A Message From the Superintendent

Dear Members of the Clark Schools Community,

The most remarkable aspect of being an educator is that each year we get to start anew, building on the strengths of the past but making the necessary adjustments to become even stronger as we move ahead. I am very excited about the successful first two months of our new school year. Our twelve-month and ten-month/two-week administrators and support staff worked diligently throughout the summer to ready us for an outstanding opening in September. Our maintenance team, led by Mr. John Pingor, is deserving of a special acknowledgement for the excellent shape of our buildings and grounds. His team’s year-round engagement in projects provide enhanced facilities for students and staff. We are thrilled by the number of projects that were completed this summer and are eagerly anticipating the additional ones on the horizon. The importance of the physical upkeep of our schools should never be devalued.

As you know, schools reopened for students on Thursday, September 5. This first day of school is always most special and initiates excitement throughout the district. The expectations for a strong opening were not only met but were exceeded. Getting to see a large number of our parents and guardians at the district’s Back-to-School Nights was equally rewarding. Please know that we, as an administrative team, have an open-door policy throughout the year and are here to address any concerns that you may have. It is our sincere hope to “inspire greatness” through the work that we do.

During these first few months of school, we have already been fortunate to see or plan for several examples of “greatness.” For instance, we are in the process of arranging for our eighth-graders at CHK, Lincoln School in Garwood, and the local parochial schools to be “Freshmen for a Day” so that they can see our various offerings during an actual school day and directly experience the superiority of our high school program. At CHK, our Positive Behavior Support in Schools (PBSIS) program, offered through the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and the Boggs Center, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, along with our Arts Integration program, sponsored by both the Foundation for Educational Administration, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and in partnership with the Program for Teacher Preparation, Princeton University and Crayola, continue to be highly valued enhancements to the great work being done with our middle school students. FKH and VRS were recipients of the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports—Early Reading (NJTSS-ER) grant from the New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Field Services. Early literacy plays such an impactful role on one’s entire life, and the support that is being implemented through this grant is enabling us to place our K-5 reading program on the cutting edge.

Members of our school community have recently been honored. For example, I am elated to report that we received notification from the College Board of the fact that, based on this past spring’s AP testing, we had nineteen AP Scholars (received scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams), four AP Scholars with Honor (received an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams), seven AP Scholars with Distinction (received an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams), and three National AP Scholars (received an average score of at least 4 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams). This continues to be an impressive number of students to receive such noteworthy recognition. VRS grade five teacher Bryan Lowe was selected as the 2019-20 Union County Teacher of the Year. This honor is an extremely notable one for Bryan, VRS, and our entire school district, and we are most proud of him for this well-deserved title. I am also glad to report that our curricula, associated programs, and technology throughout the district were updated in significant ways. For instance, all of our schools are in receipt of a number of new Chromebooks, with a one-to-one program having begun with our ALJ freshmen.

If you have yet to do so, please like us on Facebook @Clarkpublicschools and follow us on Twitter @ClarkTwpSchools as another way of becoming aware of our events and other important school updates. As an additional reminder, kindly check our Virtual Backpack on the district website on a weekly basis since a multitude of important community events and messages can be found there.

As we head into the holidays, I hope that you and your families are able to enjoy the season and find some time to relax. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, I would like to offer a very special thanks for your strong support of our schools. As always, I am looking forward to seeing you at our various events. Together, we will be able to witness the “greatness” that is characteristic of our schools and, even more importantly, your children. We are thankful to you for sharing them with us.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Grande
AL Johnson High School Homecoming

Arthur L. Johnson High School held its annual Homecoming Celebration on October 4. Nominees were driven around the track at halftime of the Crusader football game and the winners were announced shortly thereafter. This year’s Homecoming King nominees were Patrick Brennan, Max Carmino, Joseph Kaulfers, Robert Lukasiewicz and Dom Vito. Nominees for Queen were Alexandra Bowen, Brooke Gallo, Katherine Fitzharris, Nicole Randazza, and Taylor Turek. The winners were Katherine Fitzharris and Patrick Brennan.

