nature of this pandemic. Two years is a really long time! However, if we step back from the current numbers and take into account that vaccinations are on the rise, deaths are very low, hospitalizations are lower than previous spikes, and our day to day activities look much closer to normal than they have since prior to the pandemic, there is a lot to be grateful for. Our progress will continue as we move through the year. The schools will continue to make staying open and running programs our number one priority, this may entail somewhat more mitigation than other entertainment and work venues but, we will make sure our students have rich and varied experiences throughout the school year. We will also continue to revisit our protocols on a quarterly basis and ease restrictions where we can with the ultimate goal of getting back to pre-pandemic norms. Most importantly, as we move towards the New Year I wish everyone joy and hope in the year to come.



The Tenure Class of 2022

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 their 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](#).

Members of the community are invited to share their experiences with these individuals [by emailing](#) or writing to: Drew Patrick, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, 2 Brewster Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583

Name	School	Tenure Area
McIntosh, Edgar	District	Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Gliksmann, Shoshana	District	School Psychologist
Giustino, Jennifer	Edgewood	Music
Rappaport, Jill	Edgewood	Remedial Speech
Lamorte-Doerr, Angela	Heathcote	General Special Education
Welsh, Chris	High School	High School Assistant Principal
Palladino, Christin	Quaker Ridge	General Special Education
Smith, Shannon	Quaker Ridge	General Special Education
Nolan, Kaitlin	Quaker Ridge/Edgewood	Physical Education
Summerfield, Kimberly	High School	English
Dutra, Meredith	High School	General Special Education
Schmidt, Michael	High School	Music
Holtzer, Talya	Middle School	Science
Turner, Benjamin	Middle School	Science

Tenure Timeline

December, 2021	Overview of tenure process; tenure candidate list shared via 'Dale Dispatch and District website Public input invited on tenure candidates
January, 2022	Parent survey distributed electronically
February, 2022	Administrative review panel meets to discuss tenure candidates
April, 2022	Tenure recommendations completed Administrative review panel meets to discuss all other probationers
May, 2022	Continuation decisions made Board of Education tenure vote (tentatively May 9, 2022)



Budget Planning for 2022-23 School Year

By Stuart Matthey

Assistant Superintendent for Business & Facilities

Each fall, we provide the Board of Education and community with an update on facilities projects and repairs. This fall's update included work we are still finishing as part of the 2018 Bond, along with work that is part of the regular school budget. The full Board update [can be viewed on STV](#).

Let's start with Bond work. Going back to the summer of 2019, work included construction of security vestibules at all the elementary schools, and replacing the aging boilers at the High School. In January, we held the long-awaited ribbon cutting

ceremony for Greenacres School, a virtual tour of which can be viewed at ScarsdaleSchools.org/GreenacresTour.

The summer of 2020 brought us heating and ventilation upgrades and increased ADA compliance District-wide, along with work to mitigate flooding issues at Quaker Ridge and the High School. Folding doors were replaced in the gymnasium at the Middle School, a portion of the High School roof was replaced, and Dean Field was renovated. The field will be ready for use this upcoming spring!

This past summer saw extensive roof work and brick repointing completed at Edgewood, Quaker Ridge and the Middle School. Security was also improved through the addition of new cameras inside and outside the Middle and High Schools. More work is planned for next summer, including electrical panel upgrades at Heathcote, Quaker Ridge, the Middle School and the High School, unit ventilator replacement at Quaker Ridge, the Middle School and the High School, and a new boiler and gymnasium HVAC system at Heathcote. Plans for that work are currently being finalized.

There were also non-bond construction projects and improvements which took place this summer, such as new LED lighting at Edgewood and Fox Meadow. This work was completed far under budget because we purchased the equipment directly through a State contract. This strategy led to project completion at roughly 25% of the cost initially budgeted for this work!

At Heathcote, aging doors are being replaced, exterior lighting will be installed, and a number of accessibility improvements are being made. These projects have been delayed due to Covid-related factors, but progress is being made nonetheless.

New carbon monoxide detectors were installed District-wide. The new detectors are integrated with school security systems. In the past, one would need to be near a detector that is alarming in order to hear it. The integration with our improved security system can trigger school wide alarms, protecting children and staff who are at risk but not within earshot.

There were also renovations to the Bus Compound, which hadn't been renovated in decades. The work included moving Transportation Supervisor Gerson Katuemetima's office to the compound from the Business Office, enabling him to be closer to his team.

The final remaining major piece of renovation approved as part of the 2020-21 Budget is to complete renovations of the High School Auditorium. Work included stage rigging and safety improvements, sound system improvements including assistive listening technology, electrical and theatrical wiring upgrades, motorized winches/controls for theatrical lighting line sets, along with new storage and backstage lighting.

The final scope of the auditorium project is scheduled for 2022, and includes removal and replacement of auditorium seating, catering, and repair to the underlying concrete. Replacement and refinishing of the stage flooring and improvements to lighting are also included at this point.

Many people are aware that Butler Field was damaged during Hurricane Ida. Short term repairs have been made to ensure the field is playable through sectional playoffs, but more investigation is needed to determine the root cause of drainage issues. This will likely require pulling back the turf, and will occur after the fall athletic season ends.

Installation of the sound system gift from Maroon & White is also moving along. Installation plans are being finalized, and a strategy has been coordinated with the architects, electricians and sound consultants to ensure it can be installed properly, and as soon as possible although equipment delays are expected.

