



# *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

MS: ToniMarie Sorrentino

HS: Michele Smyth (M, W, F)

October 14, 2009

## **Principal's Report Presented at PTA Meeting by Principal Brian O'Connell**

### General Affairs:

We continue to focus on ensuring that instruction is of a high quality. With the addition of administrative support this year, a literacy staff developer, and two lead teachers we are working closely with our teachers to ensure they have the tools that they need and any assistance they require in using such to deliver high quality instruction. Our goal as always is to teach one child at a time and to focus on making better learners of our students. We have almost observed the entire staff already and we are very pleased at the quality of teaching and learning taking place.

Currently, as a teaching and learning organization, we are focusing on trying to get better at **using technology to improve learning and home school communication**. Some of the ways we intend to do this are:

- We are increasing the number of teachers with websites for easier information flow to and from home.
- We are working with Mr. Pepe, who is painstakingly updating our website with teacher websites linked directly from it.
- Many of the teachers are using laptops to track individual Student SMART goals for easy reference, editing, or email to parents. This is rolling out in a voluntary capacity at this point, but it is catching on. (Students are also tracking goals and action plans on paper templates. Marking Period individual SMART GOALS should be updated and written in student planners by next week since Marking Period 1 ends October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009.)
- We are working with the School Construction Authority to have electric installed in the Internet Café, library, and Technology Enabled Active Learning Classroom as well as the relocation and installation of necessary internet wiring.
- We are working with the Knowledge Network in a partnership to obtain 6 state of the art computers to drive our smart boards for both instruction and smart board training of personnel.
- We are awaiting \$100,000 in RESO A Funds promised by Councilman Ulrich which will finance the purchase of new computers, printers, additional smart boards and digital projectors for our library, internet café, technology classroom, and TEAL classroom.
- We are also working with existing Department of Education tools such as ARIS to ensure our teachers are working in teams, at least monthly to analyze data in order to drive prescriptive instruction.

### **Challenges:**

We are facing several challenges at this point. First, we are working to more efficiently align staff and resources to ensure a high level of support for students and teachers remains in tact while budgets will be crimped due to student register reconciliation. In addition to this, we want to be prepared in the event that there is a budget cut after the election or mid-year, as there was last year. For example: Last year, in January, we had to set aside \$60,000 without warning. This year, our registers fell 17 students shy of the projected enrollment that the budget was based upon. We will have to set aside a total of \$91,000. This is not a drastic surprise and we can absorb a sound percentage of it, but we do need to put ourselves in a position of viability for spring operations. Therefore, the School Leadership Team is dialoguing about the impact of raising student registers in grades 6, 7, and 8 if possible by one student per class. We accepted two high school students today, but we must maintain the integrity of the admissions criteria to ensure that the students can A) be provided appropriate course work B) Be successful in the accelerated coursework. High School students must demonstrate accelerated coursework and/or an 85% average to be considered for a seat offering. If we can find just 10 or 12 students from any remaining waiting list, then we can restore about \$50,000 of funding, while also insulating us from further register loss if students move during the course of the year. This funding will provide us with: insulation in event of a mid-year post election budget cut as it did last year, potential to secure guidance team support part-time or part-year, or worse case scenario to enable us to buy paper, additional materials, technology, etc. as the year unfolds. Making this budget scenario more difficult is the directive that bake sales are no longer permitted during school. The PTA may run one bake sale per month after the students have eaten their respective lunches. This is a big disappointment since many teams relied upon that activity to generate funds which offset uniform costs and things of that nature.

### **Title I Budget Report:**

Each month, the School Leadership Team (SLT) discusses any changes in use of Title I Funding. Likewise such will be reported by the SLT We do have approximately \$2,893 (1% of Title I Budget) in Parent Involvement Title I ARRA Funding, which may only be used to increase parent involvement and we do have approximately \$14,469 of Improving Teacher Quality, which we will receive permission to use for specific professional development purposes after the BEDS survey is completed. All other Title I Funds have been allocated to keeping staff members employed: paying for salaries of Guidance Counselor, part of dean's salary, half of AP's salary, Data/Testing PD provider's salary, Literacy Staff Developer's salary, and part of Lead Teachers' salaries. Contract for Excellence Funds have been used to likewise pay for PD Provider Salaries and we have dedicated approximately \$12,000 of Fair Student Funding to fund our Saturday and after/before school Regents Preparation and Academic Intervention Programs.

### **Grants:**

We have invested in a "Grant Team" which meets weekly to research, plan, write, and apply for grants that will bring in additional funding. Members of this team are: Mr. Coscia, Ms. Rozman, Ms. Luo, and Mr. Hamilton. They have thus far applied for two grants and have others in the works. We have applied, with St. Francis College for a \$2,000,000 grant over four years focused upon adding technology infrastructure, financing college costs of tuition, books, trips, etc. We should know by January if we received this grant.

### **Fundraisers:**

We are currently in the midst of our Candy Sale Fundraiser. Please help get the word out as such funds are very important for our school. The Picture Day just took place and we thank all of the

parents who worked with Ms. Brady to schedule, set up, and coordinate the event. This event went very smoothly and we are deeply appreciative of our volunteers' time and energy.

**Events/Trips:**

“Beach Bonanza” a spirit and team building high school event took place last week. Special thanks to teachers, staff, and parents who organized and set this event up. Specific thanks to Ms. Lyons and our two Ms. Hubbards, who under leadership of Ms. Smyth ran a great celebration.

“Making it Count” College Presentation took place on October first for students and parents.

HS Applications were distributed yesterday and Ms. Rozman conducted a High School Admissions Workshop Tonight.

Cohorts 6A and 6B as well as grade 8 are going to the Museum of Natural History this month.

Author Pedro De Alcantara is visiting on the 21<sup>st</sup> at 9am to meet with grades 6 and 7.

The Band will be marching in the Columbus Day Parade in Howard Beach, led by Mr. Leicht on October 18<sup>th</sup>

The JDRF Fundraiser is taking place on October 25<sup>th</sup> as well at 11am in Flushing Meadows Park

**Custodial Matters:**

We have issues with roof leaking and are awaiting a mold condition test result to come back for our library. Damage is over \$2,000 in books and furniture. A temporary roof is going to be installed as construction issues are worked out and we are being informed that all items will be replaced.

**Monthly Newsletter:**

A monthly newsletter is coming home to notify/remind parents of teams in the building and supports that can facilitate rapid contact and customer service. I am also providing office hours prior to any PTA Meeting via a scheduled appointment, a week in advance with Ms. Brady. There are many teams and points of contact in the building to help children and parents either via paper note, email, phone message, or face to face appointment. We don't want issues that can be addressed immediately to have to wait until a PTA meeting or attempt to surface during a School Leadership Team Meeting that we can handle in a more expeditious fashion. Our goal is to increase customer service. So please take advantage of our access points.

**Edline.com and EZ grade Pro:**

Due to budget issues and compatibility issues, the SLT has voted to move away from the Infinite Campus project and focus on an alternative option which will provide the features we need at this point for 1/3 of the cost.

Please accept our thanks for all of the work you do with your children at home and for all of the support you provide our school, seen and unseen. It is deeply appreciated and needed!

With great respect,

Brian O'Connell  
Principal