

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Weekly Community Message No. 8.1

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

February 5, 2021

Dear Families, Caregivers and Staff,

Our teachers and students continue to prove their resourcefulness, and it is my pleasure to share accomplishments and highlight activities around the district. This week, I'm happy to share that Buzz Aldrin Middle School has produced a video in place of their traditional winter concert. This production took over 125 video clips, months of preparation, and many retakes to design a final product. Members of Concert Band as well as Buzz's Beginning Band are included. Please enjoy the [show](#) with credits given to:

Words and Music: George David Weiss and Bob Thiele

Arranged: Gerald Sebesky

Video and audio editing: Taylor Mandel, Buzz Instrumental Music Teacher

Last week I mentioned MHS's School of Visual and Performing Arts virtual winter drama. The last performances are tonight and tomorrow at 6 PM.

Although it's hard to imagine summer with two feet of snow and more coming, the district has begun planning for summer camps, both enrichment and academic. Preliminary information was presented at the Board Meeting. More details will be forthcoming.

Please see some district updates below:

District Equity Team (DET)

The Equity, Curriculum and Instruction Department is organizing a District Equity Team composed of community partners including Police Department representatives, PTAC, MFEE, Restorative Justice, school alumni and current students, district administrators, staff and more. The goals of the DET are as follows:

- To provide all students with culturally relevant learning experiences and access to rigorous instruction, high expectations and meaningful curricular programs
- To provide all personnel with yearly sustained professional training that fosters a more inclusive and equitable learning community

- To strengthen district and community relationships in order to create a more inclusive and equitable learning community
- To ensure recruitment, hiring, and traditional practices manifest the belief that all students are best prepared for life by working with exceptional educators from diverse backgrounds

The work of the DET is scheduled to commence in March.

Students Accelerated in Learning (SAIL)

We are expanding the SAIL English Language Arts pilot to ensure equity and access. Multiple measures from the first half of the 2020-21 school year were collected to identify students across grades K-6. A professional development will be held for teachers of identified learners during the next Curriculum Thursday, February 25. We expect services to begin for the identified students March 1 and teachers will have a follow up training on March 18.

Black Lives Matter Week of Action in School

I am proud of our administrators, teachers and students who made our first Black Lives Matter Week of Action in School a dynamic one. You can visit our website to read more, and don't forget to follow us on Twitter, @montclairschls, as we regularly Tweet photos, updates and news around the district. At the end of the month we will showcase our Black History Month activities.

8:46 Project: Students design winning t-shirt logo

Students across the district entered the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action t-shirt logo design contest sponsored by the Montclair Education Association in partnership with the MEA's 8:46 Project (see more below). This year, an elementary school category was added to ensure conversations around race and BLM are happening among all ages. After receiving over 50 entries of students' artwork, teachers across the district voted and determined the winners of the contest. Hattie Hudson Plush, Grade 1, Charles H. Bullock and Valentina Roever, Grade 7, Glenfield Middle School were revealed as the winners on Feb. 4 during a Zoom event that included educator/speaker Alfuquan Hardy who spoke on the power of protest through clothing.

Last year, the MEA challenged everyone to make greater strides towards the establishment of racial justice and equity and established "8:46" a project designed to support social justice. The 8:46 Project commits to working towards the eradication of racist practices and pedagogy within the Montclair Public School district and community at large. It strives to educate students, teachers, staff, and community members on the racial issues in education that continue to disproportionately affect Black and Non-Black People of Color within the education system and society.

Pupil Services

The administrative team is working on Extended School Year for this summer which is scheduled to begin tentatively July 5. A handbook has been created and when staffing is finalized we will publish this on our website in the new Pupil Services section. Our resource page is continually updated and we encourage you to visit the website.

Principal Appointments

As you know, we are seeking permanent appointments for Edgemont and Bradford Elementary School principals. A community forum was held for three candidates for Edgemont this week, and a forum is scheduled for Bradford February 9. Our goal is to recommend these appointments to the Board at its February 17 meeting.

If you or a family member needs to be tested for COVID-19, the YMCA is offering [free COVID testing](#) at its Park St. facility.

Stay safe and enjoy your weekend.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent