

THE DODGER DIGEST

October 2018

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Welcome to 2018-19!

Although it is nearing the end of October, I would like to officially welcome all of you to the 2018-19 school year! While the start of school has brought some delaying challenges in the form of extreme heat and cyber security concerns, we remain undeterred in advancing our many new and exciting projects such as a new website, construction projects, guest speakers, Full Day Kindergarten, and a renewed focus on supporting the whole child.

I would like to start this issue of the *Digest* by recognizing the commitment of our faculty and staff as we opened school with some of the greatest enthusiasm I've seen among educators. Our custodians worked their tails off to make the rooms shine, the teachers came in early to ensure that classrooms were decorated, and the administrators planned a meaningful and positive Convocation including the best guest speaker with whom I have ever worked. To get a sense of this positive spirit, please see our staff's opening day performance, "[Teach the Kids, Again](#)," which included an ensemble of teachers, administrators, custodians and technology staff.



MPS staff give a surprise performance titled, "Teach the kids again," during the 2018-19 Convocation (click the image to view the video)

As we look forward to an excellent year, please make time in your calendars to attend some of my Superintendent Coffee sessions. These meetings are informal and participative. Please bring an open mind and your best ideas to the conversations, which will be held on the following dates:



November 6, 2018	7:00pm	Torey J Sabatini School All Purpose Room
January 18, 2019	10:00am	Junior School Media Center
February 21, 2019	7:00pm	Kings Road School All Purpose Room
March 14, 2019	10:00am	High School Media Center
April 25, 2019	7:00pm	Central Avenue School All Purpose Room

Thank you for taking the time to read the contents of this newsletter and for your ongoing support for our schools. I look forward to sharing the great news to come!

Sincerely,
Mark Schwarz, *Superintendent of Schools*

Goals for 2018-2019 Drive New Initiatives

It is with great pleasure that we announce the 2018-19 Madison Public Schools District Goals. On September 25, 2018, the Board of Education unanimously approved the following goals which were developed by our Board and Administration in response to our academic data and feedback from parents, staff and students from the 2017-18 year. For further context regarding the development of these goals, please view our [June 2018 State of the Schools Address](#).

#1 - Make Learning Personal - We will engage all students in rigorous instruction and assessment practices that:

- Meet every student's individual and changing needs
- Use real-world experiences as the conduit for learning
- Empower students with ownership of their learning paths

#2 - Empower the Whole Child - We will support emotional resilience in all students by:

- Knowing their stories, promoting their strengths and meeting their needs
- Ensuring dignity and kindness for all, in every situation
- Enabling every student to reach their maximum potential

#3 - Model Fiscal Responsibility - We will build community confidence by ensuring that:

- District resources are allocated and evaluated for maximum return on investment
- Budgets are established to provide sustainable solutions that meet educational needs
- The district's fiscal health is proactively monitored and reported to appropriate stakeholders

In my next edition of the *Digest*, I will share more detailed information regarding the specific outcomes and strategies that we will employ to make these goals our reality. If you have a particular interest in supporting our achievement of these goals, please make time to attend the Superintendent Coffee sessions which are outlined on the first page of this newsletter.

Dr. Robert Brooks, Child Psychologist and Guest Speaker



Madison Public Schools was proud to welcome [Dr. Robert Brooks](#) as the Keynote Speaker for our 2018-19 Convocation. On Thursday, August 30, Dr. Brooks addressed district faculty, administration and Board members in a highly-engaging two hour presentation titled *The Power of Mindsets: Nurturing Motivation, Learning, and Resilience in Students*. His work and insights had such a powerful impact on our staff that we are exploring having Dr. Brooks return to present for parents and to provide focused breakout sessions for the various types of employees in the district. When you have a moment, please take time to view our [video recording](#) of his presentation to our staff.

Dodgers Fend Off Malware Attack

In the second week of school, the Dodger technology team was given the ultimate test when we discovered that our network was under attack from what was described by experts as “the most sophisticated malware yet developed.” Our recent forensic analysis of the event has confirmed this claim and revealed that the software was most likely introduced to our system through a targeted phishing attack in which malware entered our system through an email attachment. Once in our PC network, the malware was able to steal bank account information entered into the web browsers on affected devices.

Thanks to the quick thinking of our technology team, we were able to quickly contain the threat and identify that our district Chromebooks were unaffected. While running the district using Chromebooks, we eventually developed a solution with the support of law enforcement, colleagues in other districts and our anti-virus company. Although it took approximately two full weeks to completely remove the malware from our PCs, it appears that the Dodgers dodged a malware bullet. Moving forward, the district has substantially enhanced our cyber security by upgrading to state-of-the-art machine-learning anti-virus software and establishing revised technology use protocols.

Fortunately for everyone, the malware’s danger was mitigated by its limited ability to spread. While much of our network was affected, Chromebooks and devices not connected to our network drives were not infected. Nevertheless, this was an important reminder that everyone must be vigilant when opening attachments or clicking links in emails. While we will be implementing increased security measures, I recommend that all members of the Madison School community, including staff, parents and students, take some time to train themselves in how to identify phishing emails. For more information, we recommend that everyone participate in the Department of Defense’s free [Phishing Awareness Training](#). Additionally, if anyone spots any email that they believe to be phishing, please forward the message in question to our technology supervisor, John LaPierre, at lapierrej@madisonnips.org.



Excused Absence Procedures Clarified

For the 2018-19 school year, MPS will be implementing newly revised absence procedures (See Regulation 5200) which require physician or school nurse certification for the excusal of illness-related absences. The purpose of this shift is to ensure that student absences are closely monitored to promote the continuity of your child’s education. Our revised policy regulation presents a shift in practice, particularly at the elementary level. As such, please consider the following key points regarding our absence procedures:

- Unexcused absences are expected from time to time. However, they should be kept to a minimum, never exceeding 10 absences per school year.
- If your child is sick enough to stay home but not sick enough to warrant a visit to your doctor, you have the option to keep your child home on an unexcused basis.
- Whether excused or unexcused, always report your child’s absence to the school office so that we can ensure that your child is accounted for.
- For further questions, please consult Board Policy and Regulation 5200

If you have any further questions regarding the excusal of absences, please feel free to contact your child’s school.