Dear Spackenkill Community,

Many of you are aware from various sources, including the recent media reports, that Orville Todd Middle School Spanish teacher Manny Blanco is battling health problems. He has been ill for some time. I was able to attend our Varsity Boys Soccer Team’s final sectional playoff game (he is the coach). Our team competed against a bigger and stronger rival. Spack’s team spirit and fight was impressive. They never backed off from a loose ball and battled the entire match. On the following Monday, I wrote Coach Blanco a note telling him how impressed I was with the scrappiness and never-give-up attitude of the team and thanked him for the season. Teams take on the personality of their coaches. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Mr. Blanco. We know that you are a fighter and look forward to the day that you return to the classroom and soccer field.

Today is the last day that Ms. Weisel will serve as interim principal at Nassau Elementary School. We are so very grateful for your service to Spackenkill, and you should know that your leadership has made a difference. Mr. Lynch, our new Nassau principal, welcome. We look forward to you wearing your “ugly Christmas suit” for years to come.

Finally, you may wish to stop by the high school and see how a synthetic turf field is constructed. The drainage system is amazing to behold!

My best,

Mark Villanti, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Nassau Principal Erik Lynch began work in the district last month. Mr. Lynch earned his Bachelor's in Elementary Education from Valparaiso University and his Master's in Educational Leadership and Administration from the College of St. Rose. Prior to coming to Spackenkill, he held positions as Principal and Dean of Students at the Eugene Brooks Intermediate School in the Welotuck District. He also has eight years of experience teaching in elementary classrooms in the Hudson Valley and beyond. We welcome Mr. Lynch and asked him a few questions so that the community can get to know him better.

Q: You’ve worked in a number of school districts, one as far away as North Carolina. What is it about Spackenkill that makes a great fit for you?

Before visiting Spackenkill I knew of its positive reputation, national awards, and exceptional outcomes. After my first two visits to the district, it was clear to me that the district couples high expectations with high levels of support and I knew I wanted to be a part of the team. I’m excited to join a learning community that values growth, collegiality, and the continuous improvement process.

Q: Can you tell us a bit about what you’ve learned from teaching that you apply to your role as an administrator?

I went into education to positively impact the lives of students and enjoyed doing so each year that I taught in the classroom. Teaching is both an art and a science and is the most important variable in classrooms around the world. As a principal, I can still positively impact students by supporting teachers, helping them develop, and establishing a growth mindset in everything that we do in our school. I think through the lenses of teachers and parents each time I make a decision and that practice has made me a better school leader.

Q: What are some traits of highly effective teachers? How do you encourage teachers to motivate students?

Great teachers are reflective, passionate, engaging, dedicated, and caring. They also possess growth mindsets and prioritize positive relationships with their students above all.

Q: You've been involved in basketball as a coach for many years. Did you play basketball as a student? Is this still a pastime? What other activities do you pursue in your free time?

I played High School basketball, football, and golf and then went on to play football in college and coach High School basketball. I still play a lot of golf and coach my son's flag football team! In addition to sports, I enjoy reading, music, and hiking. I’ve hiked three sections of the Appalachian Trail, and have a lifetime goal of completing the 2,100 miles from Georgia to Maine.

Q: What haven't we asked you that we should have?

My wife (Kelly) is an elementary special education teacher in Rhinebeck and I have two sons (Gunner, 5, and Axel, 1). We are excited to welcome another baby boy in early February!

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**UPCOMING KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION**

Kindergarten Registration for the 2020-2021 school year will take place at Nassau School on Wednesday, February 19th and Thursday, February 20th, between the hours of 9:30 am to 2 pm.
Tech Academy Open to All Elementary Parents

Parent Tech Academy
Navigating Google Classroom and Internet Safety
Presented by Marcella Byrne, Technology Integration Teacher
Kim Scoralick, Third Grade Teacher

Wednesday, January 22, 2020
6:30-8:00 pm
Hagan Elementary

Please note this is an adult only event.
PTA will be providing babysitting
BYOD= Bring Your Own Device for student account troubleshooting.
School devices will be available for use.
Please RSVP below or with QR code

Student(s) Name ___________________________ Grade(s) ___________
Parent/Guardians __________________________________________
Babysitting needed (circle one) YES NO
Number of Children ___________

Click here for the downloadable pdf version of the Parent Tech Academy flyer.

Students Follow Fitness Track

Over the winter recess, the Nassau Site-Based Team and the Elementary PTA joined forces to lay down an activity track in the gymnasium hallway.
Designed by Fit & Fun Playscapes, a Hudson Valley company, the colorful track is made from stickers and encourages active play.
Above: Volunteers laid the activity track stickers over the winter break.

Above: When students returned to school, they tried out the track and had fun matching their movements to the visual cues. Pictured below are students marching, hopping, crab-crawling and more. It is a great way to exercise indoors when the weather gets chilly.

Click here to watch a super-cute video of a student following the track!
Thank You, Officer Doughty

Thursday was Law Enforcement Appreciation Day. Thank you, School Resource Officer Steve Doughty, for all you do for the community.

SHS Musician Plays with College Symphony

On December 9th, Johnny Mulcahy played French horn with the SUNY New Paltz College - Youth Symphony as part of the Department of Music/School of Fine and Performing Arts Music Fall 2019 Concert Series. Since being selected by audition last spring, Johnny has rehearsed with the symphony on a rigorous schedule. Congratulations to Johnny for all that hard work paying off!

Above: Johnny Mulcahy is pictured in the top photo with SUNY New Paltz Professor and College - Youth Symphony Director Dr. Christiana Fortune-Reader.

Orchestra Students Visit NYC Ballet

On December 18, seventh and eighth orchestra students traveled to the New York City Ballet to see "The Nutcracker." Enjoy some photos below.
Capital Project Update

Construction of the new track and field continues. Facilities Director Dave Downes took the drone photo below on Monday, January 8th.

*Click here to watch a brief video of track and field work in action.*

Above: Workers began preparing the ground for the turf field, evidenced by the growing pile of dirt to the left. The yellowish orange "tubes" pictured to the right await burial on a bed of gravel underground to mitigate storm water.

Above: Workers are moving quickly. Drainage tubes were already in place on Friday, January 10.
Every fall athletic team qualified as a New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Scholar Athlete Team. To receive this recognition, the team’s average GPA for 75% of the roster must be greater than 90.00. Congratulations to our coaches and athletes!

OM Revving Up

Hagan fifth graders have begun Odyssey of the Mind (OM) sessions with coach Brendan Turk. In a recent session, in order to practice for the “spontaneous problem” portion of the competition, they improvised a dance on the stage. Spontaneous creativity involves quick thinking and teamwork. Afterward, Mr. Turk opened a discussion of key terms and concepts of OM. “Mindfulness” was one topic, and they discussed the importance of focus during their time together. The students will also be working on a long-term problem involving building balsa wood structures that will need to be passed under a limbo bar. The students will continue to meet weekly and take part in a competition in early March. Read more about OM by clicking on this link.

Above: OMers improvise a dance. Pictured left to right are Marissa Lyons, Sophia Gilmore, Shanum Choudhury, Alexandre Turk, Rachel Park, and Caroline Collins.

Above: Mr. Turk leads the OMers through a discussion of mindfulness.

Dangers of Vaping Explained

This week, Cristine Groenewegen, a community educator with The Council on Addiction Prevention & Education of Dutchess County (CAPE), visited Mr. Aagaard’s high school health students to speak about the consequences of vaping. Ms. Groenewegen has visited Spackenkill High School and Todd Middle School in the past to talk about this subject, but her presentation continues to include new information: “The information keeps changing as we find out more and more about e-cigarettes,” she told the students, noting that youth survey results show that the number of teens vaping skyrocketed to epidemic proportions from 2018 to 2019 from 3.5 million to 5 million nationwide. Because the brain takes until about age 25 to develop fully, teens and young adults are particularly susceptible to vaping’s addictive hold on the brain. “E-cigarettes
risk. Organizations like The Truth Initiative have called attention to the dangers of vaping and its unknown long-term effects. Ms. Groenewegen also talked about lung diseases associated with vaping, the result of inhaling an aerosol (not water vapor, as some people mistakenly believe). Students were offered anti-vaping tee shirts and other giveaways to bring the message home.