



Superintendent's Report January 20, 2022

On January 17, 2022, our teachers and staff participated in the Northern Valley *It Takes a Valley* Professional Development Day. Teachers attended grade-level content sessions, elective sessions on a variety of topics, a keynote address by Alisa DeLorenzo who focused on inclusivity in our classrooms, and break-out sessions to answer questions posed in the keynote address. The day was an opportunity for us to recharge, reconnect, and rethink. Kudos to nine of our staff members who were workshop presenters during the day: Patricia Brett, Courtney Carmichael, Maggie Churchill, Tara Eddy, Charlene Gerbig, Jennifer Levy, Meghan Pleus, Shannon San George, and Lori Scalera. Our Closter teachers are highly skilled professionals who are willing to share their expertise with the teachers of the entire Northern Valley. Thank you also to the entire staff at the Northern Valley Curriculum Center for organizing the day.

Our District Evaluation Advisory Committee met on Monday, January 10, 2022. This committee of teachers and administrators works with me to provide input on their evaluation process. The committee shared positive news about the evaluation process, as well as some concerns and questions. The DEAC is focusing their work for the remainder of this year on creating an alternative evaluation process for teachers rated highly effective. This is a process encouraged by the New Jersey Department of Education under ACHIEVENJ, the educator evaluation system. Our DEAC committee began this work prior to the pandemic, but it was put on hold until now. We are hopeful that that we will have an optional evaluation process for highly effective teachers in place for the 2022-2023 school year.

District Goals Update

- Goal #1: The District Diversity Council Action Plan for 2021-2022 is well underway. Our schools will be observing Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, 2022, with age-appropriate lessons. The elementary school teachers will be focusing on being kind, while the middle school teachers will frame some lessons about the events of the Holocaust. As mentioned, our staff had PD on diversity and inclusion through the keynote address by Alisha DeLorenzo on January 17, 2022, and we are currently working with the YWCA to arrange additional professional development through a grant we have received. The District Diversity Council will be meeting in the beginning of February to review progress on the action plan and will have additional meetings to determine a plan for the 2022-2023 school year, based on what is accomplished this year and from a list of additional action steps proposed in last year's work.
- Goal #2: The research team is small in number, but strong in commitment to researching and identifying what our students will need to be future ready – for high school, college and career. The team has started researching what skills and knowledge students may need and will determine if we are including those skills and knowledge in our curriculum. The team is using frameworks and standards from the New Jersey Department of Education and the International Society for Technology in Education to guide their

research. Further, the four Cs of Education, (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) are identified by employers as necessary skills to be future ready, and the research team will be considering these skills also. While the goal was to present the findings to the Board in February, we are planning to present the findings at the beginning of March 2022.

- Goal #3: The eighth-grade team met to discuss students' movement to high school and the practices already in place to ensure a smooth transition. They reviewed the first quarter grades of ninth graders to see how students performed at the start of ninth grade. There is an upcoming meeting with the Northern Valley Regional High School which will provide more specific information about how well students are prepared for high school. The team will then meet to review all information and will make recommendations for action steps.

Pandemic Update

Since Friday, January 7, 2022 (the day after my last report), we have had 54 students test positive for COVID-19, which is 4.9% of our total student population, and eight staff members test positive, which is 4.1% of our staff population. At Hillside Elementary School there are currently 32 students quarantining or isolating; and at Tenakill Middle School there are currently 22 students quarantining or isolating, which are fewer students than when we returned on January 3, 2022. We are resuming afterschool activities and sports, with necessary physical distancing and masking required. Students who test positive for COVID-19 and return to school on day six, may not participate in sports until day ten, to ensure everyone's safety. The NJ Department of Health issued updates on January 12, 2022, and again on January 19, 2022. Students who return from quarantine or isolation on days six through ten, must be isolated during lunch because they will be removing their masks. The guidance says, "schools must have a plan to ensure adequate distancing during those activities, i.e. eating, when mask wearing is not possible. Time without masks being worn should be kept to a minimum possible." At this time, we do not have enough staff available to provide supervision for the students who need to isolate during lunch, so we will continue with our plan to ensure adequate distancing by having those students eat lunch at home. We will continue to review the guidelines as they are updated and when the COVID-19 activity level for our region of the state is no longer in the very high level. Please also note that the newest guidelines state that students age 12 or older must have a booster to be considered fully vaccinated, and beginning on February 1, 2022, students without the booster who are exposed to a close contact will have to quarantine. Students aged 5-11 who had a primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine or who had confirmed COVID-19 with the last ninety days do not need to quarantine after close contact with someone who tests positive.

Vincent Mc Hale