



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

Assistant Principals

Toni Marie Sorrentino (IA)
Michele Smyth (P/T)

Principal's Report September 16th, 2009

Reported by Brian O'Connell

Welcome back! I hope you have found the school year beginning smooth and pleasant. Due to the dedication, incredible organizational ability, and hard work of our staff, this was the smoothest opening for us since our inception. There were minimal bus issues, students knew where to go and what to do, teachers had clear expectations, and support personnel were efficiently deployed to ensure that teachers and students alike had what they needed to begin teaching and learning from day one. We had a planned and renewed focus on order preceding learning this year and we believe that this is what attributed to our phenomenal start. There were minimal dress policy and compliance issues. The students have been incredibly cooperative.

This school is designed to grow and absorb/adapt quickly to changes. There were many staffing changes this year. This is a list of new titles and new staff.

2009 2010 New Titles and Key Personnel:

Toni Marie Sorrentino, AP

Ms. Sorrentino is the point of contact for middle school matters

Primary Teachers working with Ms. Sorrentino are: Science and Enrichment Clusters

Ms. Sorrentino's email is: tsorren@schools.nyc.gov

Michele Smyth, AP, Monday, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Ms. Smyth is the point of contact for high school matters

Primary Teachers working with Ms. Smyth are: Math Teachers

Mr. Bradley is Ms. Smyth's main support person on days she is not in the building.

Ms. Smyth's email is msmyth3@schools.nyc.gov. Mr. Bradley's email is

jbradley4@schools.nyc.gov.

Mr. Bradley is our Instruction and Math Lead Teacher.

A new hire, Ms. Seung Oh, is our Technology and Math Lead Teacher.

Ms. Colleran is our Humanities Teachers' Staff Developer.

Dean Foti is our Discipline and Safety Point of Contact.

At the moment, Mr. Foti is receiving support from an Assigned Administrator, Mr. Drew Goodman

New Staff:

Ms. Lewner: Grade 6 Math

Ms. Barget: Grade 6 Humanities

Ms. Galvin: Grade 7 Humanities
Ms. Mainhart: Grade 8 Humanities
Ms. Rebecca Henck: Grade 8 Earth Science
Mr. Hamilton: Spanish
Mr. Wong: Grade 11 English/Writing
Ms. Conlisk: Grade 6, 7, 8 Visual Art
Ms. Sue Murphy: Testing Support and HS Application Support
Ms. Calderon: Part-Time Physical Therapist

Task/Job Changes:

Ms. Giove is teaching grade 6 science.
Ms. Scannell is teaching grade 7 science.
Ms. Nuss is teaching grade 7 math.
Ms. Peppe is teaching grade 7 science.
Ms. Koshan is teaching grade 8 math.
Ms. Henck is teaching grade 8 math.
Mr. Chobot is teaching grade 10 global studies.
Ms. K. Hubbard is teaching grade 10 math.
Ms. Copin is teaching grade 10 chemistry.
Mr. Coscia is teaching grade 11 U.S. Government.
Ms. Grieco is teaching grade 11 pre-calculus.
Mr. Hilgendorf is teaching grade 11 chemistry.
Ms. Morritt is still teaching keyboard/piano to middle school but is focusing on developing a 6th grade band program.
Mr. Leicht is still teaching keyboard/piano/percussion to high school, but is also adding a 7th/8th grade junior band program to feed the high school band program.
Ms. Caraccio is working with the guidance department in lieu of dining room coordination.

College Credit Accumulation through St. Francis College:

We are offering 10 credits to current 11th graders:
U.S. Government with Mr. Coscia 3 credits
English/Writing with Mr. Wong 3 credits
Pre-Calculus with Ms. Grieco 4 credits

Next year we are planning to offer 12 credits to our 12th graders.

We are working on a big plan at the moment to support our college partnership. We are organizing a grant committee.

Grant Committee

We are partnering with St. Francis College to apply for a "Smart Scholars" Grant. This grant is designed to support and facilitate the Early College Partnership. The grant covers approximately 2-4 years, with \$450,000 per year in funding. Items potentially covered by this grant are: books, tuition, transportation, outreach, events, hardships with college application fees, etc.

Guidance Office Restructuring/Changes:

Due to the hiring freeze and other restrictions and limitations created by the Human Resources Division, we have had to restructure our guidance department and rearrange staff duties until staffing issues differ.

We are very comfortable and confident in this plan.

Ms. Rozman is now the Director of Guidance and College Planning

Ms. Rozman will coordinate and direct the following two personnel to support the high school and college application process.