Clark Public School District Welcomes STEAM Supervisor

Mrs. Neetu Varshney joined the Clark School District this fall as the new twelve-month Content Area Supervisor for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) for the Clark Public School District. Ms. Varshney has taught mathematics at the Union County Vocational-Technical Schools (UCVTS) since July 2005. As an Advisory Board member of UCVTS, she resolved numerous issues related to curriculum, scheduling, and assessments. Ms. Varshney also headed the Leadership Council as well as the School Assessment Committee. During her teaching tenure, she served as an advisor for Math League, Student Government, and various other clubs. Ms. Varshney was nominated as the 2012-2013 Teacher of the Year for the Academy for Allied Health Sciences.

Ms. Varshney has her NJ Supervisor certification and also possesses teaching certificates for Mathematics and Computer Science Technology. She holds a Bachelor’s degree in Mathematics and a Master’s degree in Information Technology. She completed her Educational Leadership program at Thomas Edison State University in 2014.

Superintendent Edward Grande stated, “We are excited to welcome Neetu to the Clark Schools and believe that she has the skill set required to move us forward in the STEAM areas.”

Johnson Football and Cheerleading Teams Visit First Children’s School

On Thursday, August 12, 2019, members of the Arthur L. Johnson High School Crusader Football Team and the Crusader Cheerleading Team participated in a visit to the First Children’s School, located in Fanwood, New Jersey.

The First Children’s School in Fanwood is a stepping off point for children who need highly specialized educational services for some period of time in their lives. First Children’s services extend into the home districts of students with special needs where they are invited to work with faculty and administration to assure that children with special needs get cutting-edge services in their home schools. The dedicated staffs, including teachers, aides, and therapists, are prepared to deliver their services in the schools and homes of the children they serve. First Children partners with districts and other providers like Children’s Specialized Hospital and Eden Autism Services to make sure that the children receive the very best services possible.

Members of the Crusader Football Team went into various classrooms and participated in a multitude of activities relating to the school’s curriculum.

Anthony DelConte, Head Football Coach, commented, “The football program was thrilled to be able to assist with the daily routines and to participate in activities held at the First Children’s School. It was fun watching the High School Student Athletes as they interacted with the children, and I think both groups not only enjoyed the experience, but learned a lot while doing it.”

The 2019 Arthur L. Johnson Crusader Football Team visits the First Children’s School on Thursday, August 12, 2019.
FKH Mentor Links Hike the Watchung Reservation

The Frank K. Hehnly School Mentor LINKS Program has returned this year for another set of engaging team-building activities. Program advisers Lisa Giandana, Sarah Badillo and teachers Nina Conner and Anne Nelson first met with returning and newly appointed Hehnly mentors to explain the program’s mission and goals. At a second meeting, mentors and mentees gathered to get to know one another. During this meeting, students rolled dice and answered a corresponding ice breaker question about themselves. Finally, the team visited Watchung Reservation’s Trailside Nature & Science Center and were greeted with ideal autumn weather and a day full of hands-on activities. The Reservation staff guided the group through a sensory trail in a scenic natural setting with stops along the way in outdoor classrooms. Students learned about the area wildlife and were invited to hear bird calls, examine turtle shells, and compare feathers. The group then headed inside the facility for a simulated camping trip, along with other educational activities designed to teach about the local ecosystem. Friends then shared an outdoor lunch and enjoyed some time exploring the sprawling Loop playground.

Members of Mentor Links enjoy their trip to Watchung Reservation.

FKH Student Council Donates Water and Socks to Community Causes

The Hehnly Student Council has been busy this fall with community service drives. Due to a growing crisis over lead contamination in Newark’s drinking water, the Hehnly family stepped up this September when asked for water donations. The Student Council collected more than 82 cases of water, packing most of them in Ms. DeVita’s car to be transported to the Westfield Neighborhood Council for transport to Newark.

The annual October “Socktober” started out on a charitable note. Knowing the cold weather is on its way, the Student Council held a school-wide collection for the Monarch House in Cranford. Creative signs advertised the collection. Many thanks to our generous school families. Representatives from Monarch House posed for pictures with our class representatives and Executive Board. “The outpouring of support for both our drives to greatly appreciated,” shared Student Council Advisor, Linda Hayes.

Members of the Hehnly Student Council collect water to donate.
Fall Sports at ALJ

Many of ALJ’s athletic teams had competitive seasons while qualifying for the NJSIAA State Tournament this fall. One of the most satisfying highlights from the fall was the Varsity Field Hockey Team, which made the Union County Tournament final. It certainly has been a season to remember for all teams thus far. The Boys and Girls Soccer programs have been competitive in tough divisions while making the state tournament once again. Both Tennis and XC have also both had improved seasons as they qualified for the NJSIAA State Playoffs. The Varsity Football Team’s record is currently 3-5.