In all, projects are complete or moving forward, despite the supply chain issues facing every industry. We thank the Scarsdale Community for their ongoing commitment to the maintenance and improvement of our over 1 million square feet of instructional space.



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

By Ray Pappalardi

Director of Physical Education, Health and Athletics

Wellness, well-being, and belonging have all become major focuses in the District's work. For the next few years, much of this work will be formalized as part of the [Strategic Plan](#) under the goals of [Curricular and Co-Curricular Approaches to Health, Wellness & Well-Being](#). Specific subgoals include: (1) defining wellness and well-being for the life of the plan, (2) articulating an aligned K-12 plan for student health, wellness, and wellbeing, (3) identifying curricular and co-curricular experiences that contribute to health, wellness, and well-being, and (4) developing curricular and co-curricular experiences to provide common expectations for educators/coaches and assured experiences for students. I will continue to provide updates as we work through our goals and subgoals. Below, you will find some practical examples within the context of physical education, health, and athletics.

Physical Education

While utilizing outdoor spaces and focusing on getting our children moving to the extent possible, we are transitioning back to our typical curricular offerings in elementary and middle school physical education classes. At the high school level, we are examining our curricular offerings and preparing to gather student feedback that will be used to better meet their needs. At all levels, we are looking at our facilities and our options for improving our instructional spaces.

Health & Health Education

In the curricular areas related to health and health education, we are examining the current curriculum and looking at ways to make it more sequential, progressive, and relevant for students in kindergarten through grade 12.

Athletics

The [fall season](#) was successful in both its level of participation and competition. Forty-percent of students at SHS participated on interscholastic teams. Every team had a winning season with 7 of 11 Varsity teams earning league championships. In addition to their league championship, Girls' Tennis also earned Regional and State Championships in the inaugural year of the Team competition.

This [winter season](#) is currently in full swing with new opportunities in Girls' Ice Hockey and Fencing being offered. In addition to our traditional sports we are also offering opportunities in dance. Most of all, we are happy to reinstate the full competitive opportunities for Cheerleading and Wrestling. As we continue to implement our own and monitor our opponents COVID health and safety protocols, we will continue to offer live streaming of contests on Raiders TV, Raiders TV 2, & our Sports Backup channels.

In addition to the 12 sports usually offered during the [spring season](#), we are exploring the possibility of Girls' Flag Football in partnership with the New York State Public High School Athletic Association and the National Football League.



Digital Equity

By Rachel Moseley

**Director of Information Technology,
Chief Information and Data Protection Officer**

When COVID-19 caused school closures in the spring of 2020, schools worldwide undertook extraordinary efforts to quickly transition to online learning.

In Scarsdale, we were fortunate that our teachers already had District-issued laptops, and we had sufficient devices in classroom carts to distribute to students who did not have a personal device. We were also fortunate that almost all our students and staff already had Internet connectivity in their homes. However, many school districts world-wide, were in a very different situation. DigitalBridgeK-12, an initiative from the national nonprofit EducationSuperHighway, estimates that 9.7 million students, in the United States alone, lacked the connectivity necessary to continue their coursework at home during the lockdown periods of the pandemic.

The importance of student access to devices and broadband at home was well established prior to 2020, but the urgency to close the digital divide was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In July of 2020, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) wrote: "The first step in solving this pressing {digital} equity challenge is to conduct high-quality data collection to identify which students are impacted." in their publication '[Home Digital Access Data Collection: Blueprint for State Education Leaders](#)'.

In order to understand the current status of student technology access across the state, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) released a standard set of questions and response options for a Digital Equity Survey to be used by their Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). To that end, we ask that parents who have not yet completed the survey, do so at their earliest convenience. Please complete one survey for each child enrolled in the Scarsdale Public Schools. To access the survey, download the Campus Parent [iOS](#) or [Android](#) app, or log into [Campus Parent](#) from your preferred browser, then go to the Surveys tab in Message Center. The survey should take less than a minute to complete. Thank you for your cooperation.



Technology Planning Continues

By Jerry Crisci

**Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation
Co-Director of the Center for Innovation**

Our technology planning efforts continued this fall, and our K-12 Technology Committee has been considering a series of questions that will inform our plan. These questions include:

- How do we enhance our instruction of digital citizenship, now that students are spending more time with personal devices?
- What are the areas of emerging technology that we need to consider in the new plan?
- How can computer teachers, librarians, and coordinators collaborate on ideas related to coaching and teacher support?
- What are the most effective structures to support professional development? How do we deal with the increased sophistication of teachers who are now using technology more than ever?
- How can we better communicate the purpose of our program to parents?
- What are the most effective ways to include administrators in our technology planning?
- How do we engage all stakeholders (students, staff, parents) in the process?

To answer the last question, we are planning focus groups for student, teacher, and parent representatives at each level. The focus group feedback will allow us to create surveys that will be used to collect input from a variety of stakeholders.

In addition to these questions, we created leadership teams, made up of Technology Committee members, to help explore important themes of our upcoming plan. The following themes were identified, and the leadership teams will create initial proposals for each theme:

- Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy
- Professional Development
- Parent Communication
- Engaging Administrators
- Emerging Technology

For example, the Emerging Technology team has identified artificial intelligence, data privacy, cybersecurity, and the ethical use of technology as important topics that should be addressed with students in the future.

After receiving feedback from stakeholders in January, we will begin to write the first draft of the new Technology Plan. The final draft of the plan will be presented to the Board and the community in April. Members of the Scarsdale community are invited to follow our progress by checking the updates posted on our [Technology Planning website](#).