



Orange Township Public Schools

Gerald Fitzhugh, II, Ed.D
Office of the Superintendent



June 24, 2020

Good Day Orange Public School District Community,

The continued health, safety, and well being of our school community are the top priorities of the Board of Education, administration, faculty, and staff within the Orange Township Public School District. I want to take this moment to thank all of our stakeholders during these times. As your Superintendent of Schools, I stay steadfast in my dedication to the students, staff, and community within Orange Township.

Beginning on July 1, 2019, the mantra of our school district became moving from “Good to Great.” This mantra means just this; we are going to become a great educational institution. From the Superintendent’s Meet and Greet on August 22, 2019 to the Superintendent’s Forum on September 3, 2019, I laid out a plan for the new beginning of the Orange Township Public Schools. We are moving towards accomplishing all of our goals. Throughout the year, we revisited the goals of the district and the importance of stakeholder support and feedback. I am going to provide you with an example of what we have already done in the area of Curriculum and Instruction to begin this trajectory to becoming a high performing district.

Several days ago, I received the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) report for School Year 2019-2020. Let me take this moment to share with you what NJQSAC is: The New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC) is the Department of Education's monitoring and district self-evaluation system for public school districts. The system shifts the monitoring and evaluation focus from compliance to assistance, capacity-building and improvement. It is a single comprehensive accountability system that consolidates and incorporates the monitoring requirements of applicable state laws and programs and complements federally required improvements. The system focuses on monitoring and evaluating school districts in five key components that, based on research, have been identified to be key factors in effective school districts. These components are Instruction & Program, Fiscal, Governance, Operations, and Personnel.

I am pleased to announce, that the Orange Public School District obtained a score of 83% in the area of Curriculum and Instruction. In SY 2018-2019 and as reported to the Board of Education earlier in SY 19-20 our score in Curriculum and Instruction was 74%. Throughout the course of the school year, the Curriculum Directors, Supervisors, teachers, and I embarked on a revision process of all district curriculum. In that particular area of the report, we received a perfect score 40 out of 40. We have a lot to celebrate as the NJDOE had expert pedagogues reviewing our curriculum with a fine-tooth comb. I am pleased that we have exceeded the 80% in the area of Curriculum and Instruction. This is a huge accomplishment. The following statement was sent in a letter from the New Jersey Department of Education from Paula Bloom Acting Director Office of Field Services Coordination Division of Field Services:

I am pleased to inform you that your district has satisfied at least 80% of the weighted indicators in each of the five areas of the NJQSAC review process and has been designated as “high performing.” The Commissioner will recommend to the State Board of Education that your district be certified as providing a thorough and efficient system of education, for a period of three years or until the next NJQSAC review. Congratulations on this accomplishment.

On March 17, 2020, our school district went to full virtual learning. This experience was one that was not expected but for the health and safety of all staff and students it was certainly necessary. I want to take this opportunity to thank our parents that served in several capacities during the pandemic. In addition, to the staff, I want to thank you as well. We experienced a learning curve with distance learning but as evidenced through our daily common planning periods, each of you were dedicated to making the instructional experience for students stronger each day. We launched our initial At-Home Instructional Plan on March 17th thinking that we would return on March 30th to our buildings. As a result of the Governor’s order for schools to remain closed through April 20th, we restructured our initial At-Home Instructional Plan. The Board of Education gave me alongside the Curriculum Directors the opportunity to present the Re-Launched Plan at the April Regular Board Meeting. As a result of that meeting, each school launched parent informational sessions that were held in English, Spanish, and Haitian

Creole. The intent was to ensure that all families understood our practices via academics as well as self-care. I am pleased that we had many parents on our virtual calls. The questions garnered and the sense of community gathered truly made me proud.

On May 4, 2020, Governor Murphy provided guidance that all school buildings would remain closed through the end of the school year. With that being said, we continued as a district virtual parent meetings as well as check ins by our support staff. We continued to update the COVID-19 Master Resource Plan so families continued to have support. To add, we just updated the COVID-19 Master Resources Plan on June 19th and as always the plan is located inside the COVID-19 Resources Tab on our website. Throughout the summer, we will continue to update our COVID-19 Master Resource Plan.

Throughout the emergency school closure, we had 13 Chromebook kiosks which allowed our students multiple opportunities to receive a Chromebook for instruction or drop off a device if there was an issue with it. We continued our Chromebook kiosks through the end of June as instruction continued through the last day of school. I will like to announce that during the summer, as virtual summer school programs will commence in a matter of days, we will continue to have Chromebook kiosks weekly to provide additional supports for our students. We want to provide every opportunity for our students to succeed. Now, you may ask about Internet/Wi-Fi capabilities, Comcast emailed me a few days ago as I have requested additional support weekly for our students throughout the summer. I am pleased to share that Internet Essentials through Comcast will continue through December 31, 2020. If there is any added support needed during the summer regarding connectivity, please email distancelearningplanquestions@orange.k12.nj.us so we can provide you with ongoing support.

