



# Superintendent's Report

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Dr. Frank Ranelli



**Ishita Jain**  
Honorable Mention  
Honorable Mention  
Silver Key



## Welcome to Hybrid Learning!

Piscataway Schools reopened its doors on March 1, 2021 for hybrid students. Fully masked, students quickly learned new protocols for safe passage through halls, classrooms, lunchrooms, and grounds. Our teachers made adjustments to address the needs of both hybrid and remote learners. Our administrators, school secretaries, nursing staff, counselors, and custodians ensured that we were ready to meet all other challenges to this new learning landscape, from being ready to accommodate isolated students, to developing and maintaining a schedule for cleaning and sanitizing shared spaces, to comforting and caring for students experiencing unexpected difficulties. Thanks and congratulations to the entire Piscataway Team, for making a smooth transition to hybrid learning.



**Karen Luo Ye**  
Honorable Mention  
Silver Key  
Silver Key  
Silver Key  
Silver Key  
Gold Key



## Scholastic Recognizes PHS Art Students

Congratulations to PHS students who were recognized in the 2021 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards as outstanding among their peers. Ishita Jain and Karen Luo Ye were recognized in 2D Design, while Samantha Kwan, Cindy Le, and Pauline Luo Ye were recognized in the Drawing and Painting category. Judged by a panel of creative professionals, award recipients will receive certificates and pins at the Regional Awards Ceremony, with National Medalists announced on Wednesday, March 17, 2021. Gold Key Medalists will exhibit their awarded pieces in the South Jersey Regional Exhibit and at the Appel Farm Arts and Music Campus. Thanks to PHS art educators Lisa Lentini Pombrio and Dorothy Amme for encouraging their students to apply to this competition.

## Read Across America: *CREATE & CELEBRATE A Nation of Diverse Readers*

Piscataway Schools joined readers across the country in celebrating the first week of March as Read Across America week. We also joined the NEA in this year’s theme: *CREATE & CELEBRATE a nation of diverse readers*. From our youngest students at Children’s Corner Preschool to our National English Honor Society (NEHA) students at PHS, we celebrate reading for pleasure, to learn more about our world and the many cultures that inhabit it, and to develop empathy and understanding.

Some reading activates matched older students with younger students. Guest readers from Schor School partnered with Children’s Corner to read favorite books. Thanks to Advisor Mr. Brian Horlein, and student readers Harshita Suresh Kidman, Saanvi Muthuchetty, Kaavya Pratikantham, Tanya Melkote and Jade Antunes. The Piscataway Public Library visited Children’s Corner virtually, to share books and describe library services, and encourage participation in the library’s “100 Books Before Kindergarten” Challenge - a nationwide initiative that encourages parents and caregivers to regularly read aloud to their children.

Our elementary schools celebrated with daily themed dress-up days celebrating favorite books and authors, virtual book fairs, special guest readers, story time with the library, author visits, DEAR-time (Drop Everything and Read), and so many individual teacher-directed projects. Some highlights included a visit from author and Caldecott honor winner Liz Garton Scanlon at Randolphville School, and special guest readers at Marin Luther King School, including Mayor Brian Wahler, Councilwoman Gabrielle Cahill, and students from the PHS NEHS, who read to students in 45 classrooms at MLK! Thanks go to Ms. Michelle Klastava for coordinating the NEHS event. At Arbor School, members of the UNC Women’s Basketball Team, Kennedy Todd-Williams and Alexandra Zelaya, along with coaching staff member Tori Niemann, shared favorite stories via Zoom with Mrs. Scinto’s class, answered questions about their experiences in school and sports, and offered advice about how a positive attitude helps achieve goals.



## Quibbletown Students Explore African American Art

During Black History Month, Quibbletown students explored an important aspect of African American history through art. Students created artwork inspired by African-American artist Alma Thomas. An expressionist painter born in 1891, Thomas’s work is characterized by shapes, color, rhythm and powerful emotions. Students used digital art as well as paper and pencil to create their drawings. Some students focused on the bold colors and others used her style to make portraits and imaginative imagery.



## Children’s Corner Awarded Additional State Aid for 2021-2022

Thanks to generous funding from the NJDOE through Preschool State Aid, Children’s Corner Preschool is able to offer 329 free preschool seats for the 2021-2022 school year. The total amount for the year is \$4,515,196, an increase of over 30% from the previous year’s total aid. Information about aid availability, which covers all preschool expenses, will be sent to all Piscataway families later this month, with registration beginning in late April. Since seats are limited, parents are advised to apply as soon as information is available.

## March Is Women's History Month

*"Real change, enduring change happens one step at a time."*

– Ruth Bader Ginsberg

The Piscataway School District honors March as Women's History Month. Across the district, administrators, teachers, and students are working together to lift women's voices and celebrate their many important societal contributions across politics, law, literature, science, the arts, sports, and many other fields.

