

# VOORHEES TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

October 2024 Newsletter

## A Message From Dr. Hackett

October 1, 2024

Dear Voorhees Community,

The 2024-2025 school year has started exceptionally well. Our new initiatives, including the Financial Literacy course for middle school students, a new English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum program for grades 3-5, and the What I Need (W.I.N.) period for second graders, are poised to make a significant positive impact on our students' academic achievements.

We are also continuing several successful programs from the previous year, such as accelerated mathematics in elementary school (grades 4 and 5), Spanish instruction by a certified teacher for grades 3-5, the elementary student council, various elementary clubs, instructional coaching for our teachers, and the Rutgers Accelerated Mathematics program for middle school students. We remain dedicated to enhancing our special education program, with a focus on inclusion as a core principle in all activities and programs. Additionally, we are committed to continuously upgrading our physical infrastructure to provide a safe and technologically advanced learning environment.

## VMS Safe and Secure Learning Environment

I would like to share some initiatives we are implementing as proactive measures to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for our district. As a data-driven district, we utilize various data sets to make informed decisions and identify trends that guide our efforts.

A recent data point is the profile survey for the next VMS assistant principal, in which parents and teachers indicated that 63.2% believe student behavior is the most pressing issue facing the middle school. Additionally, over the past two years, we have observed an increase in suspensions. In addition to our existing programs and activities at the middle school that focus on climate and culture, we are currently implementing the following initiatives:

**1. Empowerment Guest Speakers Series:** We will invite speakers who specialize in motivating middle school students to inspire and energize them, with an emphasis on respect, reflection, and individual value. We will include small focus groups throughout the year to continue dialogue in these areas.

- 2. Teacher Mentorship Program:** We will pair teachers with students who would benefit from a mentoring relationship. Teachers will meet with these students before and after school to discuss their grades and ensure that their behavior aligns with the district's code of conduct.
- 3. Saturday Reflection Sessions (SRS):** Students will attend school on Saturdays to watch a video on behavior, engage in restorative practices, discuss expectations with the teacher on duty, and develop goals to align their behavior with the district's code of conduct.
- 4. Mandatory Post-Suspension Meetings:** When students return from a suspension, parents must attend a post-suspension meeting with building administrators to create a detailed plan for ensuring a productive school year. If a student is suspended twice, parents will be required to meet with me. During this meeting, we will set targeted goals and provide appropriate supports to help the student avoid further suspensions.

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

The effective and efficient incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom has been a topic of discussion among educational scholars in recent years. I am pleased to inform you that Voorhees is making significant strides to ensure that AI serves as a tool to support and enhance teaching and learning. To this end, we have developed a training schedule for our teachers and are considering the purchase of Magic School AI, a safe and engaging platform where students can access information and teachers can assign interactive learning tasks. Magic School AI offers teachers tools such as a lesson plan generator, text-dependent questions, and interactive video-based activities, including questions related to YouTube videos. These features aim to make learning more dynamic and tailored to each student's needs. We want to extend a special thank you to our technology department for organizing and delivering this valuable training. We're excited about the possibilities AI will bring to our classrooms and the positive impact it will have on student learning.

### **Parent Virtual Workshops**

Our first parent virtual workshop of the year is scheduled for Tuesday, October 15, 2024, and will address Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB) District procedures, with a particular focus on distinguishing between bullying and conflict. We hope you can join us for this workshop, which begins at 7:00 p.m. The second workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, October 23, 2024. It will include an overview of our curriculum and the selection criteria for elementary accelerated mathematics and enrichment programs. This workshop will also begin at 7:00 p.m.

[Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Parent Workshop](#)

[Elementary Accelerated Mathematics and Enrichment Programs Parent Workshop](#)

### **Superintendent's Forum**

I also invite you to attend the first Superintendent's Forum of the 2024-2025 school year on October 29, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at the Administration Building (insert link). These forums are a great opportunity for the community to engage with me and work together toward the common goal of providing a high-quality educational experience for all students.

### **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.

We are delighted with the progress of the renovations at our new Voorhees Early Childhood Center. Regular updates are posted on our website <https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/domain/8957>

We are thrilled about the opportunities this school year presents for our students. We are appreciative of the unwavering support from our parents and community partners. Together, we will persist in our collaborative efforts to guarantee every chance for our students' success.

Warm regards,  
Dr. Neely Hackett

## **2024 - 2025 Assessment Schedule**

<https://www.voorhees.k12.nj.us/cms/lib/NJ01000237/Centricity/Domain/7358/Assessment%20Schedule%20and%20Requirements%202024%202025.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:

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

## **Important Upcoming Dates**

**October 2:** Early Dismissal - Rosh Hashanah

**October 3 & 4:** Schools Closed - Rosh Hashanah

**October 10:** Early Dismissal - Staff In-Service

**October 11:** Early Dismissal - Yom Kippur

**October 14:** Schools Closed - Columbus/Indigenous People's Day

**October 15:** Parent Virtual Workshop HIB

**October 16:** Family Night

**October 29:** Superintendent's Forum

**October 30:** 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>

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**Sue Donnelly**

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