



# SOUTH AMBOY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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## Letter from the Superintendent...

Dear Parents,

I hope you had an enjoyable and relaxing summer! I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back for another exciting school year. For those who are new to our school community, I would like to extend a special welcome and thank you for choosing South Amboy Public Schools. In our school community, we are committed to providing a high-quality education in a safe, secure, and nurturing environment designed to inspire and enrich life-long learning.

Our schools provide a comprehensive educational program delivered by professional staff devoted to ensuring student success at all levels. There's a unique and special advantage to attending South Amboy Public Schools. While bigger districts may offer a larger array of programs, it's the individualized attention in a smaller learning community that makes our schools a great place to develop academically, socially, and emotionally. Our schools offer a more intimate and personalized learning environment, and a cohesive vision among all stakeholders to build a strong community of learners.

### Here's a quick synopsis of last year's highlights:

- Implemented a student-centered Life-Skills program for special education students
- Partnered with the City of South Amboy to create an Internship / Coop Program
- Increased our PARCC scores for both ELA and Math across the district
- Doubled our PARCC proficiency in Algebra I
- Reached a 96.3% graduation rate, with 83% attending college
- Reduced our Student Chronic Absenteeism from 12.6% to 9% district-wide

The 2018-19 school year is upon us, and we urge your child to take advantage of the many programs, sports, and club activities available to all students. Your child's participation in extra-curricular activities enriches his/her overall educational experience by fostering collaboration and leadership, while instilling school pride and ownership. We have a strong tradition of excellence, in and out of the classroom, and our goal is for all students to find success in both!

Once again, welcome back to a new school year, and we ask that you make each day better than the day before!

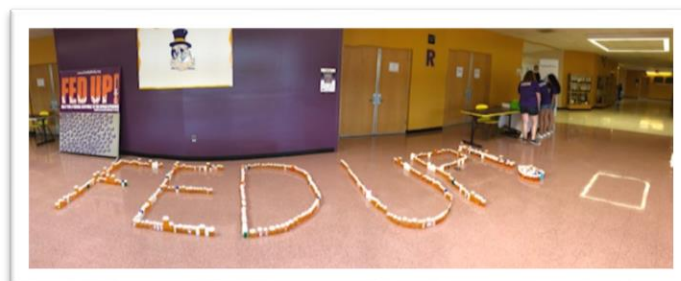
Sincerely,

Jorge E. Diaz

# SOUTH AMBOY SCHOOLS PARTNERS WITH ROOTS TO ADDICTION AND OTHER CITY AGENCIES

South Amboy Public Schools collaborated with Roots to Addiction, the City of South Amboy, and the South Amboy Police Department to bring a special program to the South Amboy community. The program called for an end to our nation's epidemic of addiction and overdose deaths attributed to opioids and other prescription drugs.

The event hosted on August 30<sup>th</sup> was a huge success, and we expect the event to grow each year. The program included various speakers, resource tables, and a memorial vigil. Thanks to all the student volunteers and community members that joined us to share in the collaborative effort to combat drug addiction.



## FACILITIES UPDATE

By Peter Frascella, Business Administrator

As students and staff eagerly await the start of the 2018-2019 school year, South Amboy Public Schools are equally as excited to introduce many facility upgrades throughout the district. Over the summer, we have worked tirelessly on completing new initiatives that include a new food service company, facilities upgrades, and security projects.

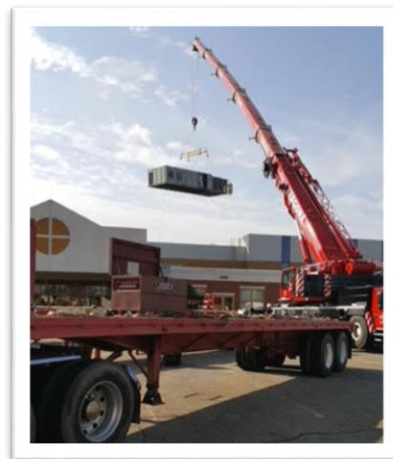
As many may already be aware, at the end of last school year, the district conducted a search for a new food service company to provide breakfast and lunch for the students during the 2018-2019 school year. The district is happy to announce that Maschio's Food Service will now be providing meals for the children in the district. Throughout the course of the summer, the district upgraded food service equipment so that new and delicious, high quality food will be served to our students. For school menu and nutrition information, please click on the "School Menus" graphic on the webpage under Departments -> Food Service or clicking on [Menus](#).



From a safety and security standpoint, this summer the district created a Security Vestibule at the Main Entrance to the Middle/High School. Visitors will no longer be able to gain access to the building prior to presenting identification and screening. A security window was added between two sets of locked doors to allow the main office staff to check the credentials of those attempting to enter the school.

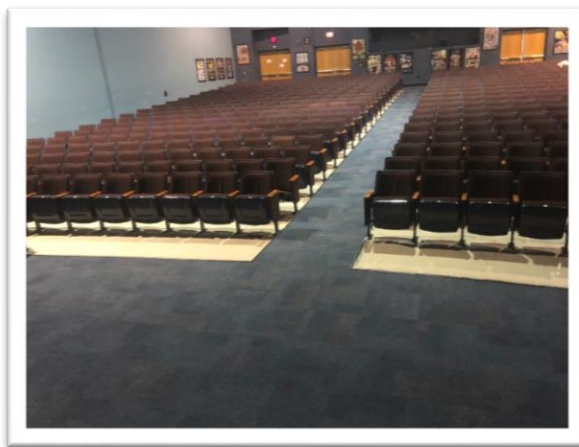
The district has also continued its beautification efforts by installing new carpet and painting in both the Middle/High School Library and Auditorium. The auditorium is not only one of the centerpieces for the School, but also the Community, so it was important that it received the attention it deserved. The School Library has not only received a facelift with regard to a new carpet and paint, but it has also undergone a redesign to meet the needs of the school and students.

The first of two major facility undertakings this summer was the replacement of a 90-Ton HVAC unit at the Middle/High School that controls the HVAC to the Gymnasium. The unit failed in January and was too old to be repaired so replacement was necessary. The installation was successful.



The second major facility initiative was the installation of the Playground at the Elementary School. This project is currently under construction, but we have been informed by the installers that it should be completed prior to the first day of school, weather permitting.

Finally, one of the most impressive things regarding our facilities is the general cleanliness of our schools. The schools look wonderful to the point when it is shocking when you first walk into our buildings. The cleanliness of our schools is due to the effort of our Custodial/Maintenance Department. They spend the entire summer cleaning, sanitizing, painting, dusting, and waxing the buildings from top to bottom to the point where the floors literally glow. Their hard work and dedication is truly appreciated.



## South Amboy Elementary and Middle School Introduces New Math Program

by Dr. Martin Gurczeski, VP of Student Affairs & STEM

We are excited to announce that the South Amboy School District will be implementing *Ready Mathematics* as its core mathematics curriculum. *Ready Mathematics* is a research-based curriculum that prepares students for mastery of the rigorous mathematics standards and is tailored to meet and exceed the needs of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The instruction in *Ready* will help students learn important mathematical concepts, develop problem-solving skills, and apply what they have learned outside of the classroom. *Ready* will challenge students to build on their previous mathematical knowledge, learn and explore different approaches to solving problems, and strengthen their critical thinking and complex reasoning skills.



Our committee, made up of teachers, administrators, and Board of Education members, chose *Ready Mathematics* because it will help us create a classroom environment that promotes mathematical reasoning, discourse, and a range of practices that will prepare our students for success in mathematics. Through a student-centered instructional model, students will build on their previous knowledge, learn and explore multiple approaches to solving problems, and strengthen their critical thinking and complex reasoning skills. Although there were other programs that we as a committee liked, *Ready Mathematics* will provide us the tools needed to help our students become “Today’s Learners” and “Tomorrow’s Leaders”.

### **Why does this math look different?**

Calculating an answer is only one part of mathematics. Mathematics is also about communicating, making connections, and finding ways to solve real-world problems. We need students who can persevere in thinking about a problem and attempt a solution, ask good questions, understand that there are different ways to solve a problem, and communicate their solutions to others.

Some instructional methods you may see in your child’s math materials may be unfamiliar to you. These newer methods are helping students make connections to concepts they have already learned to strengthen their understanding before they move on to something new. Research has shown that making these connections is an important step in developing strong mathematics foundations. More importantly, it will provide the students with the confidence needed to explore additional content in mathematics and science.

### **How you can help your student with math homework**

It’s important for your child(ren) to spend time thinking about problems and trying different things to arrive at a solution—even if he or she is struggling. Make sure they don’t give up too easily. If they are really struggling, praise their efforts and encourage them to try to figure it out—mistakes are encouraged because we learn from them. Research has shown that children often better retain what they have learned after continuing to think about a problem, even when they wanted to give up.

Rather than trying to show your child how to solve a problem, encourage him or her to try each one. Ask guiding questions that get them to take time to think about the problem and make connections to what they already know.

### **Where to learn more**

Each lesson in *Ready* includes a Family Letter explaining the mathematics concepts being taught that week. Read these letters and do the activities on the back with your son or daughter, as time allows. Please contact your child's teacher if you have not been receiving these letters or would like extra copies.

### **What is i-Ready?**

i-Ready is an online program that will help us determine your child's needs, personalize his or her learning, and monitor progress throughout the school year. i-Ready allows us to meet your child exactly where he or she is and provides data for us to increase your child's learning gains. Although the usage of i-Ready is not mandatory at home, students are encouraged to work on their individualized program for remediation and enrichment opportunities. Students will need access to a computer, internet, and their login information.



The i-Ready Diagnostic is an adaptive assessment that adjusts its questions to suit your child's needs. Each item a student sees is individualized based on his or her answer to the previous question. For example, a series of correct answers will result in slightly harder questions, while a series of incorrect answers will yield slightly easier questions. The purpose of this is not to give your child a score or grade, but instead to determine how best to support your child's learning.

i-Ready Instruction provides students with lessons based on their individual skill level and needs, so your child can learn at a pace that is just right for him or her. These lessons are fun and interactive, with games and characters to keep your child engaged as they learn.

### **What can I do to help?**

Each lesson in *Ready* includes a Family Letter explaining the mathematics concepts being taught that week. Read these letters and do the activities on the back with your son or daughter, as time allows. Please contact your child's teacher if you have not been receiving these letters or would like extra copies.

To deepen your child's learning in Online Instruction, you can:

- Discuss your child's progress on their i-Ready lessons
- Celebrate your child's learning and growth.
- Encourage them to use i-Ready at home.

We hope this information has provided helpful background for helping you understand your child's math instruction. As the school year begins, we will be sharing resources to assist you in supporting your child with their math homework.

## PREK EXPANSION & NEW CURRICULUM PROGRAM

By Dr. Christine Robbins, Director of Curriculum & Instruction

With the Pre-School Expansion Grant, all existing Pre-k classes will offer a full day program. The "Tools of the Mind" curriculum has been adopted by our Board of Education for the 2018-2019 school year for our preschool program. During this summer, our teachers have been formally trained in this model, which is named as an "exemplary educational intervention." The research-based program integrates learning approaches through the application of preschool theory of early childhood learning and development. Students engage in play-based learning and develop social skills as well as academic foundations focused on self-direction and group play.



We are very excited to offer this unique program to our students. In addition, we are developing an outdoor classroom to enable our students not only to enjoy the outdoors, but also to expand learning beyond the classroom walls. For more information visit: <https://toolsofthemind.org/>

## TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

By Mike Elson, Technology Coordinator

South Amboy Public Schools was certainly busy this summer when it comes to technology in the classroom.

First, we've upgraded the district's wireless network to accommodate our growing wireless needs. Every classroom received a new wireless access point with faster speeds to allow your children better access to G-Suite for Education and other district online resources. With the faster speeds also comes the ability to have more devices connected, making for a better experience throughout the district. This was the second largest technology upgrade for our district since the initial wireless installation over 5 years ago.



A good analogy to describe the update is to think of our students previously accessing our WiFi network like driving a car on a single-lane, local road with a 25 MPH speed limit. The upgrade is like we are driving on the Garden State Parkway (without all the traffic) - more lanes and a higher speed limit. Big difference!

Second, we purchased 22 Chromebook charging stations to begin to create banks of Chromebooks in our classrooms, encouraging always-on and ready technology.

Third, in order to fill these stations, we've purchased an additional 250 Chromebooks to replace some aging devices and also added to our growing fleet. This brings our total to almost 1000 Chrome devices used by faculty, staff and students.



I'm extremely excited to share all these improvements with your children and to continue to upgrade our district to meet the growing technology demands.

## DISTRICT ATHLETICS UPDATE

By Ken Blekeski, VP & Athletic Director

Welcome back to an exciting year for South Amboy Middle High School Athletics.