- Assistant for Processing Public High School and College Applications: Lorraine Caraccio
- Assistant for Processing Parochial/Private School Applications: Suzanne Murphy
- There will also be additional advisory support using other staff members. For example, Mr. Wong will be working with the students on their college application essays this year.

This structure is designed to provide students and parents with more intimate support with regard to completing either HS or College Applications. There will be scheduled support both during the school day and after school for our students and parents by appointment. More information will be forthcoming from the Director of Guidance and College Planning.

Internet Cafe/College Office Set Up:

The former Teachers' Dining Room is being converted to a College Information Center and Internet Cafe.

We are waiting for \$100,000 in Reso A Councilmatic Funding from Councilman Eric Ulrich which will finance the installation of computers and printers for use by students during their lunch hour, study hall, and before and after school when staffed. This resource will also be made available to parents to access their child's ARIS data during PTA Meetings or via appointments made with the Parent Coordinator during the school day.

Other Building Changes:

The *Technology Enhanced Active Learning Classroom* is awaiting Electric Installation, painting, and floor tile repair. This room has 5 smartboards installed and will be used for smart board training, science virtual laboratories, and film instruction by all grades over time.

The Library Looks Phenomenal: Mrs. Volk has done a tremendous job setting up a "real" library. During Curriculum Overview, be sure to take a peak at it and share the positive feedback to Mrs. Volk. She worked and works very hard.

Construction Matters:

Construction will not be completed with air conditioning until August 2010.

We will be temporarily be relocating 2 rooms at a time so that rooms can have the AC motors installed, sheet rocked, painted, etc. throughout the year. Construction is taking place at night. All of our classrooms are clean and look great. The Science Labs are ready except for ductwork which will be completed when the roof is finished.

Rockaway Freeway is going to be partially closed (westbound traffic lane) and traffic will be diverted to the tiger stripe lane between B104 Street and Seaside Avenue while underground electrical vaults are installed in the ground.

We are meeting with the DOT, DEP, MTA, and DOE on Friday at 1pm to prompt these agencies from coordinating their construction efforts which will be taking place along the Freeway this year. A sidewalk has been installed so that our students can now get to B105 using the sidewalk. Please encourage them to do so as conditions under the trestle and in the tiger stripe area will be very unsafe during this construction period.

Several students were observed talking on cell phones while crossing or walking in the middle of the street. Such phones were taken away by school staff. Talking on the phone and walking under the El are recipes for a disaster. Do not permit your children to bring cell phones to school. They can be confiscated and returned only on the 1st and 15th of each month.

We are still lobbying the School Construction Authority to have the Theatre and dining room placed on the capital plan for the addition of air conditioning.

We are still lobbying the School Construction Authority to utilize school yard renovation money to more immediately install AC in our theatre. We are not receiving clear feedback at all in terms of a timeline or realistic feasibility even though we have requested numerous times in writing, face to face, and on the phone.

Clubs/Extended Day:

This is the earliest in our existence that Extended Day Classes were put into place.

Students were surveyed in June and, although it is a tremendous task, every student to my knowledge received one of their four choices. Granted, there are always students who "don't want their fourth choice," but this is the way it has to be.

We are going to attempt to give those students priority in January when students have a chance to opt into another extended day activity.

Clubs Offered this Year:

There are 16 activities this year.

- 7th and 8th Grade: Yearbook, Newspaper, Fitness, Environmental Studies, Greek Mythology, Logic 1 and Logic 2, Mathletes, Film/Media, Band, Guitar, Drama, Win with Words, Art 1 and Art 2, Student Government
- Grade 6: Fitness and Foreign Language. Note: Grade 6 students are programmed for physical education 2x during the school day and 2x during the extended day this year. Students who have PE attire/Scholars' dress attire issues due to four PE days are being dealt with on a case by case basis by the PE teachers for locker room use.
- Foreign Language for grade 6 are: American Sign Language, Chinese, Spanish, and Latin.
- High School Extended Day exists in the form of a "Zero" period wherein HS band students come to school earlier than the rest of the high school, which starts at 9:05am. Feedback about the HS schedule from students is very positive.

Arts/Partnerships:

We are continuing our Ballroom Dancing Partnership through American Ballroom Theatre this year, for grade 8.

We received news that we received a grant to finance and continue our Magic Box Productions Partnership this year for grade 8.

Millennium Development is continuing to work with us on many projects including: our Early College Grant, pursuing sports/lifeguard training grants, and creating community service and employment opportunities for our students.

