

Secaucus Public Schools  
*Superintendent's Report*

## **Mid-Year State-of-the-Schools Report**

In keeping with the Board's 21<sup>st</sup> Century vision to utilize our limited funds to support student achievement as our first priority, the Secaucus District is moving into a prominent position by providing our teaching staff and our students with the programs and resources they need to accomplish this vision.

To this end, we are pleased to be able to report that all of the programs and initiatives that were presented to the public in the 2009-2010 School District Budget have been put in place or will be completed before the close of the school year.

At a recent County meeting, Technology Administrators met to review the procedures for developing their Technology Plans. It was clear from the discussion that Secaucus is ahead of the curve, as we currently have in place a number of technological advancements. For example, the 21st Century design and deployment of teacher web sites has occurred. Installation of Interactive Whiteboards in every classroom has been actualized. Installation of "Safari Montage Video Servers" with implementation of "ClassLink-OnTrack" to permit teachers to create/share online lesson plans, and the creation of a 24/7 Support Forum for staff have been accomplished. "Synchron-Eyes" software, permitting teachers to view student computers and redirect one student's work to the entire class as a teaching tool, has been employed. Design and deployment of "Docuvault" software that allows staff, with no specialized training, to post all school/district documents online, and upgrading of our Help Desk Solution with the

migration to “School-Dude” software have been put into operation. The “Acellus Learning System” for individualized online work in Math and Science has been implemented at the secondary level. A digital surveillance system for enhanced security at the high school has been installed. Additionally, a district-wide upgrade of e-mail to the industry standard Microsoft Exchange has occurred, and we have upgraded our District Website, [sboe.org](http://sboe.org), to meet the increased information demands of the district and the public

## High School

**Technology:** The new computer lab for faculty is open. It has 14 workstations where teachers can prepare their online lesson plans and do research on the Internet. There is also a fully functional Promethean Board where teachers can become familiar with the technology and collaborate with their colleagues. Teachers and their classes use the newly-outfitted Media Center Lab every day.

**Assessment:** The PTS3 test has been administered to all basic skills classes. Grade 9, 10, 11 students took full-length mock SAT tests. The two-fold goal of this testing was to expose students to the test and assess our curriculum. Our Guidance Department, in conjunction with the Princeton Review, offered an SAT prep course. The turnout exceeded expectations and we will offer an additional session.

**Professional Development:** Princeton Review conducted professional development for Language Arts and Mathematics teachers. Nancy Schultz from Montclair State University will begin work with our Mathematics faculty to explore a comprehensive plan for mathematics instruction. Representatives from “Class-Link” are collecting input from staff to enable them to merge our newly-developing online curriculum with State Standards.

**Enhanced Communications:** The ability to share the many accomplishments of our teachers and students with the community in a timely way is a critical component of good public relations. Debbie Gerbasio, our Media Academy Facilitator, is working with students to maintain a steady flow of video reports on Cable Channel 34, highlighting programs and events in our district. Denise Cunningham, our Media & Library Chairperson, is also the Editor-in Chief of a new monthly district newsletter. This will ensure that parents and residents receive a timely distribution of school-related news each month. The decision to publish the newsletter online using the district web site and to send it to parents via e-mail will save the district over \$10,000 in printing and mailing costs, as well as saving hundreds of reams of paper. Copies for residents will be available at public locations.

## **Middle School**

**Technology:** 100% of classroom teachers are using on-line lesson plans. Every classroom is equipped with either a Promethean or Smart Board. All staff has migrated to the new sboe.us e-mail system.

**Assessment:** All Grade 7 and 8 students were tested in Language Arts and Mathematics using the PTS3 (Progress Toward Success) to prepare them for the NJASK testing. Teachers met during several professional days to plan for meeting individual student needs.

**Programs:** New Grade 7 and 8 Math Program, Prentice Hall Publishers, was purchased and implemented. The S.A.I.L. Program (Student Assistance in Learning) is up and running under the direction of Stacey Lee. The students are involved with community projects, some of which are featured in the new district newsletter. Safari Montage capability was added to all classrooms to control/monitor the viewing of media by students.

**Professional Development:** "Standards Solution" educational consultants assisted teachers to focus on standardized testing and alignment with curriculum. "IDE Portal" is assisting teachers with the Problem Based Learning initiative of the Department of Education. "ACELLUS" training for teachers promotes an interactive teaching approach. Continuous staff training by "Classlink" has been provided to support online lesson planning.

