



The Scholars' Academy

An Accelerated College Preparatory School for Grades 6-12
27Q323, A Knowledge Network Teaching and Learning Organization
320 Beach 104 Street, Rockaway Park, NY 11694
<http://schools.nyc.gov/schoolportals/27/Q323>

Principal
Brian O'Connell

Assistant Principals
MS: Toni Marie Sorrentino
HS: Michele Smyth (M, W, F)

January 13, 2010

Principal's Report

Report given by Principal Brian O'Connell

1. Welcome to our 1st meeting of the New Year. I want to first thank all in attendance and all guardians/parents at home for the hard work and support you are giving our students each and every day. Our school is built upon simple principles: hard work and collaboration. Thank you for working with us to make our school better each and every day.
2. As you may already know, as per our Quality Review Feedback from a year ago, our main building-wide initiative this year is:

**“To investigate ways to
increase student learning by leveraging technology in order to
improve staff efficiency and home school communication.”**

In short:

“Technology Today, Smarter Tomorrow.”

We will actually be documenting via video, the ins and outs of what has gone and what will go into this huge project. As part of this initiative we have thus far accomplished or begun the following:

- Teacher Professional Development incorporates use of technology during our Friday Morning Professional Development sessions two times per month.
- During school Meetings and Professional Development Sessions, we then reinforce follow up or implementation of select technology components. We have also been using google.docs and other online resources to increase efficiency and limit paper use.
- Two major tools used to increase communication and efficiency this year, as per our Comprehensive Education Plan, are: **Edline.net** and **EZgradepro**. These tools enable every teacher to use a consistent grading software program, which then may be uploaded to Edline.net for faster parent/guardian communication, via each student's login/password information. We are in the process of layering in additional components across the board for all teachers. However, there will always be some teachers who are very innovative and thorough in their use of the equipment's abilities.
- Edline.net also let's us communicate with parents en masse. In fact, yesterday, I sent out a test message to announce the parent workshops that we held this evening. I ask that if you have not yet

received and activated your accounts that you do so. Add cell phone numbers or any phone numbers to which you wish to receive emergency information or announcements from the school.

- To improve communication, we have also added a podcast of the daily “Morning Message” to a site that links from our website. Now, by logging into our website you can click the podcast link to hear what is going on in the school on a daily basis. This keeps students and parents on the same page in terms of games or events, when funds of a particular type are due, or even when it is ok to “dress down” for school.
- To enhance the Morning Message and to provide full access to events in our school, we have formed a HS Student Translation Team that works with me each morning to broadcast the Morning Message in multiple languages based upon information we analyzed in our ATS computer system. We now broadcast in the following languages: Russian, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Polish, Punjabi, and English. Later in this report, I will explain/demonstrate how to access these podcasts.
- Instructionally, we are also forming a Teacher Video/Technology Instructional Inquiry Team. In short, this small group of teachers will experiment with using cameras, video, and software to communicate learning goals more easily with parents and students, or to remove the concept of time and place from access to certain lessons that are taught in class.
- Of course, as far as infrastructure and equipment are concerned, we have received support of \$100,000 from Councilman Ulrich to provide a new computer lab, thereby permitting us to relocate our existing lab to the internet café. We are proud to add that Councilman Ulrich has selected Scholars’ Academy as the location for his “Inauguration Ceremony” this Sunday at 2pm. It is open to the public and our band will be playing. Also, I believe that the mayor and other dignitaries may be present. Giant Fans are welcome to attend this event as the Cowboys are playing the Vikings at that time.
- We also leveraged funds from the prior RESO A Commitment of former Councilman Addabbo in the form of \$200,000 for additional laptops and smartboards. Keep in mind an additional \$100,000 of funding will go toward replacing the torn theatre curtains we have, and hopefully to address some of the sound and lighting issues present in the theatre.
- To assist us with our smartboard goal, we were able to obtain donated smartboards from another school that wasn’t using them and we are very grateful for the 10 smartboards and for the help of Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Foti, who on a moment’s notice, took time away from normal work to ensure we were the first school to get the smartboards. We want to thank Mr. Berman for his support in this endeavor.
- Our Technology Enabled Active Learning Classroom has been equipped with state of the art computers through a partnership with the Knowledge Network. This partnership enables the Knowledge Network to provide technology teacher training, regular teacher training, and student training. We have already worked closely with Coordinator Jacob Gutnicki in the development and scheduling of these winter and spring classes. HS students will learn how to service both Dell and Mac servers and systems. Ultimately, this room will be used as part of our video instructional initiative and our smartboard training for staff. We are very grateful to Dr. Cashin and the Knowledge Network for this support.
- Of course, we had to leverage the SCA and Ianelli Construction to help us ready room 315/317 for use as an instructional space. We are still waiting for minor wiring work in both the TEAL class and Internet Café. The equipment has already been ordered via Reso A. Laptops, however are being held up slightly due to an issue between Apple and the DOE. Ultimately, our goal, by the end of this year, is to have every teacher with a functioning printer, smartboard, and functioning laptop, with increased student laptop access.

