

Principal's Report

May 11, 2011

Theory of Action and Technology Innovations/Updates

- Principal O'Connell, Technology Lead Teacher Kinney, and the entire grade six team of teachers recently met with the Director of K-12 Education Program of Kindle (Amazon.com), Kara Sheiko, for professional development on how to use kindles in the classroom. Next year, the Scholars' Academy is piloting a program which provides kindles to every grade six student. Grade six students will be able to take kindles home. The Scholars' Academy will be learning whether or not this is a viable tool for enhancing instruction, promoting reading, and lessening the size of backpacks! (This includes better communication with and among teachers about the size and number of "binders!")
- Windward School, the private high school located in Culver City, CA, upon which the Technology Enabled Active Learning Classroom was designed has invited Principal O'Connell back to the school for a Science Colloquium. The Windward School Active Learning Colloquium, supported by a prestigious leadership grant from the E.E. Ford Foundation, brings together teams of administrators, science faculty leaders and educational technology professionals to work collaboratively on implementing at the secondary school level the active learning instructional model developed by researchers and educators at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), North Carolina State University, and the University of Minnesota. Mr. O'Connell is checking to see if his schedule can accommodate this unique professional development opportunity which may generate ideas on how to improve our high school and college preparatory science program. The Colloquium takes place starting June 29th, 2011.
- I-pad Pilot for one cohort of Scholars' Academy students will take place next year. Due to the expansion of the Kindle Pilot, the I-pad Pilot will be executed by one of our grade seven cohorts of students. Additional I-pads were purchased for teachers to use and for multiple classes to access. The goal of the I-pad pilot is to determine the benefits to instruction and management, while identifying any pitfalls and limitations. Approximately 2.5 I-pads may be purchased for the same cost of one laptop computer.
- Music Technology Room is almost complete. Special thanks to the custodial staff that assisted with assembly of more than thirty piano/computer tables. This room will permit students to better learn how to read and compose music.
- Instructional Video Library: Safari Montage is an in-house server that enables teachers to access a huge library of instructional videos. This is a \$15,000 value that our school has secured as a free pilot through Tequipment Inc..
- Wireless Signal Upgrade: Scholars' Academy is receiving an upgrade to N3, a latest generation in wireless signal. This upgrade will enhance our internet connectivity through wider bandwidth.

- Innovation Zone/iLearnNYC: We are receiving additional licenses for Desire2Learn, which is an online data base of instructional courses for our teachers and students to use next year. We will continue to refine our "blended model" of online course offerings to our students.
- Tri-caster Mobile Film Studio: We have purchased a \$15,000 tool called a Tri-caster, which enables an up to three camera system to film school events live with virtually no editing. We envision this tool being used to film big sports and school events, potentially PTA meetings, etc. which may be "live-streamed" to the internet and accessed by the Scholars' Academy Community with a login and password. This tool has the potential to enhance community awareness and virtual involvement.

Facility Enhancements/Issues

May Construction Report:

- School Yard: According to the contractor, all work will be completed by end of the summer. The school yard is getting redesigned and resurfaced. We are requesting multiple (10-12) half-court basketball courts around the perimeter, the removal of the dividing fences which would provide more sports team flexible space use, and the inclusion of removable tennis courts: 2-3 courts for tennis practice.
- B104 Yard: A combination of alternating cherry blossoms and Bradford Pear trees will be planted inside the property on B104 with a meandering path, using paving stones. The existing large tree may not be removed so the plan had to adjust to show variety.
- Seaside Avenue: New plants have been added to the flower boxes. Bicycle racks will be installed adjacent to playground.
- Theater: New lighting is being installed in the theater. Lights will be controlled from either the projection booth or adjacent to the sound box in rear of theater, which enhances safety and eases access.
- Cameras: We have been surveyed for a new camera system. Just about every hallway, stairwell, exterior door, etc. will be covered by high quality cameras which record all activities. Such will enhance student and building safety. Work is slated to begin shortly.

