



# Orange Township Public Schools

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Office of the Superintendent



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## The Orange Township Public School District Reviewing the Accomplishments of our Students and Staff

(Orange, NJ, August 9, 2022) The last few years have shown remarkable resilience and success for the students and staff of the Orange Township Public School District. This past year SY 2021-2022, was a year in which the District returned to full in-person instruction at all our schools, following a detailed plan outlined during a Town Hall Meeting before the opening of schools. In addition, with utmost transparency, survey input from staff and families were presented and incorporated into a detailed plan to mitigate exposure and remediation of the Coronavirus.

At the Board Meeting on July 13, 2021, the Superintendent of Schools, Gerald Fitzhugh, II, Ed.D., presented the District's five-year strategic plan coined "Moving into Greatness." This document outlines our ambitious academic and social-emotional goals that will assist the development of the whole child. With the plan came an expectation that the school communities, educators, and staff will continue to innovate, as this is a living plan. The 2021-2022 school year proved that the plan has a solid foundation. We were acknowledged for academic achievements and were not adversely hindered by the pandemic.

The Orange Public Schools is committed to involving all stakeholders in the decision making process at all levels and ensuring their voices are heard. Through District Parent and Student Councils meetings held monthly, parents and students representing all district schools are able to share their ideas and concerns directly with Superintendent Fitzhugh. Barriers in communication are removed by ensuring all school and district level parent communications are translated in Spanish and Haitian Creole. The Office of Innovation's Community Engagement Office continues to nurture established community partnerships and create new partnerships to support programming at all schools and increase family engagement with resources in our greater community. Bilingual/ESL and Special Education parent groups are held monthly to provide resources and support to our families. Our school year ended with a celebration of Orange pride during "Orange Week" offering an array of family activities at all schools and culminating in our Orange Color Fest in Orange Park attended by over 20 community partners inclusive of St. Barnabas Medical Center and the City of Orange, more than 200 parents and students, and featuring student performances, our annual district STEM festival, and Heywood Ave. School Color Run.

In April of 2022, Forest Street Community School was named a 2022 Blue Ribbon Beacon School by the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence (BRSE). The award will be presented during the Blue Ribbon Schools Conference this coming December in Florida. An important note, Forest Street Community School, is the first Blue Ribbon nationally recognized school in the school district.

Another noted school distinction was earned by the STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges, recognized as the only school in Essex County to record a 100% graduation rate. All seniors of the first graduating class went on to higher learning.

The Office of STEM Focused Learning was proud of the STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges students. They competed in the region's first 3D Printed Bridge Competition at NJIT's Makerspace and won first place in the high school division for their truss bridge research, design, and assembly.

Orange High School Tornadoes Robotics Team participated in the FIRST Tech Challenge New Jersey Northern League Tournament. At the end of five qualification matches, our team's hard work and dedication resulted in them being chosen as part of the top-ranked alliance resulting in the Orange Tornadoes and their two allies bringing home the first-place trophy and qualifying for the New Jersey State Championship!

Our younger scholars also showed that they were ready for competition. Heywood and Park Avenue Schools' eSTEM teams successfully represented our District in 2022 NJIT's eSTEM Challenge.

It is of particular note that the STEM Innovation Academy and Heywood Avenue School were named distinguished schools: The STEM Academy was recognized as a 2021-22 Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished School for the second consecutive year. It is one of 191 high schools to receive this honor for providing access to learning experiences through PLTW BMS and ENG. In addition, Heywood Avenue School was recognized as a 2021-22 Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished School for the fifth consecutive year. It is one of just 134 middle schools across the U.S. to receive this honor for providing broad access to transformative learning opportunities for students through PLTW Gateway.