- Another technology instructional objective being met this year via the support of our Business Partner, Mr. Rich Daly and Broadridge Financial Solutions, is the infusion of the Stock Market Game into our math curriculum on multiple grades. Just today, we met and received training with specific teachers in how this program will drive financial awareness, research, and mathematics instruction.
- Another external partner that is enhancing our technology and instructional initiative is Mr. Hank Iori. Hank, a local resident and former Region Five Technology Director, has worked with the Knowledge Network and has provided support to the Scholars' Academy staff to create integrated projects based upon land use in the Rockaways for the Math Science and Technology Fair.
- We have also created an Edline.net website that provides a vehicle for sharing internal information with staff, as well as additional information/news that compliments our existing DOE website.
- This podcast of this Principal's Report is a component of our Technology Today, Smarter Tomorrow Initiative, as is our daily Morning Message access.

Other School Matters:

- **The 2009-2010 CEP:** has been thoroughly completed and submitted and such will be online shortly. Thank you to the teachers, the SLT, and Mr. Chobot for spearheading this initiative.
- **The Budget:** Due to our anticipation of political events, we were largely prepared to withstand the most recent two budget cuts due to register loss and Governor Patterson and Mayor Bloomberg's recent announcement. We were able to set aside approximately \$37,000 in funding. However, there is very little funding remaining for any unanticipated needs that may arise.
- **PTA Support:** I recently emailed a Staff Appreciation Proposal to the PTA Presidents for your consideration which will help us keep our morale high and teachers feeling appreciated.
Also, Mr. Goldberg the School Leadership Team Title I Designee will or has been speaking with you about how we should plan to spend our approximate \$2,890 in Title I Parent Involvement Funds. These funds, however, should be focused on helping us to improve parent involvement to impact student learning such as paying teachers to do parent workshops at PTA meetings or other times, purchasing communication supplies, etc. for example. We were originally going to use to pay for edline.net, but were able to use other school funds. So, I understand that there may be additional discussion regarding how we should leverage this resource.
- **Testing:** HS Students will begin Regents/Finals Week starting January 26th, 2009. They only attend for scheduled exams. No high school classes on January 29th or February 1st. Students begin the new term February 2nd.
- **HS/College Planning:**
College Handbook will be distributed at the beginning of the term.
Internship Program for Seniors is being solidified for 2010-2011 via the HS Planning Team and School Leadership Team.
College Representatives will be attending a breakfast here on January 22nd to learn about school.
- **Student Recruitment:** HS Applications, over 700 students applied for 100-120 seats. MS Applications, we received over 800 applicants for 186 middle school seats.

- **Trips:** Juniors will be visiting St. Francis College. During March, there will be additional “March to College Trips.” Sophomores will be going to Medieval Times. Junior to Washington D.C. in April. Freshman will be going to Six Flags in April/May. 7th Grade will be going to Philadelphia and Gettysburg and 8th grade will be going to Manhattan as in year’s past: Ripley’s Believe it or Not, the Wax Museum, and ESPN Zone. The 8th grade party is the half day in June, Tuesday the 8th.
- **Events:** The MS Talent show was a huge success thanks to Ms. Scannell. The HS Talent Show is coming up February 11th. The venue for the Prom for 2011 is being worked out. A Shakespeare Competition is taking place on January 20th. We recently held a Spanish spelling bee. Preventative Assemblies are planned for 6th and 7th graders on cyber bullying.
- **Academic Support:** Additional layers of academic support have been put into place for all subjects before, during, and after school. Saturday Programs will roll out during Term 2. Letters will be forthcoming re: the SAT and Regents Courses we will be offering.
- **Courses:** Grade 7 through 11 students will receive new elective course offerings for term 2. Students will be able to change their extended day. HS students will be able to change their electives. We are thankful to be adding Yoga to the HS Elective options. Special Thanks to Ms. Kilgallen for teaching this Yoga offering. Also, in response to our Project Arts Survey, letters went home today, announcing that every student will participate in a dance curriculum once per week, starting with square dancing and line dancing. Ms. Smyth is in charge of HS inquiries and Ms. Sorrentino is in charge of MS inquiries.
- **Sports:** The HS Swim Team is fast becoming a very competitive PSAL swim team. HS Pep Band and Cheerleading has been playing at our HS Home basketball games, both boys and girls teams are competing in the PSAL. Becky M. is the number one 3 point shooter in the PSAL. We also have Middle School Cheerleaders and MS band for MS boys’ basketball season has begun. A MS swim team is in the process of being planned. Fitness Session 2 has begun with Ms. Chi. We are in the process of investigating ways to get Crew for our HS. Mr. Donald Douglas of the PSAL was emailed but we have yet to receive a response.
- **Construction:**
Construction is slow at moment due to cold weather. We have access to science labs and teachers will be using and training students in safety rules shortly. Our inventory of chemicals and equipment is in process of being stored and organized by the science teachers.

I thank you for attending our workshops this evening and I thank you for listening to this report. Now I will show you how to quickly access the Morning Message via the Internet.

Have a great month!

Sincerely,

Mr. O’Connell