

THE DODGER DIGEST

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Dodger Families,

The temperatures are dropping, the days are getting shorter, the MHS Dodgers are on the field and in the gym... 2019-20 is almost here!

As we arrive back to school this week, we do so under the auspices of breaking news that *New Jersey Monthly* magazine has ranked our community as Number 1 in their "Best Places to Live" Top 100 list. I am sure it is no surprise to any of you that Madison has been bestowed with this honor, considering its vibrant people, idyllic spaces, and its myriad of public services, including our outstanding schools. While media operated ranking systems may be imperfect, I think they got this one right. On behalf of the Board of Education and all the professionals that work in the Madison Public Schools, please know that it is an honor for each of us to proudly serve the Dodger community!



In this issue of the *Digest*, I'd like to share some important opening day updates, however, nothing I write here will replace the rich information available to you on your school's website. Please check the website often for important updates, including events on our calendars. Don't forget that you can sync your electronic calendar with the district calendar by clicking the link icon in the top-right corner of the website calendar!

Finally, I hope that this summer has allowed you to unplug and enjoy life outside of school. Although these school mailings may seem to mark the end of the break, I encourage all of you continue to enjoy August. The work that we do here is vital and it is equally important that our students take time to rest, play, travel and get lost in all things not school when we are not in session. As doors open on September 3rd, the Dodgers need to bring their best energy for all the great plans that we have in store.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon,

Mark Schwarz

Superintendent of Schools

Dodger-in-Chief

DISTRICT GOALS

The Madison Board of Education, Administration and School Faculty are pleased to announce the following district goals for 2019-20. These goals are an extension of our mission to *inspire and challenge all students to be life-long learners, empowered with the knowledge, skills and character to shape their future, realize their dreams and contribute positively to the world*. These goals are being used to inform our actions and efforts throughout this year and in the planning for the 2020-21 school year:

Goal 1: Promote High Levels of Student Achievement for All

We will engage all students in rigorous instruction and assessment practices that:

- Provide access to engaging and meaningful learning experiences
- Meet every student's individual and changing needs through innovative instructional methodologies and real-world performance tasks at all levels
- Increase student agency by empowering students with ownership of their learning paths
- Effectively use data to inform and monitor student progress

Goal 2: Empower Every Child

We will build relationships with every student by:

- Knowing their stories, promoting their strengths, and meeting their needs
- Ensuring dignity and kindness for all, in every situation
- Teaching strategies to build resilience and maximize potential

Goal 3: Model Operational Responsibility

We will build community confidence by ensuring that:

- District resources are allocated and evaluated for maximum return on investment
- Budgets are developed through collaboration and transparency to provide sustainable solutions that meet educational needs
- Facilities are designed and maintained to enhance student learning
- Bylaws, Policies, and Regulations are reviewed and developed to guide the effective operation of our schools

SUPERINTENDENT COFFEES

I'd like to share some important tweaks to my Superintendent Coffee schedule for 2019-20. First, we will continue to hold coffees on the Monday before Board meetings so that community members can have an opportunity to informally discuss agenda items with me and members of the admin team. Expanding upon last year, however, we will now offer a 10:00am day-session on the Monday before Board meetings as well. I hope that this accommodation enables more of you to attend, learn about district efforts, and have your voices heard.

We will also be allocating time during each meeting for participative activities, including conversations about budget priorities and parent academy topics, such as strategies for raising resilient students and planning for the college admissions process. Keep your eyes on our calendar for the location and topic for each coffee. Our first sessions will be held at **10am and 7pm on Monday, September 16, 2019**. At this meeting, we will be discussing the new programs and initiatives for 2019-20.

Q&A WITH THE CSA – THE 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR

As the Chief School Administrator of Madison, I receive many questions. Q&A with the CSA is a place where responses to frequently asked questions can be shared with everyone.

Q: What's new for 2019-20?

A: In addition to last year's program offerings, we are very excited to confirm that we are ready to roll out the following new initiatives for 2019-20:

- Universal Full Day Kindergarten for all Madison families
- Six new MHS courses including AP Microeconomics, AP Computer Science A, Biotechnology, Engineering and Design Technology, Broadcast Journalism, and Media Literacy
- A new MHS Girls Ice Hockey Program
- The *Spatial-Temporal (ST) Math* Program from [MIND Research Institute](#) for grades K-2
- The [Schoolwide Fundamentals](#) balanced literacy program for grades K-5
- Special Education improvements including the following additional positions:
 - Elementary Autism Class Teacher
 - MHS Special Education Teacher
 - MJS Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant
 - MJS Clinical Therapist
 - District Behaviorist
- [Classlink](#) single sign-on technology for all staff and students to increase instructional time and cybersecurity
- [Granicus](#) Board management software to improve public access to district information

Q: How will parents know who to contact with the new administrative structure in place?

A: With our new administrative team fully formed our schools are updating their websites with important communication information. Please note that your best initial point of contact is always your child's teacher or guidance counselor (or case manager for students with IEPs). If for some reason your concern or inquiry is not resolved, you should then reach out to the building Principal or Assistant Principal. In the rare case that you are not able to find resolution with the building principal, then you will be referred to the appropriate Central Office team member. In closing, I would advise anyone that if they are not sure who to talk to, call your school's main office.

Q: Did the district hire novice teachers to teach the additional sections of Kindergarten?

A: No. Kindergarten will be staffed by our experienced teachers who were interested in teaching at that grade level. Accordingly, while all sections of Kindergarten will be taught by an experienced educator, other vacancies were created. These vacancies are being filled by highly qualified teachers that are new to the district.

Q: Do the Full Day Kindergarten rooms have bathrooms?

A: Yes. Each Kindergarten room at each elementary school has direct access to a bathroom from within the classroom. Construction on these rooms is wrapping up this week.

Q&A WITH THE CSA – THE 2019-20 SCHOOL YEAR (CONT.)

Q: What is the status of the MHS Locker Room Project?

A: As anticipated, the MHS Locker Room Project will not be ready for the start of school, but the outcome will be worth the wait. The project is expected to be completed in early November. Please see the MHS website for additional information about this exciting project.

Q: How will the district respond to another heatwave if one occurs this year?

A: This Fall, we will be placing electronic thermometers in each classroom. On hot days, we will record the temperature in the rooms and establish a data set that identifies our hottest rooms. This data will be used for dual purposes. First, it will inform our decision making regarding whether or not to alter our schedule for heat relief. Second, it will clarify which rooms need to be remediated with air conditioning first. In the meantime, let's hope that this recent cool weather will continue!

Q: I'd like to buy some Madison Gear and I hear that is possible with an MHS online order. Is this true?

A: From now until 9/12, you can place orders with the [Dodger Den](#) to score yourself some very cool Dodger swag. Proceeds go to the combined fundraising efforts of the MHS class councils.

NEW MADISON LEADERS

It is with great pleasure that the Madison Public Schools welcome new leaders to our district. Please give them a Dodger welcome when you see them!

Dr. Joseph Vespignani, Director of Human Resources

Dr. Joseph Vespignani has served as the Director of Human Resources since January 2019. In this role, he provides leadership in facilitating HR processes, building staff wellness and professional growth programs, and recruiting talented and diverse educators. He also supervises the payroll and health benefits processes for the district and serves as the district Affirmative Action Officer.

Prior to joining Madison, Dr. Vespignani was the principal of Salvatore R. Calabro Elementary School in the Hoboken Public Schools. By achieving significant progress in student growth, he guided the school to rank in the 96th percentile in the state. Throughout his career, he also served as a middle school vice principal, elementary school Spanish teacher, and high school soccer coach. Dr. Vespignani holds five certifications from the New Jersey Department of Education including Teacher of Spanish, Elementary School Teacher, Supervisor, Principal, and School Administrator.



A graduate of Fairleigh Dickinson University-Florham in 2001, Dr. Vespignani completed a B.A. in Spanish and Master of Arts in Teaching through the QUEST Program. He then earned his principal certification through the NJEXCEL program in 2008. He went on to earn his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Rowan University in 2016. His research focused on bridging the gap between pre-service and the workplace as well as support for non-tenured teachers. He has been published in the *NJEA Review* and twice in the NJPSA journal *Educational Viewpoints* in the area of personnel.

NEW MADISON LEADERS (CONT.)

Michael Zulla, Director of Facilities

Mike Zulla began his tenure at Madison Public Schools on January 15, 2019. As the Director of Facilities, he oversees district maintenance and cleaning operations in addition to planning and coordinating capital construction projects. Dedicated to providing a safe and sustainable environment for the students of Madison, Mr. Zulla and the Buildings and Grounds team have set out on establishing new operational and planning processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness throughout the district.



Beginning his career as a custodian, Mr. Zulla has worked in various capacities within maintenance, custodial and facility management. Most recently, he was employed by a private school district in West Orange, NJ. Mr. Zulla is currently attending Drexel University and is anticipating graduating with a Masters Degree in Construction Management in September of 2019. He studied at Centenary University and received a Bachelors degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Management. He is also a devoted member of the New Jersey School Buildings and Grounds Association and the International Facilities Management Association and serves as a Board of Education member in his town.

