



# Voorhees Township Schools

*January 2025 Newsletter*

## **A Message from Dr. Hackett**

Dear Voorhees Community,  
Happy New Year!

As we begin 2025, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities ahead and honored to serve as Superintendent of Voorhees Township Public Schools. It is a privilege to work with such a dedicated community of students, staff, parents, and guardians, all focused on ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed.

Looking forward, I am excited to collaborate with you in exploring new opportunities and initiatives that will support our students' growth and achievement. Together, we will continue to create an environment where all students thrive.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and I wish you a year filled with peace, joy, and prosperity.  
Happy New Year!

## **Curriculum and Instruction Update**

### Artificial Intelligence Training

Teachers have undergone training on the digital artificial intelligence platform known as Magic School AI. This program provides a variety of tools designed to help educators modify assignments, enhance project ideas, generate new tasks, and accommodate diverse student needs. The platform emphasizes privacy to protect data, ensuring that both teachers and students have a secure environment for daily classroom activities.

Training for teachers in grades 2-5 took place during our in-service on November 1st. Middle school teachers (grades 6-8) received training in half-day sessions over the past few months. Educators in grades K and 1 are scheduled to receive AI training during our upcoming in-service on March 31st. We would like to recognize the contributions of our District Technology Supervisor, Mr. Bruce Taylor, who has introduced this platform to our district. Furthermore, each school's technology specialist has developed professional development sessions for our staff.

### Benchmark Assessments

Benchmark assessments in Mathematics and English Language Arts have been administered for students in grades 3-8 across our elementary and middle schools. The data collected by our professional development coaches and content administrators will be analyzed to identify

strengths and areas for growth based on grade-level standards, allowing teachers to effectively guide their instruction.

#### Middle School English Language Arts Program

The English Language Arts (ELA) Department at the middle school has been diligently reviewing ELA programs to enhance our students' learning experience. In September and October, teachers conducted a thorough examination of five different program offerings. After careful consideration, the committee has narrowed the options to two promising programs. Currently, additional information is being requested from the program vendors to assist teachers and administrators in making an informed selection.

#### **Parent Resources and Support Services-Link on District Website**

I am pleased to inform you that we have created a link on the district website

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/domain/8844> that provides information about various community, state, and federal resources available to our families. This link will be regularly updated with new information as the district receives it.

#### **Voorhees Early Childhood Development Center Most Recent Update**

Schedule:

Our previous estimated completion date was mid-February. However, we have been notified of a delay in the delivery of two main ventilation units, which are now expected to arrive in late January. The impact of this delay is still being analyzed, but it may result in a further delay in the project's completion, potentially extending the timeline to between March 15th and March 31st. We are closely monitoring the schedule and working with the contractor to identify opportunities for time savings and improve delivery times whenever possible.

Interior Work:

Door frames have been installed, and drywall finishing and painting have begun on the second floor, continuing on the first floor. Bathroom wall tiling is progressing well. Floor trim installation has also started. The contractor has received inspections and is preparing to close up the walls. Work on overhead mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems continues, and the hot water heaters have been set in place. Installation of equipment in the mechanical room and bathroom rough-ins is ongoing.

Site/Exterior Work:

Playground surfacing will proceed as soon as weather conditions allow. New window installations, roofing work, and ramp evaluation are ongoing. Underground utility installation is also in progress.

Permits/Inspections:

Permits have been issued for the entire project, and inspections are up to date.

#### **New Jersey Department of Education Definition of Chronic Absenteeism**

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) defines chronic absenteeism as a student missing 10% or more of the total school days they are enrolled in a school year. Please note that all absences—except for the six NJDOE-approved reasons (see below)—are included in this calculation, regardless of documentation provided by parents or guardians.

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); and

5. The closure of a busing district prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.
6. Participation in one "civic event" for students in grades 6-12 - can only be applied to an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit. The civic event is required to incorporate an element of service learning and address a public issue or concern.

Please contact your child's principal to discuss any anticipated or ongoing extended absences.

### **Parent Virtual Workshop**

Presenter: Maria Pinizzotto, District Instructional Coach

Title: Questioning to Promote Higher-Level Thinking

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/97121751020?pwd=xaXf8MYivy86O6aZH4sGbSaebEU5UE.1>

#### Workshop Summary:

In this engaging workshop, parents will delve into Bloom's Taxonomy, focusing on higher-level questions that foster critical thinking and deeper learning. Participants will learn about the different tiers of questioning, with a special emphasis on questions that encourage analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. By participating, parents will explore a variety of question stems and discover how to support their children in developing responses grounded in text-based evidence. I look forward to our ongoing partnership as we collaborate in pursuit of our shared mission to deliver quality education to the students of Voorhees. Together, we play a pivotal role in establishing the academic foundation that equips our students to be prepared for both college and career paths.

Dr. Neely Hackett

### **2024 - 2025 Assessment Schedule**

[https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/cms/lib/NJ01000237/Centricity/Domain/7358/Assessment%20Schedule%20and%20Requirements%202024-2025%20revised%2011\\_24.pdf](https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/cms/lib/NJ01000237/Centricity/Domain/7358/Assessment%20Schedule%20and%20Requirements%202024-2025%20revised%2011_24.pdf)

### **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:

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

### **Important Upcoming Dates**

**January 2: Return from Winter Break**

**January 15: Family Night**

**January 16: Parent Virtual Workshop - Questioning to Promote Higher-Level Thinking**

**January 17: District Spirit Day - Crazy Hat Day**

January 20: Schools Closed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 22: Board of Education Meeting

## District Spirit Theme Days

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/cms/lib/NJ01000237/Centricity/Domain/1/District%20Spirit%20Day%202024%202025.pdf>

## Parent Virtual Workshops

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/cms/lib/NJ01000237/Centricity/ModuleInstance/5783/Parent%20Workshops%202024%202025.pdf>

## Voorhees Early Childhood Development Center

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/domain/8957>

## Download the VTSD Mobile App

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/domain/7365>

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### Voorhees Township Public School - Administration Building

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**Sue Donnelly**

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