**Middle School Separation from High School:** 104 new lockers were ordered for middle school students. Physical barriers and signs are in place to encourage separation. A new bus route was added for middle school students with different pick-up and drop-off points so as to discourage intermingling of the pre-adolescent and adolescent student groups where possible.

## **Elementary Schools**

**Technology Involvement by Coaches:** Our Technology Coaches have assisted with the following: Pre-K to 6 training of Classlink, Promethean Boards, Safari Montage, as well as the creation of lessons and tests using Promethean Software, scheduling, administering and assessing data from NJPASS, NJASK, CPAA and PTS tests, and using ACCELUS Software with at-risk reading students.

**Educational Involvement by Coaches:** They have focused on at-risk students using specialized resources for grades K-3 Literacy and for Grades 3 to 6 in Math. They assisted with differentiated reading-level

instruction within primary classes and modeled lessons in the general and special education classrooms. Their job is also to administer benchmark, placement, baseline and fluency tests to determine proficiency levels. They assisted the Elementary Reading Supervisor with scheduling Basic Skills Extended-Day and Jump-Start Programs.

**Professional Development:** Coaches actively participated in the preparation and implementation of year-long professional development programs, acted as primary contact for consultants, and conducted parent workshops on technology and assisted with support.

**Programs:** Several new programs have been added that are proving to be highly successful, including “En-Vision Mathematics” at the sixth grade level, designed to transition our students into middle school. “Reading Street,” a reading comprehension program, is specifically designed to help grade K-2 teachers engage all students in successful literacy instruction. The program is aligned to State Standards. The most significant educational impact at the elementary level has been provided by the installation and use of Promethean Boards and Safari Montage video streaming in each classroom. The web-based interactivity appeals to our new generation of students who easily relate to the graphic nature of videos and the Internet in their daily lives. It provides teachers with over 12,000 lessons all aligned to State standards. Students become engaged because of their ability to interact in real-time with lessons and respond to content. During four months of use, teachers who have become proficient say they would never return to the “old way of teaching.” Some who were initially apprehensive have become re-energized by the enthusiasm of their students.

## **Math, Science and Technology Initiatives**

**Mathematics:** Both middle and high school mathematics departments are preparing to meet the challenge of the State’s new Algebra I testing program, which requires Algebra I students to pass a State test administered in May of 2011 through their newly-acquired texts and software.

**Science:** Teachers at all levels are engaging in the PRISM (Professional Resources In Science and Math) Program to better prepare themselves in delivering the latest strategies in Science Education. PRISM is a grant-funded model program offered at Montclair State University offering workshops on a variety of science-related areas.

**Technology:** The most recent releases of Microsoft Office products have been made available to teachers and office staff. This promotes a sustained level of efficiency at minimal cost. Secaucus

technology teachers provided in-house workshops for office workers, secretaries, clerks and others in the use of Microsoft Word and other new components in the Office 2007 release. An older e-mail system was converted to a more stable and secure version of Microsoft Exchange. Staff training to make the transition seamless for our employees and the community at large accompanied this rollout.

## **Special Services Initiatives**

***Instruction and Assessment:*** The Extended Pre-School Program was provided with a teaching assistant to support special education pre-school students as per their IEP's. "Creative Curriculum" instructional materials, endorsed by the DOE, were provided to the Pre-School Disabilities Program, which aligns the Special Education curriculum with regular education pre-school. Professional Development was also provided for pre-school disabilities teachers and teachers of regular pre-school. Middle and high school teachers participated in professional development for Standards Based Instruction to improve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Standard Solutions offered demonstration lessons in NJASK/HSPA Math.

***Instruction/Climate and Culture:*** A Certified BCBA (Behaviorist) provided the District's Autism programs with guidance and behavioral advice for classified students with behavioral challenges. A Transition/Career Exploration Internship Consultant was hired to collaborate with Special Services, Academy Facilitators, Guidance and regular education staff to provide students with internship activities and experiences to prepare them with work-force skills.

***Technology:*** Technology in the form of hardware and software to support the instruction of students with disabilities in both inclusion and self-contained regular education settings. An independent software consultant with expertise in Assistive Technology will be working with teachers to assure consensus on any purchases. All program software, including reading, literacy, math, life skills and computer peripherals, will be selected based on their ability to assist special education students attain independent living and academic skills.

We are most appreciative of the resources that the community has provided to the schools through the approved 2009-2010 School Budget, and to the awarding of additional state and federal funds. To that end, we are diligently working in support of our District Goals and as such providing a world class 21<sup>st</sup> Century education.