Mr. Zulla enjoys spending time with his family and dedicates most of his free time coaching recreation sports and cheering for Philadelphia sports franchises.

Andrea Padelsky, Assistant Principal, Madison High School

Andrea Padelsky was hired as the MHS AP in charge of Athletics on July 1, 2019. Prior to arriving in Madison, Ms. Padelsky was a health, driver's ed, and physical education teacher in the Pascack Valley Regional High School District. She taught students of all grade levels in both Pascack Valley HS and Pascack Hills HS in adaptive PE, CPR, driver's education, health, and physical education. Furthermore, Andrea was a member of the Health & PE Regional Articulation Curriculum and Instruction Committee and served as an assistant girls' basketball coach at Pascack Valley High School. Ms. Padelsky is also an adjunct professor teaching an undergraduate assessment and technology course at Montclair State University and a sports psychology elective course as part of the NACTEL Program at Pace University.



Ms. Padelsky began her career in education at Little Falls School No.2 in Little Falls, NJ. She then moved on to Valley Road School in Stanhope, NJ and served as the girls' basketball coach and athletics coordinator.

In preparation for her career as an educator, Ms. Padelsky earned two Master's degrees from Montclair State University, one in Educational Leadership and the other a Master of Arts in Teaching Health and Physical Education. As a collegiate athlete, Ms. Padelsky attended Pace University on a full athletic scholarship, served as a three year co-captain of the women's basketball team and scored over 1,200 points and ranks second all-time for three pointers made. While at Pace University, Ms. Padelsky earned a Master's of Science in Counseling Psychology and a Bachelor's of Arts in Applied Psychology and Human Relations. Ms. Padelsky grew up in Lebanon, PA, and attended Lebanon High School where she was a standout athlete on the girls' basketball team scoring over 1,200 points and is a proud member of the LHS Athletics Hall of Fame. Ms. Padelsky enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, staying active, and has completed the New York City Marathon twice.

NEW MADISON LEADERS (CONT.)

Todd Jensen, Assistant Principal, Madison High School

Todd Jensen came to Madison High School in August 2019. Before joining Madison, Mr. Jensen served several roles for the school district of Hopatcong. Mr. Jensen was the Supervisor of Instructional Technology in which he was responsible for providing professional development for staff as well as assisting in the development of technology-rich instruction. He also served as the Supervisor of Humanities in which he worked with staff in curriculum development, implementing new programs, and best practices. Finally, Mr. Jensen served as a building administrator for the high school in which he handled day to day operations as well as discipline.

Prior to being an administrator, Mr. Jensen taught a variety of courses that included AP History and AP Psychology. Throughout his time at Hopatcong Mr. Jensen also served as a coach and advisor to many different activities.

Mr. Jensen holds a Master's in Educational Leadership, a Master's in Curriculum, Instruction and Technology, as well as a Bachelor's in Teaching and Psychology.

Mr. Jensen grew up in West Milford NJ where he met his wife who now teaches for West Milford Public Schools. Mr. Jensen enjoys spending time with his family whenever possible. He and his wife have two sons.



Brooke Phillips, Assistant Principal, Madison Junior School

Brooke Phillips joined the Madison Junior School as the assistant principal on July 1, 2019. As a thirteen year educator and parent of three children, Ms. Phillips shares with the Madison community the desire to see our students grow, succeed, and enjoy learning. She believes it is a gift as an educator to be a part of a community that can so positively impact and empower young lives and set them on a path for success as young adults. In order for this to happen, Ms. Phillips will work with Dr. Caruso to assure that all stakeholders work in partnership so that every student can grow to reach their fullest academic and social-emotional potentials.

Ms. Phillips has been in education for thirteen years and previously taught for nine years as a Language Arts/Social Studies teacher at Lafayette School in Chatham. As a building and team leader in Chatham for six years, she helped guide staff through several curriculum changes and provided professional development for district K-5 educators. She also served as a special education teacher in Chatham's extended summer program. Ms. Phillips holds a B.A. from Siena College, an M.A in education from the College of St. Elizabeth and is finishing her second masters in educational leadership at Fairleigh Dickinson University this year.

Ms. Phillips resides in Mendham with her son and daughter, a senior and junior in college respectively, and youngest daughter, a junior in high school. Her family enjoys spending time at Culvers Lake, where there are many favorite places to read, relax, and gather inspiration.

