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**James J. Montesano, Ed.D.**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

July 5, 2016

## **RE: Guidance Program Review**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Last year, the District conducted a program review of the guidance services provided to students in Grades 7-12. As an institution for learning we believe that fresh examination and continual growth is the best way to serve our students. The program review included interviews with staff; small group parent and student forums at the Middle and High School levels; and parent and student surveys, Grades 7-12. The process has assisted us in identifying program strengths as well as opportunities for improving existing services. The American School Counselor Association Standards, along with the following guiding questions provided the framework for the review:

- *What are the strengths of Nyack's current guidance services, programs and organization?*
- *What gaps or learning points might be addressed?*
- *Are there ways to better utilize our resources?*
- *Are all of our children being well served?*
- *Are there models or research from which we could learn?*

We extend our appreciation to the many faculty members, support staff members, administrators, students and parents whose voices of experience, opinions and ideas assisted us in this process.

As we prepare for the 2016-17 school year we will begin to implement the following Tier 1 recommendations that have resulted from this program review:

1. Establish a position for a full-time Director of Guidance K-12: It is anticipated that the Board of Education will appoint Lorraine Longing as Director of Guidance at the July 12 BOE Meeting. Ms. Longing is currently the Director of Guidance in the Ossining School District where she has served with distinction since 2003. Prior to her experience in Ossining, she served as Director of Guidance and as a Guidance Counselor at Xavier High School in NYC. Ms. Longing holds her MS Degree in Administration from Fordham University; an MS in Counseling from Long Island University and her BS in Psychology from St. Thomas Aquinas. During her time in Ossining, the Guidance Department was awarded the Middle States Counseling Program of Distinction. Ms. Longing is scheduled to begin her new position on August 1.

2. Guidance Counselor Staffing Changes Diana Wright has served as part-time Guidance Liaison for the past three years. She will return as a full-time counselor at the High School which will reduce the student-to-counselor ratio. Edgar Lambert will be returning to Nyack Middle School where he has previously served to assist in the development of a Peer Mediation Program for Middle School students. Sean Cavanaugh, currently assigned to the Middle School will replace Mr. Lambert at the High School. Tara Heinemann has been hired as a new High School counselor to replace Raquel DaCosta who has retired.
3. Develop a K-12 Guidance Curriculum based on student *skill* acquisition, leading students through critical processes (i.e., transitions between schools, post-secondary planning), and social/emotional/behavioral phases of maturation. The curriculum development process will begin during the 2016-17 school year and will be guided by the ASCA Standards for Students and the ASCA Mindset and Behavioral Standards. School Districts known for exceptionally strong guidance programs will be identified to assist in the development process, as well.
4. Create a Communication Plan for the Guidance Department to assist all staff, students and families in being well-informed, feel connected and to provide viable information/resources.
5. Evaluate the College Planning Process- Critique our current college planning process on all levels (student, faculty, parent, recruiters, and counselors). The process will include a review of at least eight (8) other school districts (public or private) to develop models of best practices in areas of timelines and communication. The District will also be examining methods enhancing 'college awareness' in earlier grades. This may include field trips to campuses in grades 8 and 10 along with other activities.

Thank you for your attention to these changes in our Guidance Program. As always, feel free to contact us via **Let's Talk** at [www.nyackschools.org](http://www.nyackschools.org) with questions or concerns. I look forward to a new school year and wish you and your families a healthy and happy summer.

Sincerely,



James J. Montesano, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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**Si ou bezwen enfòmasyon tradui an kreyòl, rele Jocelyne Abraham nan 353-7044.  
Si le hace falta información traducida en español, llame a Yesenia Polanco 353-7042.**