

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Community Message SY 21-22 No. 4

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

October 1, 2021

Dear Parents, Caregivers and Staff,

We launched [Hello Montclair Community!](#), the district's first season of podcasts. Episode one features a conversation with Dr. David Goldblatt, Interim Director of Pupil Services about where we are in terms of Special Education. We hope you enjoy tuning in.

Championing a respectful culture in our schools is a year-round effort, and this first week of October during the **Week of Respect**, our students and educators will engage in activities that inspire and enhance a safe and respectful learning environment. Let's all be a part of spreading kindness wherever and whenever we can!

This month is also **Dyslexia Awareness Month**. State-mandated dyslexia training takes place on Oct. 11 for our K-3 teachers. Please see below two informational events being coordinated by Montclair's Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and the Pupil Services Department:

- **Parents'/caregivers' Workshop on the Orton Gillingham (OG) Training Program:** Glenfield teacher Tracie Wolfson who is our OG coordinator for our cohort teacher training will be presenting and highlighting the benefits of OG, what teachers are learning in the cohort training and the features of the practicums. SEPAC will announce the date of the workshop.
- **Webinar on Acadience Training:** In the planning stage, this event with Susan Miller, MA, LDT-C, Assistant Director of the Robinowitz Education Center will focus on the basics of Acadience and how to interpret the results. Acadience reading assessments were implemented as a universal screener to identify students who are exhibiting reading difficulty. Ms. Miller wants parents to know the questions they should ask their child's teacher about Acadience as well as how this data informs instruction. SEPAC will announce the date of the webinar.

Academic and Social Emotional Support

During these first few months of school we aim to build relationships and assess where students are in their social

emotional and academic state. Are they ready to learn; are they on pace in their grade level? We will be utilizing curriculum support personnel and hiring three additional literacy coaches to address learning loss. We are committed to strengthening reading instruction from the ground up. *Acadience Reading* mentioned above will be our assessment tool to help us examine how our students in grades K-6 are learning important reading skills. A [letter](#) went to families with K-6 children last week about this. Every subject is dependent on being able to read, comprehend and make inferences. We are determined to make sure that every child is on target for success and reading is the pathway for achievement.

In addition, we will be providing before- and after-school tutorial programs and Saturday sessions which will also include social emotional support. These programs will be part of a request for proposals, and we look forward to receiving them from our community partners.

In response to your questions related to facilities and COVID-19, please see details below:

Pooled Testing

The contract with Ginkgo Bioworks is on the Board agenda for October 6. Once it is approved, I am anticipating an October 11 start date for testing.

Windows and Air Purifiers

We have looked at the code requirements and are making adjustments to keep windows open. For those larger areas like cafeterias, gyms and auditoriums we are installing extra air purifiers bringing the number to two to provide further protection.

COVID-19

Please see the [Safe Return page](#) on our website, a one-stop landing, with this year's information such as [Safe Return to School Plan](#), the NJDOE [Road Forward](#), guidelines for [music instruction](#), and the [NJDOH Health Guidance Chart](#) which details various scenarios for quarantine, testing positive, being a close contact and travel guidance. A voluntary staff survey for COVID vaccination status was begun today.

Please follow us on [Twitter](#), for the latest news and happenings in the district.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent