



Tewksbury Township Board of Education

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www.tewksburyschools.org

Dear Tewksbury Township Families,

Despite getting off to a late start, the 2016–17 school year is now in full swing. District personnel worked tirelessly to address emergent facilities issues, ensuring a safe return to school for all. Detailed information regarding building maintenance can be found on the district website at www.tewksburyschools.org.

The Tewksbury Board of Education and district goals for the current school year are twofold:

- Increase student performance in mathematics and writing.
- Expand staff and student recognition programs.

These goals, along with monitoring and furthering our three-year Strategic Plan, guide district priorities to ensure resources are allocated effectively. The five goals articulated in the Strategic Plan (available on the school website) cover Curriculum & Instruction, Technology Infusion & Integration, Community Engagement, Professional Development & Finance, and Facilities & Advocacy. Notable progress on the Strategic Plan to date:

- Implementation of a curriculum focused on 21st century skill development through problem based learning, writing skills and extensive technology integration in the classroom via:
 - Expanded STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) opportunities, including the introduction of Project Lead the Way STEM at TES.
 - Implementation of a newly revised 5th through 8th grade science curriculum using Next Generation Science Standards.
 - Implementation of a comprehensive phonics program in grades K through 2.
- Additional programming for our students including the expansion of non-athletic extra-curricular opportunities at TES and OTS. Also an increased focus on wellness education, character education, and social emotional learning across all grade levels.
- Substantial upgrades to the wireless and network infrastructure, as well as replacement of several Smart Boards and other classroom instructional technology devices. We are very close to our goal of a 1-to-1 student to device ratio in grades 3 – 8, with 7th grade piloting a 1-to-1 program last year.
- Launch of a Staff Recognition program with 95 nominations submitted in the first six months of the program. Enhanced professional development covering instructional coaching in writing, math, research, and STEM, along with continued development opportunities in Writer’s Workshop, gifted education, Math in Focus, and Next Generation Science Standards.
- Ongoing security enhancements at both schools, as well as necessary repairs to the loading dock and sidewalks at TES are underway. A lease to buy program has been implemented as aging buses in our fleet

are retired. Furthermore, kitchen upgrades and enhanced options in our food service program are available at both schools.

Tewksbury Township is one of small number of districts in the state to have successfully renewed our teacher contract on time. We are pleased to begin the year with a ratified contract in place for our teachers. In addition, the Board of Education welcomes Mr. Scott Yerger as OTS Principal. Mr. Yerger has an excellent background as an administrator and math and science teacher. He joins us from Kingwood Township School District where he served as the Principal/Assistant Principal since 2010.

The Board and Administration is doing everything possible to continue offering an excellent education that develops the skills our children will need in the future, while balancing the tax burden on our community. Enrollment has decreased to under 600 students for the 2016-17 academic year, a 5 percent decrease from 2015-2016. Declining enrollment coupled with aging facilities and equipment are continued budget challenges. This year's budget included the elimination of 2.5 teaching positions. In addition to monitoring expense levels, we are diligent in seeking grants as an effort to offset costs in lieu of greater taxpayer assistance.

All district residents are encouraged to attend monthly Board meetings held on the fourth Thursday of each month. The Board of Education and school administration welcome community feedback. Currently there is an open seat on the Board with a term through December 2017. The position will be filled at the October 27th Board of Education meeting. Township residents wishing to be considered should submit a letter of interest to the Board Office by October 13th.

The start of the school year is a time full of promise and possibility, and this year our district continues positive momentum forward on delivering the best possible education for the children of Tewksbury, despite the challenges we face. On behalf of the Board of Education, thank you for your continued support of our students and staff.

Respectfully,

Lori Larsen
Board of Education President