

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent of Schools

Community Message SY 21-22 No. 14

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

January 28, 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians and Staff,

Yesterday was International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Since 2005, January 27 commemorates the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and honors the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and millions of other victims of Nazism. Our district recognizes this solemn day and doing so is a promise to never forget what happened 77 years ago. Through a generous grant from the Mark Schonwetter Holocaust Education Foundation, MPS co-sponsored, along with Kean University, a living voices production, "Through the Eyes of a Friend," based on testimonies of those who knew Anne Frank and other victims. Additionally, a wise parent shared a brief, impactful [video](#) with us which we in turn shared with our middle schools and high school.

February is just a few days away and leading off the first week, the district recognizes Black Lives Matter Week of Action in School. In 2021 the Board of Education (BOE) passed a resolution to commemorate this national initiative that focuses on racial justice and equity in the classroom. Additionally, throughout the month, the district will be celebrating Black History Month with special assemblies and a variety of activities. We look forward to highlighting these events during the month in website articles and Tweets. Teachers Undoing Racism (TURN) will be hosting a critical analysis study group for faculty and staff on *Destined to Witness* by Hans J. Massaquoi, his memoir about coming of age as a black child in Nazi Germany.

BOE Meeting

At the February 2 BOE meeting, there will be a Board training presentation from Legal One on aspects of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying. This coincides with district training for all administrators this month and next. Ensuring a safe and nurturing environment free from bullying of any kind is paramount for the district.

Gifted and Talented Update

A committee of MPS' stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community partners, Board members, and school and district administrators, have been working collaboratively with Gifted and Talented advisor Dr. Lenore Cortina of Rutgers University to develop a Comprehensive Gifted and Talented Education Plan which is equitable and inclusive for our students and in compliance with the Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act. The committee has focused on the development of an equitable identification process and continuum of services to support our students. Details will be shared at the February 23 BOE meeting.

PTAs from Three Schools Win Awards

Hillside, Edgemont and **Renaissance** PTAs were three of only 36 local PTAs that were selected to receive \$1,000 awards each from the Bayer Fund. The Bayer grant provides opportunities for families to participate in hands-on and virtual science activities and be inspired to pursue careers in STEM through National PTA's [STEM + Families Science Festival](#) initiative.

New Opportunity for Grant Money from MFEE

The [Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence \(MFEE\)](#) is our town's local education fund that supports all Montclair students, teachers, staff, and caregivers. Students receive social/emotional support and innovative teaching tools through MFEE grants, teachers boost their learning through out-of-the-box Professional Development grants, and families get resources and support through MFEE programs. From now until February 28, donors who give \$20 and above will be entered in a lottery to award a \$1,000 grant to their favorite school. [Be sure to "credit" your school's team page when donating.](#) This will enter your school in a *second* lottery to win an *additional* \$1,000 grant. [Read more.](#)

COVID Testing Update

Beginning in March, Medi Mobile of Livingston will provide rapid antigen testing **three days a week** at the Annex Atrium **on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 4 to 6 PM**. This service has no out-of-pocket cost, but please remember to bring your insurance card and ID. Additionally, if your children test positive, please be sure to inform their principal and/or school nurse who will apprise you of next steps.

Have a great weekend and enjoy the snow!

Dr. Jonathan Ponds

Superintendent