School Leadership/CEP/Academic Reporting

"May School Leadership Team Reports: Changes Anticipated in 2011-2012

1. Increase number of students in grade six.

This will increase our building capacity usage over time, while deepening the pool of Scholars' students to continue to our high school. The decision to do this at this time also provides some anticipated budgetary relief for what may be a very tight fiscal year.

2. Class/Course Programming Changes:

We are increasing the number of periods of Math and ELA next year to 8x/week in the middle school. Science is being realigned to accommodate the fact that the NYS Board of Regents has not changed the 7th grade high school seat time rule. Living Environment Regents course will be moved to grade 8 and the Earth Science Regents course will be moved to 11th or 12th grade. This will offer our high school students a non-advanced placement course option in 11th or 12th grade, enhance the chances of advanced regents diploma with honors to be earned by students, assist us in managing our programming issues of multiple tracks in our small high school, and permit a more hands-on project based science curriculum to be created in grade seven. A transition year is being planned for next year when there will potentially be no science Regents exams offered to grade 7 or 8. There may, however, be a life science course designed with a local assessment which would enable us to provide high school seat time credit for life sciences to next year's 8th graders who have passed the living environment regents in grade 8. We do not wish to have students complete the same course twice.

3. Spanish Instruction is Changing:

Grade Six will be offered Spanish instruction 2x per week next year.

Grade Eleven will phase out of Spanish instruction and the Spanish Regents Exam will take place in grade ten. This change balances out our Regents exams in grades 9 and 10, while permitting greater time for 11th and 12th grade students to focus on their AP or college courses.

4. Arts Instruction is Changing:

In order to enhance the learning experience of students, while also lightening and focusing teacher student/work-loads, several changes are taking place in both middle and high school arts programming:

Grade six will be included in Period Six Arts Elective Classes 2x per week.

Grade seven and eight students will either take music or art 2x per week in each respective year, an increase from the 1x per week currently completed. Grade seven and eight will still be able to continue in period six arts electives 2x per week.

5. High School Students will select an "Arts Area of Concentration" in grade nine focusing them on one of the following three courses of study: visual arts with comprehensive arts exam, music, or film/media studies. The increased options for high school students will no longer lock all students into the current course of study purely in the visual arts.

6. Custodial Support is Changing Effective May 13th, 2011.

Scholars' Academy is transitioning away from traditional custodial support to private contractor support provided via Temco. This change is prompted by the historical trend of custodians signing on for three years and transferring to a larger school to earn more funds. We believe that, if the private contractor arrangement is successful, we will have longer term consistent custodial support in the form of a "Building Manager." The new anticipated building manager will be Ray Velez, who knows our building

and cleaning crew, as one of our current staff. Scholars' Academy thanks outgoing Custodian Frank Kavalier for his service to our school and wishes him well as he moves onto a new building.

Music, Art, Film, etc.

- The Scholars' Academy annual Spring Arts & Music Festival takes place this Tuesday, May 17th, 2011 in the Scholars' Academy Theatre. Doors open at 6 p.m. so that parents can view student artwork. The Sixth Grade Band, Seventh and Eighth Grade Band, High School Band, Seventh and Eighth Grade Chorus, and High School Chorus are all performing. Music students must return to school no later than 6:15 p.m. as no students will be permitted to remain in the building after-school until the concert preparation begins.
- All members of the Scholars' Academy Sixth Grade Band, Seventh and Eighth Grade Band, and High School Band will perform at the NYSSMA Major Organization Evaluation Festival this year on Saturday, May 14, 2011.
- I am happy to announce that the Scholars' Academy Band (grades 7-12 only) will march in the Rockaway Memorial Day Parade this year
- The 9th grade Sculpture class is participating in an exciting afternoon program at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Students will visit the Museum for three separate thematic tours, focusing on a cross-cultural introduction to the Museum's collection. These rare and unique opportunities will occur on May 12th, 19th and 26th.
- During the month of May and June; the 11th grade Visual Art portfolios will be on display in the Gallery walk. This work is the culmination of three year sequence in the Visual Arts and showcases each students strengths and talents in the Visual Arts

