
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE OLD TAPPAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Working Together for All of Our Children



While reflecting on the events over the past week and the effect that it has had on our nation and our school community, it gave me pause and compelled me to write to you to express my own concerns and heightened awareness about the steps we must continue to take to ensure that our students, staff, and families are safe in the Old Tappan Public School District.

Last week, when staff and families started to receive word about the unspeakable tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, many questioned why this was happening in schools throughout our country. This was true for me and for our teachers, principals, and other staff members, as well as for our Board of

Keeping the students, faculty, and families of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in our hearts.

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Education members. Families have expressed these same feelings, and I am listening closely, while always re-examining our protocols so our school community feels confident that the T. Baldwin Demarest Elementary School and the Charles DeWolf Middle School continue to be safe and secure places to teach and learn.

Safety always has been a top priority in our schools, but the tragedies of Columbine and 11 September 2001 made every school district in the country re-assess what we can do to keep our schools safer for learning and teaching. Over the years, school districts in New Jersey have invested a significant amount of time to evaluate operations, to enhance school safety, to train teachers and school staff, and to practice security drills so we know what to do in an emergency. Key staff members also regularly debrief after something happens nearby or far away, so we can look at what took place with calmer minds and continue to learn, to adjust, and to improve.

Both of our schools have emergency plans and established procedures, which have been developed in conjunction with the Old Tappan Police Department. The Police Department works with us to evaluate our emergency and safety systems and to make recommendations about improvements in our procedures. They also help us with training exercises and security drills, including the usage of our newly-installed, automated emergency notification system that could be accessed from anywhere in either school building. All staff are trained on this new system and its related procedures. Additionally, visitors to each school are required to sign in and out at the main office to record their presence in the school. We are reinforcing this practice and double-checking that we are aware of all visitors in our schools.

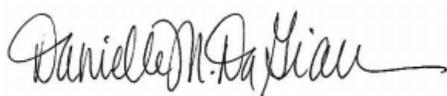
Most importantly, though, school safety is everyone's responsibility, so if you SEE or HEAR something that is suspicious or unusual, SAY something. Speak with your children at home and remind them how important it is to always notify a staff member or another trusted adult whenever they see or hear someone or something suspicious.

Of course, as important as all of these measures are, kindness is equally as vital in cultivating a safe school environment, and this is also our shared responsibility. Often times, we are so busy being vigilant that we forget how important it is to be kind to one another. All students deserve acceptance and to feel a sense of belonging. As adults, it is our responsibility to model for youngsters how vigilance and kindness are able to co-exist.

On behalf of our children and staff, I am grateful for your support because one of the best strategies to keep our schools safe is continuing to talk and work together.

Should you wish to speak with me, I will always be available for you and your family.

Respectfully,



Danielle M. Da Giau, Ed.D.
Superintendent

We Are All Music-Makers: Professional Learning

In January, the faculty and staff engaged in a day of learning. Recognizing that everyone in a school plays a vital role in the work of teaching and learning, we honor everyone as a music-maker. Whether the person’s role is onstage or backstage, each faculty and staff member contributes to the District’s rhythm. It is the syncopation of rhythm that shapes the District’s culture and frames the learning experiences for our students. The day’s theme was “Our Syncopated Rhythm: Hearing, Playing, and Appreciating ‘Music’.”

The premise for the day was grounded in the notion that a district’s growth is intrinsically tied to the professionals’ development. Positioning faculty and

“Like jazz musicians, [we must] respect each other’s talents and perspectives as [we] participate in the syncopated rhythm of ... public education.”

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and began an analysis of data. The elementary school faculty worked with their new principal for the first time to share their work and initiatives at all grade levels.

The highlights of the day were the student performances. The NVOT Jazz Band performed for our faculty and staff and shared what they remember about their elementary years that helped shape them into high school musicians. CDW students performed for their teachers, too. These performances reminded our professional staff about the importance of embracing the whole child and the value of engaging with children beyond conversations about core academic subjects.

Days of professional learning are performances worthy of standing ovations.



Teachers gather together to review testing data for performance and growth.

staff members as valuable participants within our District’s structure allows for District-betterment to become realistic. Our growth model considers professionals as both learners and leaders and as both backstage and onstage musicians.

During this day of professional learning, our faculty and staff members learned about the new features of our District’s website and started to build their own webpages. The middle school faculty engaged in a meaningful team-building exercise, learned about WeVideo, which is a student broadcasting tool,



Teachers work in small groups to learn about their new TBD principal and share information about grade-level work and initiatives.

Summer Enrichment Program

This year's 2018 Summer Enrichment Workshop Program will be open to students currently enrolled in Grades K-8. A catalog of summer offerings will be released shortly, along with an online registration form.

The Summer Program will run during the following weeks:

9-13 July 2018
16-20 July 2018
23-27 July 2018
30 July-3 August 2018

Families will have the option to select the week(s) that work for them. Families will also have the option to select half-day — mornings or afternoons — or full-day attendance.

All Summer Enrichment Workshops are taught by certified teachers and are aimed at engaging students in a comfortable school environment, where learning and relationship-building are the focus of experiences in academics, the arts, and fitness. We look forward to another summer with our students!

NJ Standardized Assessments

This year's New Jersey Standardized Assessment for students in our schools continues to be PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers). As in the past few years, the PARCC assessment will be administered to students in Grades 3 through 8 in Language Arts and in Math from 1 May through 9 May 2018.

If your child has not taken the PARCC assessment before and you would like to learn more about it, join Dr. Da Giau for an informational session on Monday, 2 April 2018, at 9:00 AM or 7:00 PM. The sessions will take place in the BOE Conference Room.

For the first time this year, the State is implementing a "pilot" test for Science in Grades 5 and 8. This assessment is called the NJSLA-S (New Jersey Student Learning Assessment in Science). This computerized test will replace the paper-based NJ ASK (Assessment of Skills and Knowledge) test that was administered in Grades 4 and 8 and will no longer be given. This year, the NJSAL-S is a pilot test, allowing the teachers to learn more about the assessment. This pilot test will be administered in May, too, and more information will come directly from CDW.



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