



# *The Scholars' Academy*

*An Accelerated College Preparatory School for Grades 6-12*  
27Q323, A Knowledge Network Teaching and Learning Organization  
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## Principal

Brian O'Connell

## Assistant Principals

MS: Toni Marie Sorrentino

HS: Michele Smyth (M, W, F)

## March Principal's Report

Delivered at PTA Meeting by Assistant Principal, Michele Smyth

March 10, 2010

- Welcome, my name is Michele Smyth standing in for Principal O'Connell who is attending a Cahn Fellows Workshop at Columbia University with Assistant Principal Sorrentino this evening. Mr. O'Connell asked that I express his apologies for not being present tonight. On behalf of Principal O'Connell and the entire staff, I thank you for coming to the meeting tonight and for all of the "behind the scenes" support you give our students each day. We also want to thank the PTA for its support in terms of instructional supplies and equipment that help us do a better job teaching our students.

### **Instruction:**

- On the topic of instruction, our teachers are intensely working with students during what tends to be an industrious time of year. We ask that you **take a look at the curriculum maps** which are actually posted just outside of this theatre to correlate what your respective child is learning during this month.
- You will find that several Interim Assessments and practice exams have been given and will be given during this time of year. As such data, or "**formative assessments**" helps to **inform** our teaching.
- In addition, we ask that you confer with your child about his/her **individual learning goals**. After each marking period or unit, these goals are expected to be updated with the teachers for pursuit during the ensuing marking period. Check in with your child to ensure such is up to date and relevant to his/her needs and send a friendly note in to the teacher if you have any questions. Of course, it is important that you partner with us in checking in with your child to ensure that he/she is implementing his/her respective action plan.

### **Technology Today, Smarter Tomorrow:**

- As you know, our school's theory of action this year is that we believe technology can be harnessed to help our teachers work more efficiently while improving home-school communication, for the purpose of improving student learning.
- Our staff's professional development focuses on this mission and within our school day's meeting protocols, teachers are learning how to roll out different features of EDLINE.NET each week.

- Due to the potential of “glitches” we ask that if you are not noticing features rolling out during this term that you send an email or note into the respective teacher. Also, feel free to make any suggestions so that we can try to improve what we are doing.
- As part of this theory of action, we have sparked an incentive competition to increase the percentage of parents who have activated and who use edline.net and ARIS. During the month of March, the middle school level and high school level homerooms with the highest percentage of activation will be receiving either a dress down day or pizza party. One prize or the other will be given to a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Class in both HS and MS. So please, log into edline.net and ARIS and get familiar with the features. One feature of edline.net that has become extremely helpful is the emergency notification. By activating and inputting your cell number, home number, email, and/or work number into the website, we can instantaneously get emergency or snow day announcements to you. This is a very important feature.
- In addition, Mr. O’Connell has purchased 7 ipod nano video cameras and 2 flip video cameras for video instruction inquiry team of teachers he formed to experiment with for instructional use. They cost about \$120 each. The vision is to “Remove Time and Place From Teaching and Learning.” This will be next year’s focus in terms of the technology initiative. Envision teachers videotaping key lessons that can be accessed online for a child to study prior to an exam, during homework, or if out sick. There are several in class uses too which are currently being used by some teachers. We expect this to become a powerful tool for our school in the future. Mr. O’Connell is going to a five day technology conference to learn more about what other “tech savvy” schools are doing to better utilize these potential instruction tools. I am sure he will have a lot to share with us.

### **Comprehensive Education Plan and School Leadership Team:**

- We are almost finished with our mid-year CEP goal benchmarks review. Our staff collected and analyzed data at this midyear check point to see if we are on target to meet our annual goals in every subject. A copy of these statistics will be available on the website with our School Leadership Team Minutes. Most subjects were right on target with teacher goals and expectations and were represented with a typical bell curve.

#### **Grade and Subject Average examples (Approximately):**

9<sup>th</sup> grade English and US History = 81

Geometry = 82

Physics = 79

Global = 88

Algebra II = 80

Chemistry = 77

AP Gov’t = 74

AP Calculus/Pre-Calculus = 80/78

AP English = 88

Spanish (all grades) = 72

Keep in mind that all of the Regents Courses used Regents questions.

Also, based upon this data, the SLT also discussed our Spanish Team requiring a renewed focus. Much conversation arose about how to raise enthusiasm and motivation in our student body to improve Spanish language acquisition. Ms. Sorrentino is currently working with this team to find ways to improve student scores and motivation, as well as to improve the delivery of instruction.

Our ELA and Math Predictive Exam Results and Practice Exam Results in middle school were stronger than last year at this same time.