Our students also participate in bridge clubs coordinated through the American Contract Bridge League, the governing body for contract bridge in the United States, Mexico, Bermuda, and Canada, and sponsored by the Orange Education Foundation. The Orange bridge club has participated in the Youth North American Bridge Championships in Atlanta, Las Vegas, Chicago, Washington, DC, and Toronto. This year the Oakwood Avenue Community School Bridge Club/21st Century Bridge Club joined hundreds of students in Providence, Rhode Island, on June 21-23 to compete in the Youth North American Bridge Championships (NABC). A total of 16 students from Oakwood participated in all categories, with many placing 1st during the three-day tournament. Out of the 16 players, 14 returned home with 1st place honors.

Students continued to excel in local district competitions organized by the Office of Humanities to promote our scholars' aptitude at the middle-grade level and broaden their horizons. Forest Street's Emily Osei and Malidjeen Severe, coached by Brian Canares, won the Debate Tournament Championship. The Orange Public School's 7th Annual Geography Bee for Grades 5-7 students took place in May. Congratulations to the Cleveland Street School team, the 2022 Geography Bee champion. Second place honors went to Park Avenue School. As well, across the District, students competed in local school competitions in preparation for the June 2022 District Spelling Bee, which tested students' spelling skills in Grades 1 – 7. After crowning each grade level champion,

the District Championship went through an additional 17 rounds of intense competition. Riley Stewart emerged as the Orange Public School District Overall Spelling Champion! Makai Pell-Rhoden took second place, and Hari Patel was the third-place winner.

At Orange Preparatory Academy, Mr. Gamble, one of EVERFI's inspiring educators, was featured in an online article on their website, sharing a glimpse into his classroom and the impact of EVERFI's real-world curriculum and relevance to the needs of millennial learners. The Circle of Rainbow Sisters Seeking Spiritual and Wellness Connection (CORESSWC) honored Mr. Glenn Gamble with a Financial Literacy in Education Award at their 1st virtual awards ceremony in May 2021. At the end of the school year, Mr. Gamble acknowledged his students who earned 10+ EVERFI certificates in financial literacy with trophies and a T-shirt at a "Credential Pizza Celebration" on June 22.

The District ensured the safety and health of its staff and students with a comprehensive plan to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 Management presentation at the February Public Relations Meeting outlined CDC guidelines, Local and State Health Departments procedures, and district policies and protocols for addressing COVID-19 and reviewed the COVID-19 Dashboard. In line with the desires of staff and parents, the District continued its voluntary weekly testing program in school buildings for SY2021-2022, further requiring that the vaccination status of staff and students be documented. To this end, in September of 2021, the District initiated a Mobile Vaccine Clinic at several district schools in association with the City of Orange and our hospital partners led by the Office of Innovation's Community Engagement Office. To aid COVID-19 protocols established in the District, the department also placed banners at each school site to promote routine COVID testing.

Additionally, the Office of Innovation promoted the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program highly regarded in the District. Banners were created and placed at our elementary schools to inform families of the available programs at the high school level, including NJROTC. During National CTE Month in February 2022, each program at Orange High School provided a student-led showcase highlighting each program and offering both parents and students more information on the quality programs offered.

Following protocols and ceremonial traditions, the NJROTC cadets held the annual Navy Ball acknowledging senior cadets and presenting promotions and awards. At the Annual Military Inspection, U. S. Navy Commander Alicia Salerno, the Commanding Officer of the Navy Talent Acquisition Group Empire State New York, commented, "The Orange High School NJROTC inspection was way beyond their age group. The cadets at Orange High School care for each other deeply, and they had an extraordinary inspection." The culminating event for the school year was the Change of Command Ceremony, another well-orchestrated event bidding farewell to the outgoing command and the appointment of a new Commanding Officer.

The District launched Parent University for our school community. The program was a series of free and reduced-price workshops that offered parents various experiences across diverse topics, from Study Skills Seminars designed to give parents academic strategies to parent wellness workshops and job placement and certification offerings.

Citing the meaningful contributions that boards of education make to public education and the quality of life in New Jersey, Gov. Phil Murphy proclaimed January 2021 as School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey. Hence, the Board of Education Members were acknowledged at the January 2022 meeting and presented with certificates for their oversight and contributions to the Orange school community.

The STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges has been recognized as a 2021-22 Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished School for the second consecutive year. It is one of just 191 high schools across the U.S. to receive this honor for providing broad access to transformative learning experiences for students through PLTW Biomedical Science and Engineering. [PLTW](#) is a nonprofit organization that serves millions of PreK-12 students and teachers in over 12,200 schools across the U.S.

The PLTW Distinguished School recognition honors schools committed to increasing student access, engagement, and achievement in their PLTW programs. To be eligible for the designation, STEM Innovation Academy had to meet the following criteria in the 2020-21 school year:

- Had 25 percent of students or more participate in PLTW High School courses, or of those who participated during the 2020-21 school year, at least 33 percent took two or more PLTW courses during their tenure at the school;
- Offer and had students enrolled in at least three PLTW High School courses;
- Had strategies and procedures in place that support reasonably proportional representation with regard to race, ethnicity, poverty, gender, and can support such claims with relevant data.

“We are honored to recognize the STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges for their unwavering commitment to provide students with an excellent educational experience despite the last two years having been some of the most challenging in recent history for students and educators across the U.S. due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr. David Dimmett, Interim President and CEO of PLTW. “The STEM Innovation Academy should be very proud of their achievements in unlocking their students’ potential and equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in life beyond the classroom no matter what career path they choose.”

The STEM Academy is part of a community of PreK-12 schools, colleges and universities, and corporate and philanthropic partners across the country united around a passion for providing students with inspiring, engaging, and empowering learning opportunities.

Heywood Avenue School has been recognized as a 2021-22 Project Lead The Way (PLTW) Distinguished School for the fifth consecutive year. It is one of just 134 middle schools across the U.S. to receive this honor for providing broad access to transformative learning opportunities for students through PLTW Gateway. PLTW is a nonprofit organization that serves millions of PreK-12 students and teachers in schools across the U.S.

The PLTW Distinguished School recognition honors schools committed to increasing student access, engagement, and achievement in their PLTW programs. To be eligible for the designation, Heywood Avenue School had to meet the following criteria:

- Have more than 50 percent of the student body participate in a PLTW Gateway unit during the 2020-21 school year;
- Have at least 25 percent of students who participated in a PLTW Gateway unit during the 2020-21 school year also participated in at least one other PLTW Gateway unit (two or more units total) during the tenure at the school;
- Offer at least one PLTW Gateway unit at each grade (6-8);
- Have strategies and supports in place that support reasonably proportional representation with regard to race, ethnicity, poverty, gender and can support such claims with relevant data.

“We are honored to recognize Heywood Avenue School for their unwavering commitment to provide students with an excellent educational experience despite the last two years having been some of the most challenging in recent history for students and educators across the U.S. due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr. David Dimmett, Interim President and CEO of PLTW. “Heywood Avenue School should be very proud of their achievements in unlocking their students’ potential and equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in life beyond the classroom, no matter what career path they choose.”

Heywood Avenue is part of a community of PreK-12 schools, colleges and universities, and corporate and philanthropic partners across the country united around a passion for providing students with inspiring, engaging, and empowering learning opportunities.

The Office of Early Learning was at the forefront of parent focused webinars and meetings, providing forums for families to learn more about supporting their early learners. Most notably, to celebrate the Week of the Young Child, the Orange Public Schools presented a panel discussion, "Champions for Children," aired live on the Orange Public Schools Facebook page in April 2022. The department also supported their families at the Orange Early Childhood Center with a monthly free fruits and vegetable distribution program sponsored by Mend NJ (Meeting Essential Needs with Dignity).

The District and the Bank Street Ed Center team entered a multi-year partnership designed to build coherence throughout early childhood, beginning with Pre-K and K alignment and continuing through Grade 3 in subsequent years. Subsequently, the District purchased dramatic play centers, puppets, and a beginner block center for every K-classroom to enhance the cognitive development of our young children.

