

VOORHEES TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

August 2024 Newsletter

A Message from Dr. Hackett

August 5, 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you and your children are enjoying the summer. We have been working diligently to make data-informed decisions that enhance educational opportunities for all students.

Our theme for the 2024-2025 school year will continue to be "Building Pathways to Success: Empowering Students through Positive Connections," emphasizing the crucial link between positive relationships and achieving favorable outcomes. We will build upon this theme established in the 2023-2024 school year.

The 2024-2025 school year will mark the second year of our targeted efforts to meet the following district goals:

1. Prioritize data-driven differentiated instruction to address the diverse needs of all learners.
1. Ensure the continuity of a research-based professional development program that fosters a robust culture of communication and collaboration, nurturing continual learning and promoting professional dialogue among our highly skilled teaching staff.
1. Enhance the timeliness, accessibility, and effectiveness of communication with all stakeholders.

Listed below are district updates:

Food Advisory Committee Meetings

We will host our two (2) annual Food Advisory Committee meetings on October 17, 2024 <https://zoom.us/j/99210356677> and February 19, 2025 <https://zoom.us/j/94295900645> at 6:00 p.m. During the meetings, we will discuss important matters related to the nutritional well-being of our students. Mrs. Helen Haley, Business Administrator, and Tina Artusa, Director of Food Services for Nutriserve will host the virtual meetings. Your input is invaluable, as we strive to create a positive and healthy dining environment for all students. Your participation in this meeting will contribute to the ongoing improvement of our district's food services program.

Student Attendance

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) defines chronic absenteeism as a student missing 10% or more of their cumulative days in membership. It is important to note that all absences, except for the five NJDOE-approved absences listed below are included in the calculation for chronic absenteeism, regardless of any documentation provided by a parent/guardian. With this in mind, the district will maintain open lines of communication with parents to address absenteeism when a student reaches 5, 10, and 18 absences. The purpose of this communication is to provide necessary support as required.

The following are the five allowable reasons for a state-excused absence:

1. Religious observance (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h));
<https://www.nj.gov/education/holidays20222023.shtml>
2. A college visit (up to 3 days per school year for students in grades 11 and 12);
3. "Take Our Children to Work Day" or other rule issued by the Commissioner;
4. Participation in observance of Veterans Day (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-13.2) or district board of election membership activities (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-33); or
5. The closure of a busing district prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.

While the Voorhees Public Schools acknowledges that notes serve as documentation for "parent/guardian-approved absences," it is crucial to note that the Principal is required to inform the Superintendent if these absences become excessive.

Parent/guardian-approved absences refer to those absences with a valid reason that have been communicated in writing by a parent/guardian to the school. Examples of such absences typically include student illness or other medical conditions, as well as family emergencies.

Superintendent Forums for the 2024-2025 school year

The Superintendent's Forums provide an opportunity for the community to engage with me in a collaborative partnership with the ultimate goal of providing all students with a quality educational experience. Please join me to share ideas, knowledge, opinions, and concerns on the following dates at 6:30 p.m. at the Board Administration Building:

- Tuesday, October 29, 2024
- Thursday, January 30, 2025
- Tuesday, March 18, 2025
- Monday, May 19, 2025

Delayed Opening Change for the 2024-2025 School Year

Effective for the 2024-2025 school year, we will implement a two-hour delay for delayed openings, replacing the current 90-minute delay. This change addresses inquiries from parents and staff about the rationale behind the existing 90-minute delay, especially considering that most districts use a two-hour delay. It was brought to my attention that the 90-minute delay had been required due to our previous half-day kindergarten schedule. Our transportation vendors have expressed their gratitude for this change, as it will significantly streamline the scheduling of routes for delayed openings.

Curriculum & Instruction

The Voorhees Township Public Schools will introduce the Wonders Language Arts Literacy Program for grades 3-5 this year. Last spring, our instructional coaches provided comprehensive

training to teachers on this innovative curriculum. They detailed the program's structure and resources, equipping teachers to effectively implement it and ensuring students derive maximum benefit from its new features.

The Wonders Language Arts Program is centered around connected text sets that explore specific topics through guiding "Essential Questions," encouraging students to seek evidence and deepen their understanding. Each unit includes various comprehension exercises tailored to different genres within the text set, such as shared reads, anchor texts, and paired selections.

In addition to the Wonders program, teachers across grades K-8 will implement the newly revised 2023 New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) in language arts and mathematics. This summer, curriculum writers meticulously aligned our language arts and mathematics curricula with these updated standards. Elementary school teachers received training last spring, and middle school educators will undergo training led by reading and math supervisors this fall, ensuring seamless integration of the new standards across all grade levels.

Department of Special Services

The Department of Special Services will continue to strengthen its work with co-teaching pairs of inclusion teachers. Last year, administrators from the Special Services Department collaborated closely with inclusion teachers and an Inclusion Facilitator to explore ways to enhance our inclusion programs. As a result of these discussions, a focus group was formed, leading to several professional development opportunities and topics designed to support staff growth in the upcoming year.

At VMS, special education students will start participating in an Executive Functioning Support class in September. This class, taught by a Special Education teacher during the school day, will help students develop crucial skills such as time management, organization, and planning.

Buildings and Grounds Summer Projects

1. Continue replacing carpets with tile across the district.
2. Continue replacing doors and windows across the district.
3. Install new furniture, reception counters, mail slot counters, and flooring for the main offices, conference rooms, and principal's offices at Signal Hill Elementary School and Osage Elementary School.
4. Replace HVAC units in B-wing (12 classrooms) at Voorhees Middle School.
5. Replace windows in the Raymond J. Brosel, Jr. Performing Arts Center.
6. Replace sections of concrete and pavers in front of the Raymond J. Brosel, Jr. Performing Arts Center, main entrance, and CER entrance.
7. Expand the main entrance vestibule at Voorhees Middle School.
8. Renovation work at Voorhees Early Childhood Development Center.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for your invaluable partnership.

Working alongside all of you has been an absolute privilege. Together, we remain steadfast in our pursuit of enhancing the academic achievement of every student.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer.

Dr. Neely Hackett

Community Events

Community events can be found in our "District Community Backpack" by clicking on:

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/Page/41663>

CER 2024 - 2025 School Age Care

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CER School Age Care registration (Grades K to 5) for 2024 - 2025 will open on August 1, 2024 at 9:00 a.m. CER offers A LIMITED number of scheduling options for our working families (five full days, a.m. only, p.m. only, three full days per week, and five days per month). CER acknowledges that we cannot accommodate all families needing School Age Care, and some families will be put on the "Waitlist." We will do our best to provide a quality, organized, safe program for as many families as possible. We encourage families to have alternate plans for School Age Care should they not be immediately accepted. Families may visit the district's website (Community Tab) for additional information.

Like us on Facebook - Check out all of the great things happening around the district!



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