



The Scholars' Academy

An Accelerated College Preparatory School for Grades 6-12
27Q323, A Knowledge Network Teaching and Learning Organization
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Principal

Brian O'Connell

Principal's Report November 12th, 2008

- Budget Cuts 2008-2009:** The Scholars' Academy received an approximate 1.83% of \$3,313,147 budget cut which equals \$60,728. As indicated in a prior letter that was sent home, we were prepared for these cuts and made financial decisions in consultation with our School Leadership Team so that there would be minimal impact upon the school. One such "sacrifice" we have made is to not hire an Assistant Principal this year. To make up for this loss, we have realigned our professional development teams, essentially taking a very collaborative and supportive tact when dealing with our teachers. By structuring building management with our team of staff developers and with support of a dean and our second Guidance Counselor, we have been able thus far to work with a very high acumen and intensity. I am very grateful for the support of the PTA which has come through numerous times for instructional supplies, teacher appreciation, maintenance of equipment, etc. We are also grateful for all of our individual donors, private supporters, and our incredibly supportive, smart, and talented staff.
- Sports:** Golf Night ends in about two weeks. Our JV HS Girls' volleyball team finished their season 6 wins and 1 loss. Cheerleading tryouts are taking place November 17th and 19th for freshman and sophomores. MS girls' volleyball has begun and our first game was against Mr. Perry's, our former Assistant Principal, school. It was a special event and the two teams embraced one another. It was truly inspirational. Mr. Perry is missed, but he is already making a difference for other children. During the next few months, we will be offering the following HS sports: Boys' Basketball, Girls' Basketball, Co-ed Bowling, and Wrestling. Middle School Sports forthcoming are: Boys' Lacrosse, Fitness Club, Girls' Volleyball, and Girls' Cheerleading. Other sports will be planned for spring on a rolling basis. A special thanks to Frank Kavalier, our custodian, Keith Goldberg and the Gray Beards Organization for support in purchasing and installing our brand new score board in the gym.
- Trips:** An intense emphasis on curriculum related trips has already taken root this year. Examples of trips already taken are: Grade 6, 8 American Museum of Natural History, Ballroom Dancing Trip(s) NYC, grade 10 Museum of Modern Art, Grade 7 Fort Hamilton, etc. Review of our curriculum maps outside of the theatre indicate several others that are planned for this year. "The more you get out of school, the more you get out of school."
- HS and MS Open Houses:** We already had our HS Open House on November 6th. Approximately 250 guests attended. Ms. Rozman and a huge team of staff and students planned, organized, and executed a very tasteful event. MS Open House will take place on December 4th, 2008. Applications will be available on December 1st via our counter or website for download. Grade 4 "Cut Off" scores are: 669 in ELA and 684 in Math on the 2008 exams. Reservations are required and over 300 people already reserved appointments. As a city-wide gifted program and consistent with our MOU, the seats will be offered on a competitive basis within four geographic zones. Zones 1 and 2: Rockaway Peninsula East and West will make up at least 50% of the entering student body. The Mainland of District 27 (or zip codes external to the Rockaway Peninsula, but within District 27) will contribute up to 40% of the student body, and students residing external to District 27 will make up 10% or less of the student body. Currently students do not have to take the citywide gifted exam since we are a special application process school. Our admissions process remains in tact. Students current or external applying to grade 9, according to Chancellor's Regulation 101, must meet our posted screening criteria to gain admission. This regulation was updated in August, 2008. Criteria: 85 and above average in math, science, ELA, and social studies. Students with algebra, earth science, and living environment

