



# MANHASSET

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Spring 2019

[www.manhassetsschools.org](http://www.manhassetsschools.org)

## Enhancing Health & Safety

In addition to the security vestibules noted in the article at right, several health and safety upgrades have been completed or are in process:

### In Process:

- Revised visitor policy with enhanced visitor screening, implementation of a new visitor management system, video intercom and trained greeters.
- Add a second security vestibule at the Secondary School (gym entrance), funded in part by a generous gift from SCA Frolic 2017, and a permanent security vestibule at Shelter Rock School, subject to voter approval of the Capital Projects Proposition on May 21, 2019.
- Additional security guards/aides and a security booth at the Secondary School.
- Implementation of door-ajar alert systems.
- Enhanced and additional exterior and interior lockdown alert strobe lights.
- Additional HD cameras with live views accessible to Nassau County Police Department.
- Digital radio and public address system upgrades.

### Completed:

- Door hardening throughout.
- Swipe card access for building entry.
- Automated lockdown systems which can be interfaced with public address systems and text messaging.
- Key personnel access to police RAVE emergency mass notification system.
- Stop the Bleed Save a Life staff training, conducted on site by North Shore University Hospital staff members.
- Automated External Defibrillation upgrades with automated communication to Nassau Emergency Services.

# Strengthening Our Schools *Both Inside & Out*

## *Prioritizing the social, emotional and physical well-being of our students*

It is our intent to ensure that Manhasset Public Schools continues to be at the forefront of building the social, emotional and physical well-being of each and every student.

The Board of Education and administration have prioritized the development and implementation of best practices in social-emotional learning systems and supports and the explicit teaching of skills and strategies as an integral part of the academic program to enable students to achieve and maintain social, emotional and physical wellness.

A comprehensive overview of how we are implementing social and emotional learning best practices across buildings, grade levels and departments can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Concurrently, we are implementing innovative technologies and practices that have been endorsed by local and federal law enforcement officials to make our school buildings as secure as possible. While taking a softer approach inside our schools to help students through the challenges of childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, we are hardening the exterior of our footprint to ensure our overarching priority – health and safety – is met to the fullest extent.

As we develop, implement and communicate a clear Districtwide vision for mental wellness and school safety with a compelling nod to social and emotional learning, we have enlisted the input of students, parents and faculty and

have teamed with community partners to ensure that every initiative is carried out with our community's support and our children's well-being in mind. Last spring, thanks to a donation by the SCA, we conducted a school climate survey, receiving more than 2,700 student, parent and staff responses. All of this input has been extremely valuable.

Construction on new security vestibules at the main entrances of Manhasset Secondary School and both elementary schools will be completed later this spring. Additionally, we consistently conduct security drills and training in conjunction with the Nassau County Police Department, Homeland Security, BOCES safety specialists and building safety teams. Law enforcement and other security professionals continue to serve as advisers to our District Safety Committee and make recommendations on how to further enhance school safety.

Many of these recommendations have been implemented, including an evaluation of our school visitor policy. Other recent security enhancements that have been completed or are being planned are detailed in the column to the left.

We thank the community for its support and encourage you to learn more about our efforts to enhance social and emotional learning and to make our schools safer, kinder and more mindful environments for all.

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# Leading the Way in Social and Emotional Learning

The District fully recognizes its responsibility to develop in all students the social, emotional and academic skills to enable them to succeed. In accordance with the New York State Education Department's (NYSED) "Mental Health Education Literacy in Schools: Linking to a Continuum of Well-Being," we are focusing on six main areas, as outlined below.

## Review and assess K-12 health education curricula for alignment to new mental health education requirements.

In conjunction with amendments to Education Law §804, we are strengthening mental health practices and better aligning the relationship between the physical and mental health of our students. Programs are being designed to enhance student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.

## Build capacity and strengthen relationships between educators and pupil personnel services (PPS), including school psychologists, social workers, counselors and nurses.

The District has established a Mental Health Support Team (MHST), which consists of school counselors, psychologists, social workers and nurses. The MHST has been meeting regularly with faculty and PPS support staff to identify common issues of concern in the buildings and solutions to benefit the social and emotional well-being of students.

"We want students who are fulfilled, joyful and resilient – and while we know that many students already are, we also know that our focus on our children's social and

emotional well-being must continue," said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Vincent Butera.

In November, a four-hour training session that involved 327 faculty and staff members was conducted. Titled the "Mental Wellness Approach," the workshop was designed to help staff better understand, identify and address mental illness within the student population and included breakout sessions and role playing. The MHST is developing strategies to heighten awareness of mental health support staff services.

## Establish school-community partnerships with mental health professionals and organizations.

In June, secondary and elementary level faculty members met with David Hymowitz, coordinator of behavioral health awareness training and education with the Mental Health Association of Nassau County, and Dr. Ronald Smith, psychologist and former superintendent of schools who was involved in shaping NYSED's "Continuum of Well-Being" comprehensive guide. In December, the MHST, administrators and Mr. Hymowitz met again with other community partners. The focus of these meetings was to target best practices for social and emotional learning and mental wellness in Manhasset.

"Working in collaboration with our mental health providers, and in partnership with outside agencies, we will continue to build our staff's understanding of student mental wellness," Dr. Butera said.

To date, the District's community partners in these areas include Central Nassau Guidance and Counseling Services, Family and Children's Association, Long Beach Reach, Manhasset CASA (Community Against Substance Abuse), the Melillo Center, Mercy Medical Center Family Counseling Services, North Shore Child and Family Guidance Center and Tempo Group Inc.

The District will look to establish and strengthen relationships with Northwell Medical Center, NYU Langone and Dr. Anthony Puliafico of New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Department of Child Psychiatry/ Psychology.

"We want students who are fulfilled, joyful, and resilient – and while we know that many students already are, we also know that our focus on our children's social and emotional well-being must continue." – Superintendent of Schools Dr. Vincent Butera.

## Leveraging partnerships and building upon existing resources to develop a sustainable infrastructure for mental health.

Administrative meetings were held over the summer, and the MHST held additional meetings with Mr. Hymowitz and his team. Over the course of the fall and winter, some members of the MHST participated in "Mental Health in Schools: It's Everyone's Job," a four-session think tank series facilitated by Dr. Smith that helped to establish roles and channels for community partners to share resources and information for the benefit of all stakeholders.

## Identify strategies to engage families and students in supporting mental health and well-being.

Last spring, the District conducted a School Quality Survey. Over 2,700 responses were collected and reviewed, including data from 1,075 parents, 293 employees and 1,352 students. The feedback has been invaluable in guiding our goal of improving the climate at all three school buildings. The District looks forward to planning mental wellness symposiums for students and parents. Parents and student resources will also be expanded.

"Everything we do to enhance the social and emotional support system in school must be extended to the home to ensure that the students and their families benefit from every resource available to them," said Manhasset Executive Director for District Special Education Programs & Services and MHST Co-Chair Allison Rushforth.

## Supporting a School Climate 'Culture of Care'

To support a "culture of care" within our buildings, the District has developed four initiatives as outlined below.

**Raising Awareness:** The District will continue to raise awareness through Responsive Classroom implementations, mindfulness work with staff and students, and school counselor classroom lessons at both the elementary schools and the secondary school.

**Ensuring a Safe and Nurturing Environment:** One way to achieve this will be by identifying students in need of additional support through the Instructional Support Team, continuing to monitor their well-being and providing additional resources to these families and others.

**Establishment of a Social and Emotional Learning and Support Center (SEL Wing):** The May 21, 2019 ballot will include a capital projects proposition that seeks voter approval for several projects including the SEL Wing, a redesign and repurposing of existing space in the Middle School wing to create an area for Middle School students to take a mindful break from their work and/or speak with pupil personnel services staff. The reconstruction will provide space for school counselor, psychologist and social worker offices, as well as building administration and full size classroom space. Planning for the SEL Wing of the Secondary School is underway. Visits to other school student wellness centers have and will continue to take place, and a committee has been formed to help determine the final design, subject to voter approval of the project.

**Increase Mental Health Counseling Support:** The proposed 2019-20 budget includes funding for an additional school counselor at the elementary level. Presently, the two schools share a school counselor.

## Future Plans

District faculty and staff will participate in ongoing professional development with the MHST. "Mental Wellness Approach" training will be expanded and administered to elementary faculty and staff. Social and emotional wellness discussions will take place and resources will be shared during regular faculty meetings.

"We will continue to nurture partnerships and refine our practices for the long-term," Dr. Butera concluded. "Our goal is to ensure that systems and supports are always in place to assess, intervene and help our students as they navigate these most important years."

