

Principal's PA Report 2013-2014

PA Meeting November 13th, 2013

1) Principal's Statement:

Scholars' Academy is a Pioneering Teaching and Learning Organization

Cutting Edge or pioneering does not always imply technological items. Yes, we have rolled out 1:1 ipads to every middle school child and laptops into our high school classes and yes, we are planning a huge purchase of additional ipads and laptops. Yes, we are likely one of the few public schools in the nation to leverage ipads to enhance the fitness training of our students, thereby increasing student "on task"/work-out time in addition to their fitness IQ's. True, our teachers are flipping instruction in their every-day classes, permitting quicker differentiation and a greater maximization of time that may be dedicated in class to more in-depth inquiry and problem solving. It is no lie that the use of internet broadcasting, morning messages, and the week preview gives access to school events to a wider swath of parents and community members than ever before. Finally, it is factual that datacation, pupil path, and google websites and docs are being used to tighten home-school communication while making our school's teaching and learning more transparent than ever. Yet, there are many other practices in our school that are getting cutting edge notoriety.

The word is getting out. Scholars' Academy is a premier school which is constantly visited by entities interested in learning "best practices." Several of our teachers have been recently video recorded to share instructional strategies. Our teacher teams and Friday Teacher Inquiry Work is of great interest to numerous entities looking to share what we are learning here about how to organize in order to evolve student and adult learning alike. Our school is invited to participate in pilots year after year because of its high staff IQ and capacity to engage in adult learning for the betterment of student learning. Numerous staff members have presented and attended

conferences on how to infuse the Common Core Learning Standards intelligently into instruction. Several of our staff sit on multiple advisory panels to help inform instructional and leadership practices.

I believe that any award I receive is an award shared by our entire school staff, student body, and community. In the past few years, I have been blessed to be recognized numerous times largely for the collective hard work of many many people: “Irish Principal of the Year” by the Emerald Society, Educator of the Year in 2011-12 and 2012-2013 by Education Update, a Hometown Hero this past September by the Daily News, next Monday on November 18th I am receiving a Blackboard Award, and on December 11th, all are invited to a celebratory event at Russo’s where I will be honored by the Catholic Teachers Association. Yet, with all of these recent ego-inflating and “cutting edge” accolades, the simple and most significant, measure of success is captured through an interaction that I had on election day this year as I went to vote.

I ran into a community member and a parent who stated something that prompted me to pause and reflect upon the work of our school and its significance to the individual student, staff member, parent, and community as a whole. This one piece of evidence outweighs all of the celebrations and honors that we have earned.

This parent stated to me that he was very grateful of our school because if it wasn’t for the excellence of academics and love of this school that the students demonstrate, many community members would have likely pulled up their stakes and left the community after Hurricane Sandy.

This was a powerful and appreciated statement. This statement means a lot to us because this statement is a truthful measure of the overwhelming connectedness that our students feel for one another and this school. Think about it: This school is the sum of the interactions of the students and adults within and around its work. This is the ultimate recognition of achievement and the ultimate reward for hard work.

Motivated and Moving forward in a post-Hurricane Sandy time, our staff is doubling down its commitment to the work that has helped define who we are as a school. We are continuing our mission to leverage technology to enhance student learning through increased communication and efficiency in order to make every student college and career ready for the 21st Century.

Today, our Progress Report for the high school has been made public. We sent a Pupil Path Announcement to parents with the links. You will find that we have once again performed to a very high level in just about every category, even while wrestling Hurricane Sandy to submission. Our high school improved from an 80.6 score and a 90th percentile ranking to an 85 overall score and a 94 percentile ranking. These data-based results are important in that they help round out the truth about the Scholars' Academy. **I implore you to read the grades and most importantly read the Learning Environment Survey results.** I challenge you to compare our results to the top schools and see how we measure up.

Learning Environment Survey Results

http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2012-13/Survey_2013_Q323.pdf

High School Progress Report

http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2012-13/Progress_Report_2013_HS_Q323.pdf

It is important to remember, however, that even though we are celebrating these numerical results, the vote of sincere support and expression of affection for our school made by our student and parent body after Hurricane Sandy, embodied by the comments made to me on the way to the voting polls, is the greatest progress report or school report card the Scholars' Academy has ever witnessed in my opinion.

Thank you,

Principal O'Connell

2. Physical Education/Athletics:

The Physical Education team is currently getting students ready for their Mid-Assessment FitnessGram. In the remaining few weeks of the Nike iPad Fitness Unit, students will have the opportunity to create their own Fitness Routine with their groups and teach the routine to their peers. A peer assessment will be completed by members of surrounding groups during the performance by following the Nike iPad Peer Assessment Rubric.

Congratulations to the PSAL Girls Volleyball team and Ms. Naples for finishing the regular season with an undefeated record. The girls have the 2nd round of playoffs this Thursday at 5:00pm at Scholars'. Our PSAL Winter season is currently underway. I would like to welcome Michelle Ryan, she is our new HS Swim Coach. The swim team currently practices at Richmond Hill HS. Our Middle School Volleyball team has their first game of the season on Friday November 15th at 10:00am at Scholars. Our Middle Soccer team will take part in the 1st Annual Turkey Bowl Soccer Tournament. This tournament is part of our middle school Peninsula Athletic League. There will be six teams from across Queens that will take part. The tournament will take place on Thursday November 21st at 10:00am at the new turf field located on Beach 32 St.

The Louis J. Acompora Foundation offers a grant program known as the LJA Public Access School Defibrillator Program. Mr. Lunati is looking for the PA to please consider this matching grant program. The cost of the defibrillator is \$1565.90. The PSAL will only give AED units to those programs. Our CHAMPS, Non-PSAL and other MS Sports teams are in desperate need of additional defibrillators.

A special thank you goes out to the PA for purchasing our middle and high school cross country shirts.

2) Parent Teacher Conferences

Teachers have been busy getting ready for the fall Parent Teacher Conferences. We are again offering extended parent teacher conferences on the afternoons of Friday November 15th and Friday November 22nd. These conferences are by appointment only for targeted students. On November 19th we will host the afternoon and evening conferences for all other parents and guardians here at Scholars' Academy.

Based on positive feedback from last year's conferences, we are again using an online appointment scheduling system which was sent to all parents/guardians via Pupil Path just a few hours ago! The link will also be on the scholarsnyc.com landing page by

tomorrow. We will be doing our best to mimic the layout of the conferences we held last year at the Aviator.

We are looking forward to seeing all of you!

3) Science Team Says Thank You:

The science team would like to thank Irene Dougherty for applying for and winning a science laser light show for our whole middle school last week. The show taught students the physics of lasers and also detailed careers that heavily depend on a workforce trained in the use of lasers. The students really enjoyed the show, thank you!

4) Dean's Office:

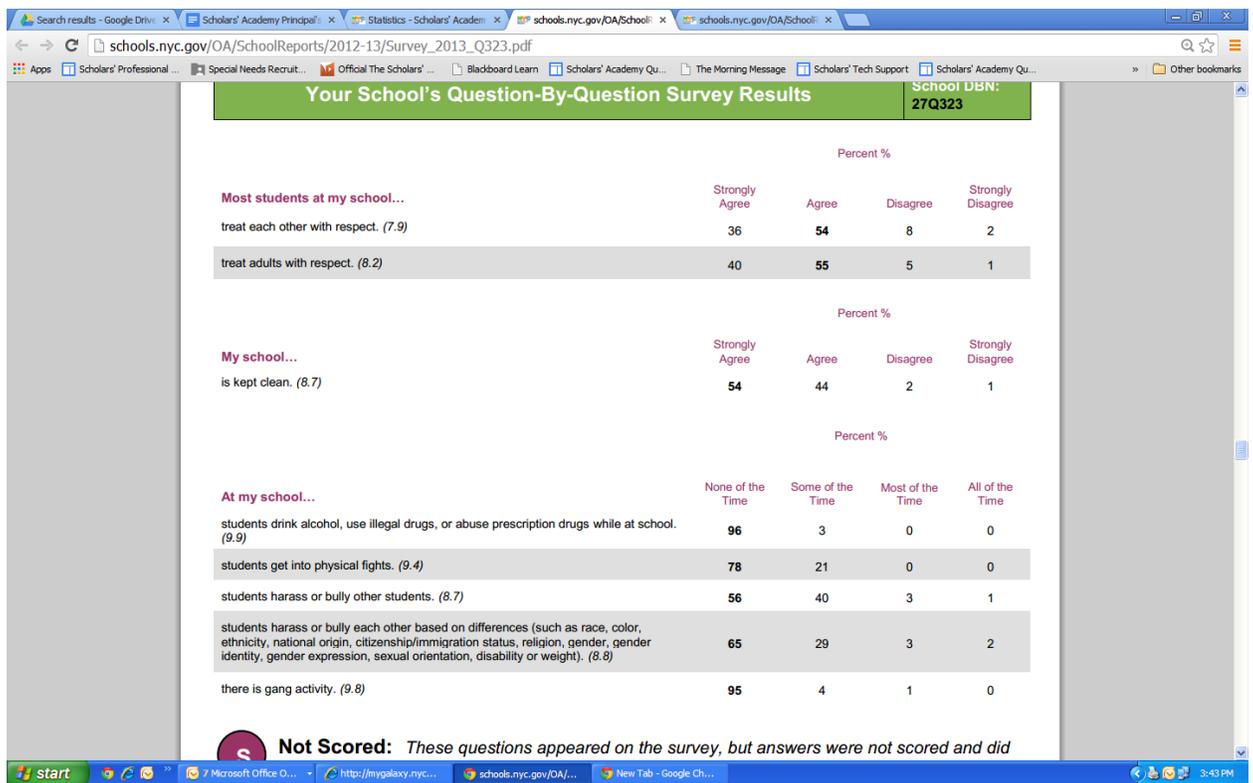
- Students have been reminded that the school yard, during AM arrival, is unsupervised. Students are strongly encouraged to go directly into the building, scan their ID cards, and eat breakfast. Those students who arrive by yellow bus are required to go directly into the building. Students have also been reminded of this as well; they may not go into the school yard after exiting the bus.
- As the weather grows cold, students have been reminded to always bring their coats with them to lunch, when there is outdoor recess. Students taking yellow buses must also wear their coats when boarding.
- Students are also reminded to ensure that they do not display any electronic devices, including cell phones within the vicinity of the school. Students talking on phones risk not hearing motorists while crossing the street. Students displaying electronic devices may bring unwanted attention as well, potentially subjecting themselves to criminal activity during transit to and from school.
- **Broadridge Partnership** - Congratulations to our 19 finalists from 11th grade, out of over 50 entries, who will be visiting Broadridge Financial Solutions Global Headquarters in Edgewood, NY tomorrow, for our yearly Shadow Day event. Students will "shadow" Broadridge Mentors for the day to gather information about what it is like to work in a financial and business oriented workplace, establish contacts through networking, and schedule dates and times for long-distance communication sessions that will give them an opportunity for future connections as they move forward in their careers.

- **Positive Behavior Intervention Supports Impact the School's Learning Environment Survey:**

The dean's office and guidance team are very proud of the incredible learning environment of the Scholars' Academy. The positive school culture of the Scholars' Academy is maintained through numerous proactive measures taken to positively influence the school culture one student at a time. The results of our school learning environment survey demonstrate that these efforts are making an impact on our school culture. The list below are just some of the activities which have positively enhanced our school learning environment. In general, the school's Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) promotes several simple qualities of what it means to be an "Outstanding Scholar." Students are rewarded with "Scholar Dollars" or vouchers that they may redeem if they are witnessed being **Cooperative**, **Hard Working**, **Amiable**, **Respectful**, or **Trustworthy**. Each month or marking period 1 student who exemplifies these characteristics from each homeroom is recognized by the school at an assembly and either a breakfast or a luncheon.

Measures Taken by the Youth Development Team (Dean and Guidance Office)

- The school appointed a "Respect for All liaison:" Dean Brandeis
- The school holds annual discipline code workshops for students
- The school utilizes Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) to encourage positive student to student and staff to student interactions.
- The PBIS Incentive Program is used to reward positive behavior by students.
- The school holds a Safety Town Hall Meeting each year for parents and students wherein multiple issues are addressed such as cyber bullying, face to face bullying, etc.
- Grade Specific Assemblies are also held which focus on topical issues assessed by the dean's office and the grade leader teams.
- The school established a Preventative Conflict Resolution Student Team, which consists of 24 high school student mentors, who push into each middle school homeroom monthly to teach interactive and engaging lessons that address bullying, social media, stress management, etc.
- Teachers work with the Pupil Personnel Team to hold Extended Parent Teacher Conferences each term for students requiring additional supports.
- The school holds workshops for all staff members to assist them in identifying bullying and to understand their responsibilities under Chancellor's Regulation A-832.
- The school secured additional guidance counselors this year, including the support of Project Hope Staff, in addition to workshops performed by the Partnership for Children



5) Guidance

- Scholars' Students won the painting contest on October 19th along Beach 116th for the 1 year Sandy Anniversary sponsored by the Rotary Club and Beach 116th Street Partnership:
 - 1st place prize \$500: Sunehra Of (608) , Sanjid of (607), and Safkat Of (606)
 - 2nd place prize \$250: Catherine of (101), Joshua of (103), and Mariah Of (102)
 - 3rd place prize \$150: Felicia of (103) , Daana of (101), Tiffany of (102), and Karli of (101)
- All students and parents should have received an email through PupilPath from your counselor last week. Here is the contact information for each counselor, by grade:
 - Mr. Moretta - Counselor for Grade 6 - Extension 1111, gmoretta@scholarsnyc.com
 - Ms. Gilgur - Counselor for Grades 7 and 8 - Extension 1113. lgilgur@scholarsnyc.com
 - Ms. Lagombra - Counselor for Grades 9 and 10 - Extension 1114, rlagombra@scholarsnyc.com

- Ms. Villa - Counselor for Grades 11 and 12 - Extension 3203, mvilla@scholarsnyc.com
- Tonight during our meeting, we will have an introduction discussion regarding recovering from Sandy 1 year later. In addition to our guidance team, we will also have representatives from the New York City Department of Temporary Housing available to assist parents
- We will be hosting a school-wide Career Week the week of January 13th. On Friday, January 17th, we will be having a career day and career fair. We are asking parents who would like to participate as Career Ambassadors to contact Ms. Gilgur at lgilgur@scholarsny.com

6) College Office

- The College Office hosted a College Standardized Testing Workshop tonight from 6-7pm. All 9th-11th grade students and parents were invited to attend
- The College Office is excited to announce that we have packaged 32 students to apply to college early, an increase from 22 students last year!

7) Community Service

- New York Cares Orientation for potential volunteers in Rockaway. Rockaway Collegiate High School, 100-00 Beach Channel Drive, Wednesday November 6th, 6:30PM-7:30PM
- Rockaway Waterfront Alliance Community Building Event with Office of Emergency Management. Firehouse 59, 5803 Rockaway Beach Blvd., Saturday, November 9th, 10AM-1PM
- Hurricane Sandy Response: Assist the Action Center in the Rockaways. 57-10 Beach Channel Drive, Saturday, November 16th and November 23rd, 9:00AM-1:30PM
- NY Aquarium with the Action Center, volunteers should bring \$9 for admission. 602 Surf Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11224. Saturday November 23rd and November 30th.

8) Middle School Admissions

- MS Information Sessions & Tours took place on Thursday November 7 starting at 4:30 pm & Friday November 8 at 9:00 am. 935 people attended. Our application is currently available online on our website as well as the power point that was used. The deadline to apply is December 3, 2013.

9) Professional Development Friday Inquiry Sessions

- During October, Friday Inquiry Sessions focused on a three week lesson study cycle. The cycle included looking at student work, designing lessons based on student work, viewing the teacher lesson and providing feedback.

- Each session had clear intended outcomes that focused on improving student work and improving teacher practices. The feedback from the teachers for these sessions was extremely positive and the school will move forward with one to two study group cycles during the year.
- A video crew from the NYC Department of Education videotaped the three week cycles and were very impressed with the teachers and students. The videos will go on the Common Core Library section of schoolsny.gov website