During the month of June, our early childhood and elementary schools conducted virtual moving up ceremonies for our students in grades pre-kindergarten four, kindergarten, and grade seven. I pledged to you that we would recognize our students and that is what happened. We wanted to make our students feel whole but also our staff. I know the staff missed the students immensely so what better way than to have these great celebrations.

On June 18th, the Orange High School Administration planned a drive through processional for the Senior Class of 2020. What a great way to celebrate our Seniors. The full community was out in force to recognize and congratulate our Seniors. With the pandemic, we wanted to make sure they had a lasting memory which we hope will live within them for many years to come. As a reminder, the virtual graduation will be featured on Comcast Channel 35 at 6:00 PM on June 25th as well as on the district's You Tube Channel. Please use this link <https://youtu.be/Bhsh2uG-DJs> to view. We also placed the link on our district website www.orange.k12.nj.us under latest news and announcements as well as on the Emergency Pop Up as you enter into the website. Also, I want to extend congratulations to our senior class of 2020 for garnering over 18 million dollars in academic scholarships!

As shared previously, our nation has certainly been through a very trying time. Our district provided opportunities to discuss political and racial discourse in the wake of the deaths of Broenna Taylor, Ahmad Arbery, and most recently George Floyd. As educators, it was important that we understand the complexity of our reality and that of our students. It was important to teach our students the history behind their identity, the language behind their culture, and the geography from where they came. The conversations held with social studies teachers district-wide allowed for us as a district to provide activities and discourse that must continue throughout the summer and into next school year. I am appreciative to our families for understanding that as a district we had to educate our students on the current climate in our nation.

I want to provide some updates as it relates to next school year. In addition, I want to thank the Board of Education for understanding my vision for the district based on metrics that as previously mentioned will move our district from "Good to Great."

I will like to announce the district restructuring plan for SY 20-21:

- 1) Central School will re-open as its own standalone school. The school will house Grades K-2 with its own principal.
- 2) STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges will become our second high school in Orange. STEM will no longer be considered a program out of Orange High School.
- 3) The Newcomers ELL Program will return to Oakwood, Rosa Parks, and Lincoln Avenue Schools. The Newcomers building located at 123 Cleveland Street will become an Early Childhood Center.
- 4) Rosa Parks Community School will be restructured to become a Grade 3-7 building.

I will like to announce the following administrative reassignments for SY 20-21:

- 1) Ms. Denise White will assume the principalship of the New Central Building that will house Grades K-2.

- 2) Dr. Joseph-Charles will remain as the principal of Rosa Parks Community School but the configuration will change. Rosa Parks Community School will house Grades 3-7 and no longer Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 7.
- 3) Dr. Erica Stewart will assume the principalship of the Twilight Program housed out of Orange High School.
- 4) Mr. Dana Gaines will assume the principalship of Oakwood Avenue Community School.
- 5) Dr. Cayce Cummins will assume the principalship of our new Early Childhood Center housing Pre-Kindergarten 3 and 4.

Principal interviews for Orange Preparatory Academy and STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges will take place this summer.

I want to provide summer breakfast and lunch locations for Summer 2020. Students throughout the township as shared during the emergency school closure are encouraged to take part in this program. Students can report to any school on the list. The suggestion is to select the school closest to your home to ensure the continued health and safety of our children.

- 1) ORANGE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER
- 2) FOREST STREET ELEMENTARY
- 3) PARK AVENUE SCHOOL
- 4) ORANGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY
- 5) ROSA PARKS COMMUNITY SCHOOL
- 6) HEYWOOD AVENUE SCHOOL
- 7) LINCOLN AVENUE SCHOOL

The summer meal program will run as follows at the schools above:

1. **Dates of operation:** June 29, 2020 - August 20, 2020
2. **Days of operation:** Monday - Friday
3. **Pickup time:** 7:30pm - 1:00pm

As you know, I will continue to communicate with you throughout the summer. It is important to keep these lines of communication open. I ask that you continue to visit our website as well as the district Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. We will have postings evident all summer long. To that end, I want both the staff and families to decompress a bit as this has been a trying time for all of us. Thank you for your continued commitment to the Orange Township Public School District. I look forward to continuing our work throughout SY 2020-2021.

Educationally yours,

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Superintendent of Schools