Principal for a Day, Rich Daly, CEO of Broadridge Financial is continuing to partner with us via the following support: facilitating the stock market game directly into our math curriculum, facilitating the roll out of Infinite Campus to improve home/school communication and increase teacher efficiency which will increase student learning, the purchase of shot clocks and additional score boards for our gymnasium, etc.

Brooklyn Golf Center is also still supporting us with free use of their facilities during select times.

Sports!

Fall Sports that we applied for and are likely to get are:

Champs Middle School: Soccer, Fitness, Cross Country

PSAL HS: girls' JV volleyball, varsity volleyball, and Coed bowling

We are self-funding a High School Cross Country Co-Ed Athletic Club.

Golf Night Begins Wednesday September 23rd, 2009:

5pm, grade 6 and 7

6pm, grade 8 and 9

7pm, grade 10 and 11

High School Golf Team 1 night per week at Riis Park.

Swimming: We have great hope that we will be getting something off the ground, or into the water in terms of swimming.

We are investigating access to Far Rockaway's Pool and have received promising news that the St. Francis College Pool may be accessible to us. This could be a great connection that may lead to a water polo club since SFC has a phenomenal Division I Water polo Team.

Instructional Progress/2008-2009 Results:

Our School Earned a Progress Report Grade of A for 2008-2009

It must be noted that we moved from the bottom of our peer group to the top of our peer group in ELA and remained near the top of our peer group in math. Significant is the fact that we increased the percentage of Level 4's from 13% Level 4 to 31% for ELA while increasing our Math Level 4's to 83%. Other notable statistics:

- 100% Level 3's and 4's in ELA and Math for grades 6-8
- Major increase in one year growth: 39% to 64% in ELA and 81% to 87% in Math
- Individual student proficiency rate moved from a negative value per capita to a positive value per capita based upon our preliminary analysis.
- 100% Regents Passing rate for US History and Government, English, Global Studies, Living Environment, Earth Science and Integrated Algebra
- A move from the bottom of our peer group to the top of our peer group

Regents Results June 2009:

- Grade 7 and Grade 10 Living Environment: 100% Passing, 98% above 70%, 86% Average
- Grade 8 Earth Science: 100% Passing, 98% above 70%, 87% Average
- Grade 8 Algebra: 100% Passing, 100% above 70%, 84% Average
- Grade 10 Math B: 56% Passing, 36% above 70%, 67% Average*
- Grade 10 Global Studies: 100% Passing, 97% above 70%, 88% Average
- Grade 9 Physics: 56% Passing, 41% above 70%, 65% Average*
- Grade 9 Geometry: 89% Passing, 84% above 70%, 78% Average
- Grade 9 English: 100% Passing, 96% above 70%, 87% Average
- Grade 9 U.S. History and Government: 100% Passing 98% above 70%, 92% Average

*Signifies that all students enrolled in the course were mandated to take this exam which is a departure from past practices.

Overall these are incredible results.

This data informed class placement, specifically with regard to mathematics this year. It also informed our instructional goals for improvement in physics and geometry.

To Impact Instruction this year, our Professional Development Theme for 2009-2010 is:

“To investigate uses of technology to *improve student learning through greater teacher efficiency* and *home/school communication*”

Our Big Three Goals are:

1. Stay Focused on Instructional Purpose

2. Teach with NYS Standards Based Process/Content:

- We teach children, not subjects. Subjects are just the medium about which we talk, think, and communicate in writing.
- **We teach the PROCESS OF THINKING AND LEARNING**
- **CONTENT MUST BE THE BY-PRODUCT**
- **CONTENT IS THE MEDIUM IN WHICH WE TEACH PROCESS**
- (We are 60% evaluated by state reading and math exams. State reading and math exams are based on state learning standards. Hence, teaching should be based on state learning standards.)

3. Continue to Conduct Individual Coaching:

- An ounce of one on one will make changes in the learner in a far more accelerated fashion than a pound of lecture.
- Lecturers assume students are already equipped with the knowledge of how they best learn and tend to simply disseminate and evaluate. That is not teaching.

If we meet these objectives/goals, then our mission will be accomplished.

Mission Statement:

“To engage in an interactive, culturally rich, highly motivational, interdisciplinary education that exceeds all standard expectations in order to create the leaders of our future generations.”

Mottos:

“By examining yesterday and today,
we will find our respective places in tomorrow’s world.”

“E Pluribus Unum – Scientia est Potentia”

“Out of many, one – Knowledge is Power”

As always, on behalf of the entire staff, thank you for your support which helps us to the best we can for our students. Let’s get to work and have a great year!

Good Night,
Mr. O