Dear Spackenkill Community,

I am struck by Ms. Farrell's lesson about Dr. King and the theme of her class project, “Everyone can be great.” As a child, those words, “becoming great,” meant that I wanted to be the next Mickey Mantle! As I became a high school student, I came to realize that it was time to let go of that dream (couldn’t hit a curve ball) and find another. My parents always encouraged my brothers and I to become great. I never imagined that I would become a school superintendent or that my brother would become the Chief Justice of the Florida Appellate Court. “Great” is not synonymous with “famous.” It means becoming the best version of ourselves.

Certainly, our new third grade teacher, Ms. Tomasetti, embraces that thought in her interview. What about Jack DeLuca, a young, aspiring artist who has created an artwork that has already earned him recognition. And our high school young thespians, who went off to their first-ever New York State Theater Conference and are developing their artistic talents. Lucas Jin seems to have embraced the message. Imagine performing at Carnegie Hall in third grade!

A great education should encourage all of our students to think big and realize that with hard work, motivation, and smart goals, you can become great and the best version of you. Just a reminder that there is no school on Monday in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

My best,

Mark Villani, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

MLK Remembered

In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, schools honored the civil rights leader’s memory with lobby displays and classroom activities (see Nassau’s at left).

In Ms. Farrell’s K-2 classroom at Nassau, students read about Dr. King, watched videos about his life, and discussed his quote “Everyone can be great.” The students talked about MLK’s thoughts on character and how each of us could do little things each day to show fairness, love, togetherness, and respect toward one another. Ms. Farrell’s students also read the book “All Are Welcome,” by Alexandra Penfold, and incorporated the message of “All are welcome here” into the classroom.

Mrs. Strapeo’s second graders read the book “Martin’s Big Words,” by Doreen Rappaport. The students discussed what these “big words” mean, and then they
At Hagan, Mrs. Scootlick and Technology Integration Teacher Marcella Byrne worked on an MLK activity with students. The third graders listened to two videos and then respond to three questions via a program called Flipgrid.

At the secondary level, lobby signs also paid tribute. There will be even more activities next week!

Above: In the Nassau kindergarten wing, a bulletin board shows how everyone can be great.

Above: "My Dream for Making a Difference" was a theme project for Mrs. Turner's second grade students.
Above: Mrs. Scoralick's students worked with Mrs. Byrne on a Flipgrid activity about MLK.

Above: Mrs. Strapec's students created posters and microphones reflecting the words of Dr. King.

Above: Labby signs at the high school and middle school remind us of Dr. King's legacy.
Jack DeLuca in Mrs. Cunningham’s kindergarten class has been selected as a finalist for Artsonia’s Artist of the Week award for the pre-K-through-third-grade age group. This is a national contest. The finalist who receives the most online votes between now and Saturday, January 18th, will be selected as Artist of the Week.

To view the finalists and cast your vote, click on the link below. Voting is limited to one vote per computer per day for each age group. Jack’s art is listed as Jack31451, Poughkeepsie, New York:

http://www.artsonia.com/aotw/vote/teacher/81836092

The Artist of the Week will be featured on the Artsonia homepage and will receive a commemorative plaque. In addition, Blick Art Materials has donated $100 gift certificates to the winning school and $50 to the winning artist.

All fan club members from Spackenkill Elementary Schools have been sent an email inviting them to vote.

Students Attend Theater Conference

On the weekend of January 10-12, 11 Spackenkill theater students attended the annual conference of The New York State Theater Education Association (NYSTEA) in Sullivan County. This statewide organization of theatre educators promotes and supports theater education for students in grades pre-K through 12. This conference creates an opportunity for approximately 850 high school students from all over New York State to come together for a full weekend of learning and peer interaction. These students attend workshops given by colleges, universities, and theatre professionals, as well as networked with one another and experienced a variety of performances throughout the conference. This was the first year that the Spackenkill Union Free School District sent representatives to the NYSTEA Student Conference.

Regents Exams Are Next Week

Regents Exams will take place at the high school on January 21 through January 24.

Please click here for a letter from the high school principal and the schedule of exams for the week.

A Message from the School Nurses

We have had cases of the flu in all of the buildings.

According to the New York State Department of Health, the flu started several weeks earlier than it has in the last three years and the number of cases has greatly risen since the week of 12/21/19 and is expected to continue to rise for the next several weeks. It is not too late to get a flu shot at your doctor’s office or pharmacy. Please note that it takes about two weeks before it is fully effective. It is imperative that staff and students with the flu stay home until they are fever free for a full 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication (Examples - ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, acetaminophen, Tylenol, Aspirin). A fever is 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

Please contact your school nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Nora Bergstraser, MSN, RN (Nassau): 463-6390
Please click here to read a letter from the Superintendent Villanti and Elizabeth Giancaspro, District Nurse Coordinator.

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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.

Please click here to read a letter from Principal Erik Lynch to incoming families regarding the registration process.

Please click here to read a letter from Principal Erik Lynch highlighting important dates.

Please click here to download and print the registration packet.

Tech Academy Open to All Elementary Parents
Meet Leah Tomasetti

Leah Tomasetti teaches third grade at Hagan Elementary School. She took over last fall for recently retired teacher Dave Murray. Those are big shoes to fill, but Ms. Tomasetti is up to the task. With a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood and Childhood Education, with a concentration in math, from SUNY New Paltz, Ms. Tomasetti brings her experience to Spackenkill as a substitute teacher in the New Paltz and Marlboro districts. We welcome her to Spackenkill and asked a few questions so that the community can get to know her better.

Q: Where did you grow up and what school district did you attend?
Across the river in the Marlboro/Highland area- I attended Marlboro Schools.

Q: What sparked your interest in becoming a teacher?
I have always wanted to be a teacher. I think coming from a family of teachers has a lot to do with it! My mom is a second grade teacher in New Paltz, I have family members who teach in Marlboro (fourth grade and middle school math) and in the Bronx (fifth grade special education), and my grandfather was a high school math teacher, too. For as long as I could remember, I was "playing school." I have been working in my mom’s classroom since I was in elementary school. I learned a lot about what teachers do after they come home from a day at school, on the weekends, over the summers, etc. I have experienced the work it requires but also the joy in seeing children grow. Being a part of a child’s education is so rewarding. Watching children grow socially, emotionally, and academically is just so amazing.

Q: You are currently pursuing a Master of Science in Literacy Education for Birth-6 at SUNY New Paltz. Can you tell us a bit about what insights you’ve gained from this program that you could apply to your teaching at Hagan?
In today’s diverse world, it is important that the books are just as diverse in order for students to connect and comprehend. When teaching reading it is crucial that instruction is differentiated. Students should be reading books that are interesting to them yet on their grade level; I also try and make sure that I try to meet students where they are developmentally and academically. Books are such a useful tool. I often use think-alouds with my students to actually show them and model the way I read a book. I find this to be powerful when trying to teach students reading behaviors such as reading comprehension. Technology can serve as such a great tool. There are so many websites that can be useful in the classroom and at home. Writing is just as valuable as reading. It is the way we convey our thoughts and ideas, I try and have students write in authentic ways to show the importance of writing.

Q: Also, how do you find the time to work on the Masters?
mathematics and how you extend that to the classroom?
I have always had a passion and interest in math. While others dislike it, I always enjoyed the challenge. In the classroom, I try and expose the students to real-life math problems to show them how life is filled with math. I think that it is important that they understand why they are learning something. For example, I brought in a cake when we were discussing and beginning multiplication. I asked the students how I should cut the cake so that all 22 of us would get a piece. By showing students how math is connected to the real world, I feel like they value what they are learning even more. Similar to the importance of math, the popularity and presence of STEAM is increasing dramatically. Again, I try and incorporate real life scenarios into the classroom that require students to think critically. For instance, once the cold weather hit and students were bringing in big coats and snow suits, our classroom closet became messy. The students came up with different closet arrangements that we tested to try and make the closets more organized. Again, I think that making connections and giving students a purpose/ reason to their learning makes a huge, positive difference.

Q: What interested you in teaching at Spackenkill?
I have always lived in this area and always heard such great things about the district. And those "rumors" have been validated. Everyone has been so helpful, supportive and kind. All the administration, my principal, the secretaries, custodians, colleagues, parents and children make this district great.

Q: How are your lesson plans different? Can you give a few examples of how you spark students' interest in topics?
I try to engage students in a variety of different ways. Where beneficial, I incorporate small group work, student-led centers, whole group instruction, technology, and movement within the classroom. I think it is important for students to move throughout the day and while they are learning. Centers, independent reading around the room, learning activities such as Wooot, and technology (Kahoot, EPIC, Prodigy, Google Classroom, Readworks, Nearpod) are all beneficial in engaging students. Where appropriate, like reviewing morning work, I invite and encourage students to come up to the board to answer, write and explain their thinking to their classmates. They enjoy being "the teacher." This fosters confidence and allows them to practice lifelong skills like public speaking in a safe place.

Q: In your leisure time, what do you like to do? Are you active in sports, crafts, etc.?
I find myself doing something school related most of the time, especially since this is my first year. But I do enjoy being outdoors, spending time with my family, and discovering new places to eat.

Student Performs at Carnegie Hall
Third grader Lucas Jin recently won second place in the Little Mozarts competition in New York City and performed on the piano at Carnegie Hall.

Little Mozarts is an annual juried music competition for musicians ages three to 14. The goal of the competition is to encourage and motivate young musicians and make music a more significant part of their lives. Congratulations to Lucas on this amazing accomplishment!

Team Plays for a Cause
Beacon, Millbrook, New Paltz, Haldane, Highland, and Spackenkill participated in the two-day Girls Basketball Holiday Classic over winter break. Highland hosted the first night and Spackenkill the second day. Donations were collected at both sites and the school communities raised $500, which will go to the local Miles of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation. Spackenkill Girls Varsity Coach Don Neise, organized the games and the fundraising efforts. The Spackenkill team is pictured here. Victoria Guy earned All-Tournament Team recognition. Great job!
Todd's Creative Community

One of the first things you notice when you enter Todd Middle School is the display of art throughout the lobby and hallways. That's because students in Mrs. Romani's art classes and members of The Todd Art Club have been busy sketching, drawing, making pottery, working with ink, and even designing their own stickers and paper popup monsters. Stay tuned for the Family Art Night on January 22nd.

Above: Art Club meets every Tuesday after school. Students have a choice of media for dabbling.

Above: Todd art students explore sketching and painting in class.
Mission: Inspired by a tradition of excellence and a spirit of continuous improvement, the Spackenkill School District will provide all of our students with the academic and social skills necessary to pursue their goals and become responsible citizens in an interdependent global community.

Vision: All Spackenkill graduates will be lifelong learners who are inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global society.

Please submit story ideas to mary.forsell@suhsdny.org