



Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together

May
2024

A Message From the Superintendent

**Dear Scotch Plains–Fanwood
Community,**

The end of the school year is always a special time to reflect on the progress and growth of our students and school communities. With just a few weeks left before summer break, let's celebrate the strides we've made, together!

Marvel at the creative works of our students at their art shows and listen to the sounds of our spring choral and concert performances. Cheer on our students at the final games of the season or on their field days. And, finally, congratulate the Class of 2024 as they prepare for the culmination of their hard work and dedication at graduation. The calendar certainly is full this June with so many examples of SPF students shining and making us all proud!



Amid the end-of-the-year celebrations, we are also looking ahead to the future of SPF, with a bond referendum scheduled for Sept. 17. We held a virtual community forum on May 16 to inform and educate the community about how a successful referendum would bring a new elementary school to our district, air conditioning and other upgrades across all our schools. If you were unable to watch the forum live, please consider viewing the [recording online here](#). Keep an eye out for additional in-person and virtual forums to be held in August and September.

Thank you for making the last weeks of school a reflection of the success of the 2023–24 school year!

Sincerely,
Dr. Joan Mast
Superintendent of Schools

SPFHS Hall of Fame Honors Distinguished Graduates

SPFHS was pleased to induct 13 impressive alumni, including an Emmy Award-winning director/producer, the nation's first Muslim-American judge, a former NFL player, and a former Scotch Plains mayor, into the school's Hall of Fame on May 9. The inductees were honored at a special ceremony in the SPFHS Auditorium, led by former Governor Donald DiFrancesco, also a SPFHS Hall of Fame member.



Barbara Adams Austin '57 – Founder of the Fanwood Nature Preserve & professional artist, gardener and writer

George Falkowski '78 – NY Emmy Award winner in sports and TV news

Daniel Catullo III '90 – Emmy Award-winning director and producer

Peter Kuran '74 – Academy Award winner for developing a process to restore color film

Michael Richard Jackson '65 – Medical innovator, entrepreneur and inventor of PureWick

Nate Jones '00 – Rhodes Scholar nominee and former NFL player

Gene Schiller '50 – Former athletic director at SPFHS and Scotch Plains Township Director of Recreation

Hon. Zahid N. Quraishi '93 – First Muslim-American judge in U.S. history

Richard Wetherald '54 – Research associate in the field of greenhouse

warming; named Meteorologist Professional in 2007

Erroll Southers '74 – Professor of the Practice in National Home Security, Director of the Safe Communities Institute and Homegrown Violent Extremism Studies at the University of Southern California

Mike Marino '81 – Actor and comedian inducted into the NJ Comedy Hall of Fame; USO Bob Hope Comedy Award winner

Mauro Checchio '42 – Former Mayor of Scotch Plains, instrumental in founding a Kean University Campus in China

Rich Feinberg '79 – Long and decorated career in the television industry

Nettingham Fifth Grader Earns Award of Merit

Congratulations, Giovanna Flecca! Giovanna, a fifth-grade student at Nettingham, received the Award of Merit for her poem “Hopeful Every Day”. She was honored at the New Jersey PTA Reflections Award ceremony in Burlington County and was the only award winner from Union County.

To listen to her poem, watch the [Board of Education meeting from March](#). She reads her poem at the 7:20 mark.



Meet the Board: Sonali Barve

Committees: Policy, Curriculum, and Wellness and Equity Committees

Sonali was a middle and high school mathematics teacher in the district. She is currently a stay-at-home mom to her son and hopes to get back in the classroom in the future. She keeps her hand in teaching by tutoring in mathematics.

Her son is in PreK 3 at Coles Elementary School, which was also the elementary school she attended!



Why did you become a board member?

I am passionate about the role that schools play in our students' lives, and I wanted to be involved in shaping our school district.

What do you enjoy most about being on the Board of Education?

I enjoy getting to help shape the school district and giving back to my community.

What are the biggest challenges?