- regents have an improved chance of gaining available seats. Scholars' Academy students, continuing 8th graders, who meet the posted criteria get first choice at any seat offerings.
5. **Instructional Focal Points:** Rigor, Intensity, Differentiated Instruction. ELA is a focal point. We hired two part-time AUSSIE consultants, Mr. Peter Auer and Ms. Eleanor Nicholson, to work with our Literacy Team since ELA 1 Year Progress is a priority. Currently this professional development support is sustained to the ELA in January. We secured a teacher for training and assuming some of Mr. Bradley's instructional responsibilities so that he may also assist with our professional development instructional initiatives. Mr. Bradley now has Lead Teacher status.
 6. **Guidance and Youth Development:** We have a "Respect for All" Anti-Bullying Program kicking off. The Guidance and Dean's office will be doing workshops with the students during lunch and during class to promote acceptance, kindness, and a zero tolerance for bullying (cyber, verbal, physical, etc.) I have also been speaking to this theme during the Principal's morning message.
 7. **Community Service Tracking:** Please get the word out that students must take advantage of the numerous community service opportunities that we are involved with. The Guidance Dept. is doing a thorough job on advertisement, outreach, and tracking. Last minute appeals this year concerning community service will not be taken lightly as we are constantly reminding the students.
 8. **Student Government:** Speeches and elections are taking place this week. Mr. Flatt is coordinating. Candidates had to obtain signatures and write leadership responses prior to being given an opportunity to run for office. We will have one candidate per cohort in the middle school grades, and one per homeroom in the HS grades. The executive branch will be made up of HS students. MS students will serve as the senate.
 9. **Construction:** We have been ahead of schedule and the teachers, custodial staff, and students are being very accommodating. The 3,000 +/- square foot science labs will be up and running as early as late January/early February according to the contractor. We have secured \$1.1 Million in Reso A funds for playground and park reconfiguration and are considering trying to reallocate some of those funds to the air conditioning project so that we can have AC in the theatre and/or dining room. We have been very patient waiting for the SCA to coordinate this effort. Since the schoolyard will be tied up for a while, we will pursue other funds for that in the future if we can reallocate.
 10. **Progress Reports HS:** The HS Progress Report is available on the website. There is no letter grade and there won't be one until we have a graduating class. According to the available metrics, in comparison to the following schools in our peer group which is made up of the top schools in the city (Stuyvesant, Goldstein, Brooklyn Tech, Bard HS, and Townsend Harris), we analyzed this sample space and found that Scholars' Academy outperformed those mentioned here in the following categories: School Environment: Academic Expectations, Communication, Engagement, Safety and Respect. Credit Accumulation: Earning 10+ credits in Year 1. Weighted Regents Passing Rates: English, Science, and U.S. History and Government. Rockaway's Scholars' Academy is on its way to its goal of being the statistical best school in the city.
 11. **Online Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP):** We are part of a new online CEP project. Such will enable us to more easily and transparently create and articulate our goals and action plans to the public.
 12. **Quality Review Results:** We once again received the highest score available on the Quality Review. This year the highest score was "Well Developed." Last year, it was "Outstanding," which we were rated. This year's feat makes it three years in a row that we received "top billing." The Quality Review examines the school's systems and instruction "top to bottom." It is a very rigorous and intense process. Kudos to the students, parents, teachers and support staff on this honor.
 13. **Parent Outreach:** Open School Week is next week. We are having two days of Open Classrooms on Monday November 17th and Friday November 21st. Parents may visit their child's classroom starting at 9:05AM-9:48AM. Parents should or may arrive as early as 8:15AM. Please use the Seaside Entrance. Coffee and muffins will be available in the dining room prior to visiting the classroom. Teacher Conferences are next Tuesday. Please be sure to send back the notice whether you are attending during the day or in the evening.
 14. **Forthcoming Events:**

Scholar of the Month on November 21st, Ballroom Dancing Show November 26th,
Thanksgiving Recess November 27th and 28th, **Parent Workshop: “Helping Your
Child Prepare for the State ELA” Monday Night December 1st, 2008 at 7pm**, Winter
Concert December 18th, 2008.

Please consult our monthly calendar and website for additional updates.

Respectfully,

Brian O’Connell

Principal