In general, ELA average % Tier 4 was approximately:

Gr. 6 = 81%

Gr. 7 = 93%

Gr. 8 = 94%

In Math % Tier 4:

Gr. 6 = 78%

Gr. 7 = 76%

Gr. 8 = 61%

- In addition, the SLT also examined teacher revised goals which are now informed up until midyear for next year's (2010-2011) CEP. The major difference this year, is that, although many items will still go into a teacher's report card grading policy, we are narrowing our "Marking Period CEP Benchmarks" to one standard assessment or evaluation measure each marking period. These measures will remain constant across a respective grade's teachers and classes so that we gain comparative and evaluative statistical value. The end goal is to develop a more sincere predictive value of how we are doing in terms of being on target to reach our CEP annual goal....AHEAD of time. We don't want any surprises.
- The SLT has voted to recommend the appointment of Ms. Sorrentino as Assistant Principal.
- A discussion took place about strategies to attempt to get a Crew Team off shore. Mr. Lunati is waiting to have a meeting with the PSAL who expressed a willingness to meet with us to strategize a plan for program creation.
- A discussion of how the classification as a Title I School actually hurts our school budget by approximately \$144,000 due to the restrictions on class size put in place and potentially grieved by the UFT. However, we have the ability, because we are a gifted school, to obtain a waiver for up to three years. Class size is anticipated at being between 30-32 students in middle school next year and 25-32 students in high school next year. Of course lower class sizes are always desired, but funding is received per capita and with the budget shortage, every student "counts" toward your school's budget.
- SLT also discussed the No Child Left Behind status of the school, learning that Mr. O'Connell communicated with that office that we are an application school and not a zoned school. In addition, the SLT discussed our register projections and began an investigation to find more students with special needs or IEP status who meet the publicized criteria of our school.
- We anticipate about 970 students in our school next year, up from 850 this year.
- SLT also discussed the Saturday Academic Intervention or Regents Enrichment Program which starts this spring.

- Mr. O’Connell also received potential good news from Councilman Ulrich about a pending grant to support up to \$10,000 in additional scheduled music teaching artists or specialists from the Queens Symphony Orchestra to help our band teachers for part of the year next year as well as support for HS students, who demonstrate need or exemplary service, to be able to attend a Kaplan course next year. The course typically costs \$450 and funding may be available to help 25 students. That’s over an \$11,000 value.
- As far as Title I Parent Involvement Money is concerned, the SLT is using Parental Involvement feedback from the PTA Parent Involvement Discussions to help us finalize how we plan to spend this approximate \$2,800 to enhance parent involvement this year.
- Discipline-wise: The school tone and climate is excellent. We pride ourselves on full and thorough reporting and responses to any disciplinary issue that arises. Here is a quick breakdown of our statistics:

**Infractions for the Year (Number of actual incidents)**

<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>	<b>Level 5</b>
<b>46</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

Our Safety Team and Pupil Personnel Team are constantly working to be proactive in educating and reminding our students of proper behavior which helps set the appropriate building tone which keeps these infraction numbers low. Dean Foti and Guidance Counselor Rozman are highly instrumental in this mission.

**Events/Celebrations/Sports:**

We have numerous events taking place.

We were very proud of Mr. Leicht, Ms. Morritt, and our students who sounded great during the recent St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Rockaway. Our cheerleaders also well represented our school led by the great work of Ms. Mainhart and Mrs. Scannell. Mr. Lunati, Ms. Khouri, and several sports teams were also well represented.

We just had a successful High School Talent Show and we are very appreciative of Ms. Lyons, Ms. K. Hubbard, and all of the supportive staff that helped to make this event happen for our students.

March to College Week, which promotes College Awareness and an expectation of attending college was a huge success. Students went on trips to colleges, researched colleges, and participated in an interactive competition.

Our girls HS PSAL basketball team made the playoffs this year and we are very proud of their hard work under the direction of Coach Kleiner.

The boys MS basketball season has begun as has Middle School Swimming!

We anticipate HS softball to start soon and we are looking for a girls Middle School basketball coach.

Several Cyber-bullying workshops are taking place this week as well as lessons to promote student camaraderie, sensitivity of differences, and acceptance during Respect For All Week.

Interviews of new students begin on Thursday.

On Saturday, the 13<sup>th</sup>, our Kaplan SAT class continues.

There will be a Community Service Blood Drive and Thrift Sale. Students earn a half hour of credit for each donor they recruit.

**Also, this Saturday, Ms. Todes is being honored by the Catholic Teacher's Association. Parents, students, staff, and friends are welcome to attend this external event.** There is a \$55 charge to attend the luncheon and/or various rates to buy a booster ad for the journal. Deadlines and other information are posted on our school's website. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Math Science Technology Fair is taking place 5-7pm. 23<sup>rd</sup>, the marking period ends. High School Main Round Results are distributed on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 25<sup>th</sup> there will be a "Changing and Growing" Seminar for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students whose parents send in consent forms. This is an important developmental workshop. The 26<sup>th</sup> will be March's Scholar of the Month Assembly and spring recess begins on the 27<sup>th</sup> through April 6<sup>th</sup>. School resumes April 7<sup>th</sup>.

- **Parent Teacher Conferences:** Parent Teacher Conferences for the Evening (only) will take place on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 5:30pm-8:30pm. It is a full day of school for students, 3:30PM dismissal.

**Construction Updates are Not Available:**

The project is moving slowly and we are likely to not be completed by September 2010 in my opinion. We are being given sparse information on the progress of our score board electric work needed, internet café work, and TEAL room work. This must happen soon as we will shortly have the equipment installed.

The roof requires a great deal of work.

The AC units have begun getting installed in classrooms

Work still needs to be done behind the building on Rockaway Freeway.

We asked the Custodian to buy large portable garbage containers as once the Freeway work begins, we will have a trash storage issue.

So, we have a long way to go.

**Again, I thank you for listening to this lengthy report.**

**If you have any questions, please reach out to us via email to a specific staff member or through our Parent Coordinator Ms. Brady.**