Parent Issues/Upcoming Events Not Referenced

- Scholar of the Month Students suggested that we have games: Parents vs students and Parents vs Staff .
- Scholar's Academy will participate in WakeUpNYC! Which is a multimedia campaign aimed at reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism. Through WakeUp!NYC, students will receive phone calls with pre-recorded morning wake up messages from Magic Johnson, Jose Reyes, Big Boi, Terrence J and Rocsi from BET's 106 & Park, singer Trey Songz, and other celebrities.
- Next year's scholar of the month will be celebrated by inviting the families of the recipients to attend breakfast with the principal before the assembly.
- We want to encourage all parents to use the ARIS Parent link where you can easily find information about your child's attendance, periodic assessments, and NY State test results, including Regents exams. Parents of students in middle and high school can also access report card grades, unofficial transcripts, and important information about high school graduation requirements. ARIS Parent Link also contains resources you can use with your child to improve his or her achievement. On Monday letters with passwords

are being distributed to those parents who have not yet activated their accounts. Please contact Ms. Brady ext. 181 if you need assistance or a password reset.

- The student government will be taking its annual trip to Albany to visit the legislature on Wednesday May 18th.
- Scholars' Academy is hosting the Community District Education Council 27's open calendar meeting next Monday May 16th at 7:30pm. We encourage all parents to attend to become more aware of the important work that is done by the council. The meeting notice is being distributed at tonight's PTA meeting.
- Students, parents and guardians are invited to attend our annual Science and Technology fair on Wednesday, May 18th from 5 to 7 pm. Students in all grades will present and display their projects using videos, screen casts, smart boards, lap tops and other technology equipment! There will be raffles, concession sales and many projects to view! Please join us for this exciting and informative school event!
- Rockaway Waterfront Alliance hosted a team based competition to challenge local students to collaborate on ideas to make the Rockaways a greener and more sustainable waterfront community. Scholars' Academy Students have submitted their projects and all parents and students are invited to attend the Opening Reception and Jury Presentation on **Saturday May 14th** from 4pm to 6pm at the Rockaway Artist Alliance Gallery at Fort Tilden in Gateway National Park.

Safety/Transportation/Logistics/Youth Development

The month of May is packed with testing and enrichment activities, both in and out of the building. With a month and a half left, we remind students to be consistent with behavior and academic expectations. Review schools and citywide policies with your children to ensure a safe and productive end of year.

Middle School Events and Trips

- The 7th grade will be traveling to Pennsylvania on May 25th & May 26th to visit the Liberty Bell, National Constitution Center, Edgar Allen Poe House, Eastern State Penitentiary and many other exhibits. Ms. Sorrentino, as well as 14 other staff members will chaperone and supervise this over-night trip.
- Our middle school journalism class will travel by foot with Mrs. Kaplan and other chaperones to visit The Wave headquarters and learn from their editors in person!

High School Applications

- This year we have 54 of our current 8th graders leaving to go to other high schools, this is 45 less than we had leaving last year and the year before that.
- There are zero 9th graders transferring to other high schools, unlike last year, when we had 5 transfer and the year before that when we had 2 transfer.

- We have 23 8th graders moving on to specialized high schools which is similar to how many have gone to them in years past. This trend has not changed.
- There are 26 students going to other screened high schools such as Townsend Harris and Leon Goldstein- which is 14 less than we had going last year and 18 less than the year before that.
- We have 24 students this year moving on to parochial/private schools, which is 10 less than last year and the year before that. It is clear from these numbers that there are more students choosing to remain at Scholars' Academy High School and we expect that this trend will continue.

Physical Education/Sports

- Congratulations to Becky Moers for being selected to the Daily News Queens Borough Basketball Team.
- The HS Golf team is currently 4-0 and their next match is Thursday 4:30pm at Douglaston Golf Course.
- Sports Night is Wednesday June 1st at 6pm at Roma View. Any questions please contact Mr. Lunati
- The Physical Education Dept is taking part in their Circuit Training Unit. Students were tested on both upper and lower body exercises. Scholars' students were able to participate in a wide variety of fitness activities.