Final Records:
Boys Soccer (6-11).
Girls Soccer (8-10-3).
Field Hockey has concluded their season with a (15-6) record and finished the season ranked 7th in all of Group 1. Cross County continues their season on November 09th at Thompson Park in the NJSIAA Sectional Tournament. Volleyball concluded their season with a record of (10-6) and captured the Valley Division Championship. Girls Tennis concluded their season at (8-5).

ALJ Blue Cru Brings Classic Spirit Back to High School

The Arthur L. Johnson Blue Cru, an organization spearheaded by student representatives and high school Vice Principal Ed Bucior, hosted a myriad of events this fall prior to Johnson home football games. The events, such as the kickoff and Senior Car Decorating, have reinvigorated the student body and the high school faculty and staff. The kickoff event included catering from local restaurants, games of corn hole and Can Jam for all to enjoy. Students have done an amazing job of decking out in the weekly themes, such as White Out, Camo Night, USA Spirit, and Neon night.
ALJ Students Receive Accolades for Accomplishments

Arthur L. Johnson High School selects both a Student of the Month and a Crusader of the Month. The SOM is chosen based on academic achievements and the COM is chosen based on extra-curricular involvement in both the school and community.

September
Robert Lukasiewicz- SOM
Brooke Gallo- COM

October
Heidi Compton- SOM
Jenna Wiese- COM

November
Nicole Randazza- SOM
Aeden Kelly- COM

The following students were selected as the first of this year’s recipients of ALJ’s F.O.C.U.S. awards- an acronym for Future, Opportunity, Character, Unity, & Success.

Emma Hilton: Finished 2nd highest in program history for goals scored. She received a scholarship to Ball State for Field Hockey.
Katherine Fitzharris: Earlier this year, Katherine noticed that a freshman wanted to enroll in our ASL class, but it was full. She gave up her spot so the other student could take the class!
Matt Snedeker: Was nominated for his role and his positive interactions in our Unified Club.
Ethan Ponce: He noticed a new transfer student sitting alone in lunch and invited/became friends with the student.
Connor Fitzgerald: Always goes out of his way to be kind to others. Helped befriend a student that would sit alone waiting for school to start.

30 Arthur L. Johnson Students Recognized by College Board as AP Scholars

Arthur L. Johnson is excited to announce that 30 of its students have been recognized as Advanced Placement School Scholars by The College Board. The awards recognize high school students who have demonstrated college-level achievement through AP courses and exams.

19 students have been noted as AP Scholars receiving a score of 3 or higher on three or more AP exams. 4 students have been recognized as AP Scholars with Honor receiving an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams. ALJ has 7 AP Scholars with Distinction receiving an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams. Three of these scholars with Distinction also earned the title of National AP Scholar receiving an average score of at least 4 on all AP Exams taken and scores of 4 or higher on eight or more of these exams.

“These students are to be applauded for their immense success with postsecondary studies while still at ALJ. They will have a strong head-start on their college studies and are a source of great pride for our high school and district as a whole,” stated Superintendent Edward Grande.
What’s New at the Clark Preschool

Our students at the Clark Preschool have been “falling in love” with fall. During the month of October, the ABA and PSD classes participated in many exciting and enriching activities. To truly embrace the season, staff adorned the hallway with autumnal decor and created a pumpkin patch where students were able to pick their own pumpkins. Music and laughter filled the air when Jammin’ Jen Music Therapy performed at the Preschool in mid-October. Then, in honor of Fire Safety month, the Clark Fire Department visited, and students had the opportunity to tour the fire truck and try on gear. And last, but certainly not least, Halloween was a spooky sensation with our students dressing up and attending class parties. Thus far, the Preschoolers have embarked upon a successful school year, and we look forward to the months ahead.

Students in Mrs. Petela’s class at Valley Road School worked in small groups to create jumbo number grids to practice adding and subtracting on number grids.
Students in Mrs. Petela's class worked with mini pumpkins donated to the class by Lila Stebbins and her grandma. The students made predictions about weight as well used weights to balance their pumpkins on actual balance scales.