Currently, we need to focus on getting more space to keep our class sizes where they have always been, and therefore, the Sept. 17 referendum is vital to maintain the quality of our school district.

SPFHS Black Student Union Visits the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington D.C.

The Black Student Union (BSU) immersed itself in African American history and culture in a trip to Washington D.C. The group visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) along with students in the AP African American Literature course and members of the Social Justice Club.



The BSU opened the trip to other SPFHS students and clubs. Their message: the club welcomes *all* who support and wish to uplift minority groups.

"The trip expanded the knowledge of our students," said April Chestang, Student Assistance Specialist for Diversity and Equity. "Even if it's not their own history, the students see that it's a part of American history, and that strengthens our bond."

“

The Afro-futurism exhibit really made me reflect. It brought to light many different aspects of that aesthetic and the dystopian nature of being black in America.

- SEQUOIA, SENIOR
PRESIDENT, BLACK STUDENT UNION

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NMAAHC infuses symbolism from the outside, in. The building's shape is inspired by the crowns used in Yoruban art from West Africa. Patrons of the museum begin with slavery, where the dark environment evokes the same emotions that African American's felt.

"As we moved through the Civil Rights floors, you see the struggles African Americans had just to prove they were equal," said Chestang. "That section hit me and the chaperones hard. We paused to reflect that many of these fights persist today, and we talked about what we can do to move beyond this point."

Sequoia, a senior and president of BSU, found it surreal to see the trip come to fruition, describing it as a goal during her time in the BSU. She learned about African American's impact on pop culture, from television to movies, clothing, music and sports.

"The Afro-futurism exhibit really made me reflect," she said. "It brought to light many different aspects of that aesthetic and the dystopian nature of being black in America."

Coles Elementary School Fourth Graders Place at the World Finals Odyssey of the Mind Competition

Six fourth graders from Coles Elementary School placed fourth in the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals hosted at Iowa State University. The team competed against 56 teams from schools across the nation including 15 international teams from Poland, China, Japan, Singapore, Netherlands, and Germany. The team received a permanent spot on the OOTM leaderboard, an honor only given to the top six teams in each category.



Odyssey of the Mind is a global competition for kids from grade 3 going up to high school. Students learn how to develop and use their natural creativity to solve problems and think outside of the box.

The team collaborated to create an 8-minute-long play adapted from the book, *Wind of the Willows*. Students wrote the script and built detailed stage props using recycled materials. The competition includes a spontaneous section where the team is given random objects and needs to imagine creative applications.

Congratulations to Alyssa Koganti, Arhaan Malviya, Myra Masand, Rudra Mair, Vihaan Malviya, and Zia Shah!



Staff Appreciation Celebration

The Scotch Plains–Fanwood Board of Education held its annual celebration to honor retirees and faculty/staff for their years of service. Join us in congratulating all the dedicated staff recognized!



Retirees: Christine Bumiller, Marie Concepcion, Donna Gomez, David Heisey, Lea Kaluzny, Linda Klehm, Ellen Makely, Lisa McNally, Cynthia Pfirrmann, Rosemary Piccola, Tracey Starker, Mary Verlangieri



20 Years: Karen Benovengo, Patrick Boyle, Patrick Cahill, Francis Capron, Kimberlee Ciemniecki, Jason Cross, Jennifer Danberry, Monique Gilbert, Donna Gomez, Kevin Holloway, Terri Anne Kitts, Michelle Kolbeck, Lauren Mazzarella, Deborah Mehl, Kelli Miller, Amanda Moser,



25 Years: Gina Cammarano, Amy Cavalli, Kristy Donohue, Kevin Ewing, Ann Fitzgerald, Raffaele Gerace, David Heisey, Suzanne Friedrichs, Kenneth Hernandez, Catherine Hoffman, Kristine Iarussi, Karen Joseph

Beth Polito-Hickey, Robert Rafferty, Nicole Sikoriak, Tracey Starker, Matthew Tiedemann



30 Years: Damiano Binetti, Carol Hutchison, Andrea Karanik, Marisa Pucci



35 Years: Laura Smoot

Scotch Plains–Fanwood Board of Education Student Recognition

Scotch Plains–Fanwood Board of Education held its annual student celebration on May 21 to honor the seniors and some hardworking and talented SPFHS students. Congratulations on these accomplishments!