Once again this year we are happy to offer the following sports  
Fall: Boys and Girls Soccer (MS/HS), Girls Tennis (HS), Cross Country (HS)  
Winter: Cheer (MS/HS), Boys and Girls Basketball (MS/HS)  
Spring: Baseball (MS/HS), Softball (MS/HS), Track (MS/HS), Boys Tennis (HS)

This year, we have started to collect our athletic registration information, and sign off sheets through an online system. The link for the [Athletic Scheduler](#) can be found on the Middle High School website under the Athletics tab. All middle and high school students that are interested in playing sports this year must complete this online form.

Athletic physicals are a state requirement for all athletes. Physicals must be completed and approved by our school nurse and school physician before an athlete is allowed to participate in practice. The NJSIAA required forms can be found on the Middle High School Athletics page under the [Athletic Documents](#) heading. Sports physicals are valid for 365 days, however, a health history update will be required if your last physical occurred more than 90 days before the start of the season.

All of our [Athletic Schedules](#) can be found online. We encourage all parents and athletes to sign up for automatic schedule updates, which will notify you via email or text, of changes that occur due to weather or other types of cancellations. Most of our coaches utilize the Remind app to notify parents and players of changes to the daily schedule as well. Any questions regarding practice schedules and times can be directed to the team coaches. We encourage open communication from our coaches, and as such, we trust them to provide professional feedback to our players and to make decisions regarding the best interest of the team. Our coaches are available to speak with parents and players regarding issues of practices, skill development, and student athlete health and safety, however, the issue of playing time is not one which will be discussed at any level.

This year we will be returning a strong group of athletes led by our Senior class. Among this group are several All Division players and State level qualifiers. This is shaping up to be an exciting year, and we love the support of our students and our community. As always, we expect our parent and student spectators to model the same exceptional behavior that has earned some of our teams GMC Sportsmanship Award honors over the years. Our first fall sports open up with games on September 4. Hope to see you out there.



## MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL UPDATES

By Patrick McCabe, Principal

The MHS has had two important upgrades over the summer. First is the new carpeting and arrangement of the media center. It looks beautiful. The new set up will be more welcoming and increase the use of the resources. The second is the increased security at our front door. We now have a visitor window in our vestibule. Guests will be allowed in to the vestibule after ringing the outside bell and showing identification. Then, once in the vestibule, they will be greeted by our staff. There, we will check identification, provide temporary badges, if appropriate, and allow the visitor entrance into the building; the second set of doors now have remote locks on them as well. The visitor window will allow for small items to be dropped off without a visitor needing to enter the building.



## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL UPDATE

By Sean Dunphy, Principal

We have a number of updates for the upcoming school year. As previously mentioned here in the newsletter, we are excited to offer full-day Pre-k for our incoming students. In addition, our Prek teachers are ready to implement the Tools of the Mind curriculum program.

Our new playground is under construction. The playground was made possible through a Pre-School Expansion Grant and a donation from the PTO.

Our school will also be implementing the new Ready Math program in grades 1 through 5. Ready Mathematics is the highest rated K-8 mathematics program as evaluated by EdReports.org, an independent nonprofit that delivers evidence-based reviews of instructional materials. We chose *Ready Mathematics* as a school because we believe that the program will help us create richer classroom environments to strengthen our students' critical thinking, complex reasoning skills, and mathematical understanding, which is essential for the success of our students in the future.

Lastly, a new discipline policy was adopted by the Board of Education during the summer. I have included the policy in our student handbook, which was sent to you in August. The handbook will also be posted on the school's website. The policy includes a discipline chart which outlines the progressive discipline and interventions that will be administered for various infractions. Please take the time to review.





# PTO

The purpose of the South Amboy PTO is to strengthen the relationship between home and school, so that parents and teachers may work together for the success in the education of children at our schools. Our group helps the staff and students of our district by raising funds to provide technology and supplies needed, and has events to promote family unity.

The PTO is currently seeking new members for the upcoming school year to help with various activities such as a Fun Day committee, box top counters, and monthly birthday ice cream coverage. Please email a letter of interest to [sapto08879@gmail.com](mailto:sapto08879@gmail.com).



For more information on our PTO, please email us at [SAPTO08879@gmail.com](mailto:SAPTO08879@gmail.com)