The school year ended with the highest recorded levels of scholarships and awards for our graduating classes. Again, the STEM Innovation Academy achieved a 100% graduation rate, with its students receiving \$9,097,208.00, up from \$8,026,896 from the previous year. Orange High School graduates received \$17,248,357.00 in scholarships, up from last year's total of \$16,872,994.00. Our scholars will attend such schools as Harvard, MIT, Seton Hall, NJIT, and Rutgers. In addition, several students took the Oath of Enlistment to join the military. Last school year, we had over \$25,919,000 in scholarships. This year the students from the Class of 2022 garnered over \$26,000,000 in scholarships.

The District facilities are maintained and renovated to provide our students with state-of-the-art learning structures. A significant addition was completed and celebrated at the Orange High

School Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on December 17, 2021. The expansion includes a media center, an Auxiliary gym, technology labs, a robotics lab, art studios, a drama classroom, and 15 general classrooms, providing 576 new student seats. These seats will accommodate the return of Grade 9 students to Orange High School in the upcoming school year.

Grants were an essential funding source that allowed us to provide the level of services to our schools, implement innovative programming and attend to the individual and collective needs of our entire school community. The District independently sought corporate grants totaling \$395,000, including a Computer Science Grant for students at Orange High School, STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges, and Orange Preparatory Academy from Apple, amounting to \$300,000. Additionally, the Board of Public Utilities awarded the District two grants to improve the air quality and energy performance in schools and to improve energy performance in schools through the installation of energy-efficient and water-conserving appliances, for up to \$10,000,000, depending on expenditures. Other District grant sources came from Notice of Grant Opportunities (NGOs) through the NJDOE Office of Grants Management. NGOs accounted for the lion's share of our grant funding:

- Discretionary grants were awarded to address specific education initiatives for over \$3,000,000.
- Competitive grants for over \$500,000
- Entitlement grants, based on a formula prescribed in legislation or regulation, including budgets to support efforts behind COVID-19, amounted to nearly \$34,700,000.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, in August 2020, the New Jersey Department of Education announced that the Orange School District satisfied at least 80% of the weighted indicators in each of the five areas of the NJQSAC review process; designating the District as a "high performing." As a result, the District was certified as providing a thorough and efficient education system for three years.

The Orange Preparatory Academy Roundtable Series concluded on May 12, 2022, after three sessions designed to outline the processes needed to make Orange Preparatory Academy a Grade 8 school, the "new" Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry & Innovation. In a Grade 8 only environment, students will receive the highest level of academic and social-emotional support to persevere through a rigorous curriculum. The grand opening of Orange Preparatory Academy of Inquiry and Innovation will take place on Thursday, September 1, 2022.

The Gifted Education Program at Scholars Academy has received notoriety through the success of its students and staff. In 2020, Principal Karen Machuca and student Ymani Matthews were guests on the "DOE Digest," Episode 23 of the monthly podcast discussing "Gifted and Talented Education - Advancing Student Learning." Additionally, The New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC) awarded Scholars Academy teacher Kate Dormann "Teacher of the Year 2020-2021" in recognition of her outstanding contributions in the field of gifted education. The NJAGC also awarded Avien Abney Distinguished Student of the Year for grades 3-5. He attends the Gifted/Talented program and Heywood Avenue School. Further, in 2021, Scholars Academy STEM teacher, Regina Nadbielny, was one of ten national winners to receive the Computer Science Teaching Excellence Award through CSTA (Computer Science Teachers Association and

Infosys Foundation). Our program is renowned, and in April of this year, Trenton School District administrators visited Scholars Academy to learn about our Gifted and Talented Program.

In closing, the Orange School District is looking forward to SY 2022-2023 on our quest to Move into Greatness. To the staff, students, and families, the Board of Education and Administration salute your dedication, resilience, and support. As always, we are one Orange and partners in this work.

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