- **Valedictorian:** Daniel Wong
- **Salutatorian:** Diti Nainwal
- **Culmen Awards:** Taylor Clement, Sara Lehman, Michelle Nikolaev, Emily Park, Aidan Route, Nicholas Skawinski, Ashley Steer, Emersyn Teicher, Emma Vieira, Mackenzie Virgil
- **Paper Mill Playhouse Rising Star Nomination:** David Gomez – Outstanding Performer in a Leading Role, Ashley Hoberman – Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role, Olivia Gomez – Honorable Mention
- **Region II Honors Choir:** Graeme Daniskas, Hannah Solomon



National Merit Commended Students: Alexander Allegra, Emily Juckes, Diti Nainwal, Benjamin Nathan, Emily Park



Union County School Board Association Recognition – Unsung Hero: Jacob Hathcock



Scholar Athletes: Timothy Ennis, Emily Park, Billie Rose Sherratt



Moonglowers: Daniel Wong, Audrey Coyne, James Gardella, Elizabeth Agnello, Elorie Howell, Aarav Mathur



Featured Events

See the full calendar of events at spfk12.org

June 3, 6–7:30 p.m. – Evergreen Art Show

June 3, 6 – 7:30 p.m. – School One Art Show

June 3, 7 – 8:30 p.m. – Terrill Grades 7 & 8 Spring Concert

June 4, 6:30 – 7:45 p.m. – Nettingham Choral Concert Grades 5 & 6

June 4, 8 – 9:45 p.m. – Nettingham Choral Concert Grades 7 & 8

June 5, 5 – 7 p.m. – Brunner Art Show

June 5, 7 – 9 p.m. – SPFHS Meet the Coaches Night in HS Auditorium and New Gym

June 6, 1:30 – 2:55 p.m. – Evergreen Faculty vs. 4th Grade Kickball Game

June 6, 7 – 9 p.m. – SPFHS Senior Music Recital at HS

June 7, 9 – 10 a.m. – Coles 4th Grade Celebration of Learning

June 7, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. – School One 4th Grade Picnic

June 7, 12:30 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. – Nettingham 8th Grade Field Day

June 10, 7 – 8:30 p.m. – McGinn Spring Concert at Terrill

June 11, 1:15 – 2:30 p.m. – Terrill Grade 5 Field Day

June 11, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. – SPFHS Senior Picnic

June 11, 7 – 8 p.m. – Coles Spring Concert at Terrill

June 12, 11:50 a.m. – 12:50 p.m. – McGinn Helping Hands Picnic

June 13, 7 – 8 p.m. – Evergreen Spring Concert

June 14, 6:30 – 11:30 p.m. – SPFHS Senior Prom at Imperia

June 14, 9 – 11 a.m. – Terrill Grade 8 Awards Assembly

June 14, 9:30 – 11 a.m. – Evergreen Celebration of Learning

June 14, 1:15 – 2 p.m. – Terrill Grade 8 Field Day

June 14, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Brunner 4th Grade Picnic

June 12, 13, 14 – Single Session HS ONLY!

June 17, 9 – 10 a.m. – McGinn Celebration of Learning

June 17, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. – School One 4th Grade Celebration of Learning

June 17, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Nettingham 5th Grade Field Day

June 17, 18 – Single Session Day for all students

June 18, 9 a.m. – 11 a.m. – Nettingham 8th Grade Award Ceremony

June 18 – Last day of School/Graduation

June 20, 8 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting



www.spfk12.org • (908) 232 6161
512 Cedar Street, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076



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