



MTBOE

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE— September 2007

VOLUME V ISSUE 1

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WELCOME BACK

**OUR STRATEGIC
PLAN IS NOW ON
THE DISTRICT
WEBSITE**

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES FOR 2007-08

We wish a fond farewell to Dr. Ilene Skolnik, District Director of Assessment and Special projects. Dr. Skolnik was a favorite among administrators because she provided support and assistance with cumbersome state reporting requirements, understanding that the focus of our building administrators needs to be on our students. A warm welcome is extended to her replacement, Dr.

Sandra Reid, coming to us from the Morris School District where she was a supervisor of curriculum and instruction. We wish her great success in her new position.

With our appreciation to the River Plaza Community for giving up their much-loved principal, Marie Hartnett has moved into the position District Director of Curriculum K-12 for Math and Science. We are happy to announce that River Plaza School has a new principal. Ms. Linda Pesce is a long-time employee of our neighboring district, Colts Neck, where she served as an administrator and a teacher of Spanish. She has a deep understanding of elementary curriculum and the way young children learn. She looks forward to the support of the actively involved River Plaza parent community.

Last, but certainly not least, Middletown is thrilled to have the expertise of Mr. Fred Carrigg as our District Director of Curriculum K-12 for the Humanities (Language Arts, Social Studies, World Languages). Mr. Carrigg was the Special Assistant for Literacy to the Commissioner of Education and directed New Jersey's Office of Reading First. He is considered one of state's top experts in literacy development, and he is nationally recognized as an expert in the area of English Language Learning. Mr. Carrigg will lead district initiatives in literacy across the curriculum this year.

IMPORTANT ADDITIONS TO OUR MIDDLETOWN PROFESSIONAL STAFF

As promised during the budget awareness campaign, Middletown has added staff to reduce class size and improve student services at a time when so many other districts are cutting existing staff. We have added three regular elementary teachers and one teacher to each middle school for class size reduction: a science teacher at Thompson, a social studies teacher at Bayshore, and a special education teacher at Thorne. We also added an English teacher at High School North and addressed reduction of class size in both high schools by adding extra sections for courses as needed. All these staff have been added to allow for better individualization of instruction, as our District enrollment has actually decreased.

We have also added staff for important intervention services so fewer students will need special education services. Two reading specialists and a guidance counselor were hired for the elementary schools and a reading coach was hired for the middle schools to support struggling readers and to assist students with social and emotional issues.

MORE TECHNOLOGY TO ENGAGE OUR STUDENTS



Last school year we made significant progress toward implementing our Five-Year Technology Plan. Our students will return to school this year with even more new technology at their fingertips. Each middle and high school is receiving 42 new laptop computers to fill up their existing 6 laptop carts. The laptop carts are assigned one to each subject area department in the secondary schools. Due to the size of High School North and the extent of their computer utilization last year, we purchased an extra cart for High School North with 28 computers. In the elementary schools, we added 15 laptops on a new cart to every building.

The purpose of the laptop carts is to infuse technology right into the core curricular subject areas. It is no longer enough for teachers to sign up for a computer lab when students want to conduct research on the Internet. Our

Technology—continued

teachers and students are now signing up for a specific number of laptops they will need to use in their classrooms for weeks at a time. Problem-based learning units from our IDE Portal, an Internet resource we purchased for all our teachers, are being used to stimulate higher-level thinking and group problem solving.

Just buying the computers was only the beginning. We also purchased the necessary hardware, software and services to create building-wide, wireless environments in the middle schools, allowing the laptops to be used anywhere in the buildings. The wireless environment facilitates the use of the computers. Teachers don't have to worry about plugging in and charging them. We have also added features to make the laptops more secure.

Along with our purchase of laptops, we have made many other investments in our technology initiative. We upgraded two computer labs at High School North, purchased virus protection modules, along with other web filter enhancements to protect us against security breaches, and we purchased software to increase the management of our technology equipment.

Another exciting technology purchase is the addition of seven Smart Boards for every secondary school. Smart Boards are used to present information to a whole class, with features that organize, highlight and otherwise enhance the information to improve learning. The purchase of 53 document cameras throughout the district will allow teachers to photograph text and manipulate it in any way that will enhance the learning. These exciting technology initiatives will help Middletown keep up with our technology-savvy students and the students will stay more engaged and focused on instruction.

IMPROVEMENTS TO OUR FACILITIES



Over the summer, many improvements were made to our facilities that will enhance the learning environment in our classrooms. The most significant improvement was the replacement of the HVAC units in 6 elementary schools, (the other 6 will be done next summer) adding the coolant element to bring in and circulate air-conditioned, fresh air. Our staff and students can now look forward to improved air quality and increased comfort during all months, including the warm weather months. The buildings that are currently completed are: Harmony, Leonardo, River Plaza, Fairview, Nut Swamp and Port Monmouth.

Other significant improvements to our facilities are as follows:

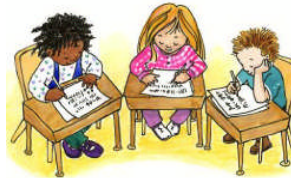
- Replacement of the ceiling tiles and lights at Harmony School.
- Refinishing of floors at Ocean Avenue and the gyms at H. S. South and H. S. North.
- Additional parking spaces at New Monmouth, Leonardo, Bayshore and High School South
- Boilers at Nut Swamp and Harmony Schools.
- Many more facilities improvements!

And we are pleased and proud to announce the start of the installation of the synthetic turf field at High School North!



DISTRICT CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

As we embark on a new school year, we see a new district philosophy of curriculum and instruction taking hold across all subject areas and grade levels. Evidence of change can be seen by walking down the hallways and looking into classroom windows. Instead of desks in rows, one may see various configurations of instructional groupings.



Teachers are circulating and assisting groups of students who are working in teams to solve problems that require higher level thinking. The focus is no longer just on memorizing facts, dates and terms, but on the application of skills and knowledge to authentic learning experiences. Technology is being used by teachers to present information and by students to conduct research or to organize and assimilate data. This inquiry-based philosophy is increasing the rigor and the relevance of our students' education throughout Middletown's schools.

Lessons that demonstrate this philosophy can be seen on our District Website @ www.middletownk12.org. Follow the links to our TV Production Studio.