



MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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KENDRA V. JOHNSON, J.D., ED. D.

Superintendent of Schools

August 30, 2018

Dear Montclair Parents/Guardians,

I am honored to serve as the Montclair Public Schools' Superintendent. Subsequently, I am excited to enter the 2018-2019 school year. In addition to continuing the great work already underway within Montclair Public Schools, several amazing efforts are slated for implementation during the 2018-2019 school year. To that end, please allow me to highlight a few of these amazing efforts:

- Pursuit of a World-Class Education:
 - The Department of Equity, Curriculum and Instruction worked with district teachers to create curriculum documents for over 15 courses. While we are knee deep in this work, I would be remiss if I did not pause and salute our educators.
 - We are focused on ensuring we provide each student with a world-class education. In order to do this work incredibly well, we need students to be on time and present every day. Accordingly, we will roll out revised student attendance procedures that underscore the importance of students to be on time, in school and in their assigned classes. As noted by the New Jersey Department of Education, our chronic absenteeism requires some attention. And, we were required to create a districtwide attendance plan. As we transition to some very clear attendance expectations, we will work with parents/guardians to ensure a comprehensive understanding of our expectations, which are aligned with state compulsory attendance laws. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure all students are on time, present and in their assigned locations so they have access and opportunity to partake in our delivery of high-quality, daily instruction.
- Districtwide Security:
 - District leadership recently met with a security consultant group to determine the metrics for a comprehensive districtwide security assessment. We want security experts and our local Montclair Police

Department to assist us in assessing our security needs and providing recommendations to enhance our security measures. We will publicly share the findings and recommendations from this expert assessment to the extent possible without breaching security protocols.

- Inclusive, Welcoming, Safe, and Inviting School Communities:
 - Employee Self-Care:
 - We are advancing a districtwide effort that emphasizes the importance of self-care. I firmly believe that if our staff members make intentional efforts to care for themselves, they will be in a better position to care for our students. Public education has become extremely complex; therefore, educators must be supported in order to openly receive and thoughtfully, effectively and compassionately respond to our textured public education landscape. When we know how to take care of ourselves well, we are able to take care of others well.
 - Restorative Justice Training:
 - In collaboration with the Montclair Education Association (MEA), we now have a Restorative Justice curriculum and a Restorative Justice educator who is leading our districtwide focus in this arena. Four Restorative Justice workshops are slated for the 2018-2019 school year. Each workshop will consist of four days of comprehensive training. From this work, we will have 100 district and community members trained to facilitate Restorative Justice.
 - Ongoing Anti-Racist Training:
 - The vast majority of our staff participated in two-day *Undoing Racism* trainings. Staff not trained during the last three years will receive race-equity training. Furthermore, our Student Equity Advocate may assume responsibility for in-district equity professional development.
 - Ongoing LGBTQA+ Knowledge and Awareness Training:
 - We engaged in one year of districtwide training with Hudson Pride. This year we started our administrative retreat with a training led by a staff member from Garden State Equality. We will continue this work with our school community. Additionally, this is the first year we will have, at least, one “all

gender” restroom in each school building. A districtwide message was sent to all school communities regarding this work.

- Ongoing Emotional Health Training:
 - We engaged in one year of districtwide emotional health training. This year we started our administrative retreat with a training on trauma and how trauma impacts our students’ ability to attend to learning experiences in classrooms. We will continue this work with district staff, and hopefully, engage in community workshops to further advance our knowledge and understanding relative to this topic.
- Nutritional Access:
 - To ensure each student has access to meals during the school day, I am respectfully asking all families to complete the Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) application. By completing the application, parents/guardians will be able to ensure that if their child is eligible for free or reduced meals, he/she/they receive such. Additionally, students who are eligible for FARMS are also eligible for SAT/ACT and college application waivers. If an active and approved application is not on file, these waivers will not be valid. Lastly, the district receives additional funding based on the number of students who participate in the FARMS program. Our current district FARMS rate is 16.8%. Regrettably, we do not believe this number accurately represents our true numbers. Therefore, I request your completion of the application. Approval for participation in the program does not mean your child has to participate, but it certainly gives your child the option.
 - All students must complete an application annually. If students were approved last year (17-18), they will be approved until October 2018. After October 2018, approval is revoked if another application is not completed. Please monitor closely.
 - Link to the online application:
www.heartlandapps.com

- Digital Citizenship Training*:
 - All certified staff are receiving ongoing digital citizenship training. Furthermore, we are encouraging more thoughtful and intentional use of cellphones. In K-8 spaces, all students with cell phones should have them off and stored (unless informed differently by an educator). To this end, we will work with parents/guardians/community groups to further educate all, including students, on the importance of digital citizenship. To support this work, I am attaching an overview document that I find very helpful in framing this conversation.

The above highlights serve as only a sample of the amazing work underway in the district. Hence, these are indeed exciting times. Therefore, I thank all of you in advance for your partnership. Together we can achieve what may have been thought of as unachievable.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kendra V. Johnson
Superintendent

*An attachment relative to the topic is provided.

C: Montclair Board of Education