

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

22 VALLEY ROAD ~ MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042

WWW.MONTCLAIR.K12.NJ.US

PHONE: 973-509-4020 FAX: 973-509-0586



Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 12

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

March 5, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

March is a busy month filled with important celebrations including National Reading Month and Women's History Month. I am happy to report that the district continues to focus on its reading initiative with phonics, comprehension, reciprocal teaching and Orton Gillingham training at the forefront. In our schools Read Across America Week, the nation's largest celebration of reading since 1998, kicked off with our readers of all ages exploring books and authors that promote diversity, inclusion and compassion. Additionally, our students will be learning about and commemorating the vital role and achievements of women in American history.

Also this week, Buzz Aldrin Middle School students in the [Start With Hello Club](#) participated in *Say Something Week*. During this special week, in an effort to spread kindness, the club created a [video](#). This club of about 80-120 students was inspired by the Sandy Hook Promise, a national, nonprofit organization led by several individuals who lost loved ones in 2012 during the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Its mission is to educate and empower parents, schools, and community organizations on how to prevent gun violence before it happens.

Congratulations to members of Montclair High School's DECA Club. This year the club was among 324 chapters that [achieved THRIVE level recognition](#) and will be commended at DECA's International Career Development Conference held virtually April 19-23. Through academic conferences and competitions our students are encouraged to develop their business, leadership and entrepreneurial skills. The DECA members who contributed to the THRIVE recognition were Elias Benchekroun, Amelia Chan, Owen Duncan, Maura McGeever and Serena Lee with the assistance of their advisor, Ken Schnitzer. We are so proud of our students and their advisor for their business acumen, dedication and spirit.

Please see district updates below:

Update on Delayed In-Person Instruction

As we are still in an active litigation matter, the district is not in a position to comment further. We can report that we continue mediation. We are excited to hear that Governor Murphy has prioritized vaccinations for teachers and school staff.

Calling all Families - Your Application Matters

The district has an amazing opportunity to apply for Federal and State funding and resources that can help us implement Pre-K education. We need your help, and it's simple. Please submit a [Free and Reduced lunch application](#) or simply click deny on the form. When applying for grants and funding, we must be able to produce free and reduced lunch statistics, and we need to be accountable for everyone.

Please note that if your circumstances have changed, and you wish or need to be considered for assistance, please apply. Again, your completed application is critical and will get us closer to applying for resources that will help our students.

Highlights from the Office of Equity, Curriculum and Instruction

Supervisor of World Languages and English as a Second Language, Frank Sedita, partnered with MFEE to match English Language Learners with mentors through a Peer-led Educational Engagement Program (PEEPs). Sedita also met with PTAC presidents to establish a parent liaison to identify parents/guardians who can provide support in other languages.

We are piloting the use of Mystery Science, an online resource for Elementary Science curricula that teachers are using to help engage and inspire young learners through its lessons.

Gizmos have been introduced for Middle School Science teachers who attended professional development last week. Gizmos are captivating online simulations of key science concepts produced by Explore Learning. Each Gizmo enhances student comprehension of challenging concepts through inquiry and exploration. Students manipulate variables, observe the virtual results, and draw conclusions. This opportunity helps to bridge the gap while we cannot conduct actual labs.

While we are remote, teachers have been utilizing virtual field trips to enhance classroom learning. The Montclair Historical Society has hosted these trips called "Montclair Our Town" for our K-3 students. Our K-8 students have been attending virtual field trips to the Yogi Berra Museum's exhibit "Discover Greatness: An Illustrated History of the Negro Leagues."

Community and Support Services

We have created a shared Community Resources [document](#) with a host of support services, some directly related to COVID-19, and others for general support for mental health, food insecurity, tutoring, and more. Please reach out to any of these organizations for your particular needs.

Budget Update

The district submitted its [Board approved budget](#) to the County this week. The budget is still a work in progress as we look to create one that is forward-looking and prepared with an emphasis on building for the future. We are committed to seeking grants to supplement our revenues that will provide resources to develop programming in areas such as Pre-K, extended school day, and Saturday learning opportunities. All are invited to attend Board meetings and the Board of School Estimate (BOSE) meetings where details of the budget are discussed. A list of BOSE meetings is on the homepage of the website in Announcements.

Pupil Services

We continue to work on our Extended School Year program and have met with all of the Child Study Teams. We posted for positions and are working on building locations. The team is in the midst of developing the programs, such as multisensory instruction and social skills.

Technology

Director of Technology Christopher Graber gave a [presentation](#) at the Board of Education Meeting on March 3 about the GoGuardian Teacher Product. We have temporarily deactivated this classroom management tool until families have had a chance to review the information and ask questions. We will notify families on how we will move forward.

Reminder: Toni's Kitchen Delivers

No family should ever go hungry. If you are experiencing hardship during these troubling times, please see the flyer ([English/Spanish](#)) for details.

Reminder: Montclair Neighborhood Development Corp. (MNDC)

MNDC is hosting a virtual Career Development Institute and is accepting applications through March 31. Montclair residents ages 16-18 are encouraged to apply as they will learn how to virtually interview for a job, prepare a resume, cover letter, and complete an online employment application. Please call **973-744-9094** for more information.

Have a lovely weekend!

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent