



# Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together

December  
2022

## A Message From the Superintendent



**Dear Scotch Plains–Fanwood Community,**

This time of year is special in our school communities. From donation drives to winter concerts to holiday celebrations, I'm constantly amazed by the joy and generosity that flows endlessly from you: our students, teachers and staff, and families.

I love seeing how Terrill Middle School's compassionate teachers and staff baked treats for the Center for Hope Hospice in Scotch Plains or how student-athletes raked leaves for seniors in Fanwood. These acts of kindness are what make SPF shine.

As the bustle gives way to winter break, I hope each of you will take time to relax. I look forward to coming back on January 3 refreshed and ready to see how you all will continue to shine in 2023.

**Sincerely,  
Dr. Joan Mast  
Superintendent**

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## A Surprise Visit from Wildlife Advocate and TV Host Chris Morgan

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Chris Morgan, a TV personality and wildlife activist, gave students quite a surprise on Dec. 8. Morgan was set to appear virtually via video to speak with SPFHS students about environmental sciences and preservation. Instead of a video call, he flew from Seattle for an in-person chat.

The event started with the help of Zachary Rittner, the AP environmental science teacher at SPFHS and a longtime fan of Morgan's podcast *The Wild with Chris Morgan*.

"It was supposed to be a Zoom call, and he set it up so that he phoned

in like normal but was complaining of some Wi-Fi issues,” Rittner said. “He explained that he wanted to change locations to see if the signal would be better. He then turned off his camera and walked into the auditorium asking, ‘is this better?’ The kids and I went crazy!”

Chris Morgan has long been an advocate for protecting wildlife across the world, from endangered species to the animals in your backyard. In his podcast, Morgan approaches conservation through multiple perspectives to gain a greater understanding of how to preserve the natural environment and the real effects on how we live. A long-time listener of the podcast, Rittner started incorporating *The Wild* into his courses to bring this real perspective to his students.

Their strong connection and dedication to preserving the natural world also led Morgan to make another surprise addition to the event’s agenda: asking Rittner to join him on a boat trip to Svalbard, Norway. Rittner will join as a special guest over the summer to help study and record episodes of *The Wild* on polar bears, whales, and other species in the Arctic.



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## SPFHS Italian Students Go to College for the Day

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SPFHS seniors studying Italian recently experienced Montclair State University’s World Languages program firsthand, thanks to their teacher Carmela Lambert.

Lambert took a group of students to her former alma mater to learn how they could apply their knowledge of Italian after high school. During the visit, the students had the chance to interact with

Lambert's former teachers.

college students and meet some of

Lambert has taught Italian in Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools for 20 years, starting at the high school level, then rotating among various grades and district schools. She instilled her passion for the subject in her students.

“I wanted to bring these kids to Montclair because I wanted to show them where Italian could take them, especially as they are about to embark on a new chapter of their lives,” said Lambert. “It’s not just about going on a college track either. Through the program, they learned about the 60-plus Italian companies in New Jersey alone that they could join after attending community colleges or tech programs. This field trip was about showing them opportunities.”

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## 9 SPFHS Students Accepted to Region II Honors Choirs

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We are pleased to announce that nine exceptional student vocalists who auditioned to the Region II Honors Choirs were accepted. The students were selected based on their scores from over 375 students who auditioned.

Four of the nine placed in the top 10 in their voice part, with junior Ashley Hoberman receiving the number one score of the Soprano 1 section for the second year in a row.

The mixed choir will perform under Dr. Andrew Kreckmann the Director of Choral Activities at Sacramento State University. Conducting the Treble Chorus will be New Jersey native Ms.

Julianna LoBiondo, who currently serves as a teaching fellow in the College of Music while pursuing her PhD in music education at the University of North Texas. **The concert will be on Sunday, Jan. 29 at 3 p.m. at Monroe Township High School.**

### Region II 2023 Mixed Choir Students:

Graeme Daniskas (Junior)- #3 score of the Tenor 1 Section

Ashley Hoberman (Junior) - #1 score of the Soprano 1 Section

### Region II 2023 Treble Choir Students:

Ash Mattos (Senior) - #7 score of the Soprano 1 Section

Gayatri Phatak (Freshman) - Alto 1 Section

Juilee Joshi (Freshman) - Alto 1 Section

Emersyn Teicher (Junior) - Alto 2 Section

Anusha Magdum (Sophomore) -  
Soprano 1 Section

Isabella Rocha (Sophomore) - Soprano 1  
Section

Hannah Solomon (Junior) - #8 score of  
the Soprano 1 Section

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## Featured Events

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Dec. 23 – Single Session Day

Dec. 24 – Jan. 2 – Schools Closed: Enjoy Winter Break!

Jan. 5, 8 – 9 pm – Board of Education Annual Organization Meeting in  
Admin Offices

Jan. 10, 7 – 9 pm – Grade 8 Parents’ Night in Auditorium

Jan. 12, 7 – 9 pm – Terrill Grades 5 & 6 Band/Chorus Concert

Jan. 13, 7 – 9 pm – McGinn Bingo Night

Jan. 16 – Schools Closed: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan. 19, 8 pm – Board of Education Regular Public Meeting

*Full calendar of events: [Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools /  
Calendar \(spfk12.org\)](http://scotchplainsfanwood.org)*

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