



# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

22 VALLEY ROAD ~ MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY 07042

WWW.MONTCLAIR.K12.NJ.US

**NATHAN N. PARKER, ED. D.**

*Interim Superintendent of Schools*

November 1, 2019

Dear Families and Colleagues,

Now that I have been in the Montclair Public Schools for two months, I would like to give you an update on the progress and operations of the District. Although there have been a number of changes in school leadership, Board of Education membership, and superintendents over the past few years, I want to assure you that the District has shown significant resilience and maintained an excellent reputation.

I began my work in late August by following a structured *Entry Process*<sup>1</sup>; learning as much as possible, as quickly as possible, about the strengths, needs and opportunities across the District. I met with key stakeholders including high school students, parents, teachers, principals, district administrators, Board of Education members, and community leaders.

Some key findings are:

- Most credit the resilience of the Montclair Public Schools to the principals, faculty and support staff. Principals are the glue that holds the District together, working as a collaborative group; helping each other out.
- My meetings with students were particularly meaningful. Our students are delightful, reflective, and representative of the diversity of the community. Many students are accepted at the most competitive colleges, indicating our students are some of the most talented in the country.
- The four pillars of school district quality (academics, arts, athletics, and community service) are highly regarded and will remain key focus areas.
- Basic functions of the school system need significant improvement. These areas include curriculum and instruction, professional learning, human resources, Special Education, school facilities and fields, financial management, transportation, communication, district leadership, and Board of Education functioning.

Based on these findings, my overarching objective will be to build trust. The positive energy of our talented team of administrators, faculty, and support staff will be instrumental in building that trust. And, with trust comes *New Beginnings*, of which we have instituted a number of them over the last couple of months.

---

<sup>1</sup> Barry Jentz and Joan Wofford, *The EntryPlan Approach* (Leadership and Learning Inc., 2012)

Telephone: 973.509.4000 ~ Fax: 973.509.0586 ~ Email: [nparker@montclair.k12.nj.us](mailto:nparker@montclair.k12.nj.us)

These are a few highlights of our *New Beginnings*:

1. The Board gained its 7<sup>th</sup> member. At the October 14 meeting, the Board adopted 2019-2020 goals in the areas of Board functioning, student achievement, fiscal responsibility and leadership. Mayor Robert Jackson has appointed a productive and diverse team of policy makers.
2. Board presentations are more focused and engaging.
3. Human Resource Leadership is essential to the effective operation of the school district. The Personnel Manager resigned and was replaced by a highly experienced Interim Director of Human Resources, Dr. Paul Arilotta.
4. The curricula in each elementary school must be aligned so students will have similar backgrounds as they enter the three middle schools. A half-time Interim Director of Elementary Education was recruited and selected, Dr. Sheila Cole. She supports the Elementary School principals and teachers and oversees the Restorative Justice Initiative and the Title 1 program.
5. Middle School Education and Equity, Curriculum and Instruction are in the hands of an experienced leader. A half-time Interim Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum, and Instruction, was recruited and selected, Dr. Margaret Hayes. She will serve as second in command in the district and will oversee the middle schools and the district curriculum leaders.
6. Montclair High School and Special Education will have additional district office support. A half-time Interim Staff Coach was recruited and selected, Dr. Fran Stromsland. She will oversee and support Montclair High School and K-12 Special Education programs.
7. Transportation management is changing. Our current Transportation Manager is retiring. We thank her for her many years of service. We recruited and selected a new manager who will begin January 1, 2020.
8. Strengthening positive interactions among students is critical to their growth and development. We continue and expand our Restorative Justice Initiative at Montclair High School, Glenfield and Renaissance Middle Schools, and Edgemont School.
9. Montclair Academic Dual Enrollment (MADE) program for MHS students interested in pursuing STEM courses has been implemented in conjunction with Montclair State University.
10. A dedicated group of teachers at Glenfield Middle School has formed a Master Scheduling Design Team to address concerns related to the amount of instructional time in English Language Arts and Mathematics.
11. Teacher salary issues will be resolved soon. The negotiated 2019-2020 salaries began being paid on October 31. Retroactive salaries for 2018-2019 will be paid by the end of December.
12. The budget process has begun nearly two months earlier than in previous years and will be much more collaborative.
13. Student enrollment projections are necessary to more accurately budget personnel needs. A demographer has been selected to project student enrollment over the next five years. A future option may be to reexamine the attendance zones to ensure school diversity is maintained across the district.
14. The major staircase renovations at Montclair High School are slated to be completed November 5, 2019.
15. Architects are being invited to propose a three-part Long Range Facility Plan focusing on basic building needs and mechanicals with evidence of educational appropriateness.
16. Safety and security are our utmost priorities. The relationship with the Montclair Police Department has been strengthened. We are currently collaborating to update security procedures.

I extend a heartfelt thank you to the Board of Education, students, staff, families and community members

who have offered their keen insights into the workings of our District.

I look forward to updating you on our progress, continued collaboration, and success in *New Beginnings*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nathan N. Parker". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Dr. Nathan N. Parker