At PHS, during morning announcements, student speakers expound on the marquee quotes, offering additional related information. Special curriculum followed an "Inclusion and Infusion" approach, with students researching notable women and sharing their accomplishments. Teachers infused filmmaking and the arts into the curriculum, with classes watching, among other offerings, documentaries *Girl Rising*, *Makers: Women Who Make America*, and the BBC Reel *Henrietta Lacks' Immortal Cells*. Other classes listened to and analyzed the lyrics of Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit*. In World Cultures, students focused on women as Absolute Monarchs, US History students studied women's roles in the American Revolution, as well as second-wave Feminism and other social movements. In Facing History, students studied the role of women during the Jewish Resistance. Across the board, teachers used digital classroom resources, including *Women and Congress – Teach a Girl to Lead*, from Rutgers University's Eagleton Institute of Politics, *History, Art & Archives*, United States House of Representatives, and *The National Women's History Museum*.

The English Department theme, "Our Voices," continues during Women's History Month, honoring the impact that women's voices have made both in our community and around the country. Daily lessons celebrating women leaders and authors feature readings, videos, poetry, short stories and novels celebrating women's empowerment and resilience. Speakers invited to the Race and Gender class included former PHS student Asia Eaddy, who spoke to our students about being a young woman of color working in the Arizona Senate, and Linda Ortiz speaking about both her work at the Department of Justice and within communities torn by conflict.

## PHS Students in Community Conversations

PHS broadcasting students Arianna Vazquez, Kayla Gonzales and Haseeb Rehman had video stories accepted into *Community Conversations - New Jersey's COVID-19 Storytelling Project*, a joint venture between the NJYMCA Alliance, the NJ Department of Health, and the Healthy NJ Advisory Council. The project memorializes the personal accounts of NJ residents—especially those who are underrepresented or at greater risk during the pandemic. Stories gathered for this project may be included in StoryCorps, a non-profit organization dedicated to building connections between people and creating a more just and compassionate world. More than 500,000 stories have been archived by the organization to date. Congratulations to our PHS filmmakers and their teacher, Mrs. Susan Pascullo.

## Quibbletown Students Are Over-Achievers!

Quibbletown students Tavoris Morris (Grade 6), Makai Allen (Grade 7), and Jazmin Davis (Grade 8) were honored by the Plainfield Area Branch of the NAACP at their annual Black History Month program. The students received the "Middle School Youth Over-Achievers Award" for their hard work, perseverance during the pandemic, and volunteerism. They proudly represented Quibbletown with prepared speeches and received legislative citations from Assemblywoman Linda Carter.

Students at all grade levels are greeted every morning with inspirational quotes on their buildings' marquees. They then partake in learning activities that reflect the weekly quotes through reading, writing and student led discussions. Teachers and media specialists within the district created reading lists and discussion starters.

Other notable events include students at Children's Corner Preschool creating bulletin boards featuring women leaders such as Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and Amelia Earhart. Read Aloud selections for the month focus on women authors and strong female characters such as the book *Just Ask!: Be Different, Be Brave, Be You* by Justice Sonia Sotomayor

Elementary school teachers use texts to encourage creative thinking. For example, students in Mrs. Reynolds' Digital Literacy class at Randolphville read *Violet the Pilot*, by Steve Breens, then discussed how Violet uses her inventor skills to build airplanes. Students then created their own airplanes from materials at home and shared with the class in Google Classroom. And Grandview third grade students were inspired by guest readers from the Rutgers Newark Women's softball team.



## Socially Distanced PE and Recess

Students across the district are learning new fitness methods and techniques to keep active and build strong bodies, while keeping safe through social distancing.

Above, students at Conackmack practice yoga during PE while to the right, Grandview students enjoy recess games.



## Schor Students Think Critically, Discuss Honestly

On February 25, 2021, students in Mrs. Smolk's Social Studies classes at Schor School participated in a virtual Socratic Seminar celebrating Black History Month. Students researched a notable African American and represented that individual in a Zoom discussion. Some students dressed for the part and others used props. The students engaged in meaningful conversations regarding racism, discrimination, equity, and diversity. The student-led discussion were inspiring and reflective of the outstanding students in our Piscataway community.



## Knollwood Flies High with Hero Squad Fundraiser

Knollwood School once again participated in their annual, school-wide Hero Squad Fundraiser for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS). The fundraiser coincided with Knollwood's focus on the character pillar *Citizenship*, and reminded students that being a good citizen means doing kind things for others and helping our community.



At the conclusion of the Hero Squad Fundraiser, the school raised a total of \$6859.69 for LLS! The top two fundraising classes won Ice Cream Parties for their exceptional efforts. Ms. May's Kindergarten class raised over \$1,000 and Ms. Florek's second grade class raised over \$2,000! Knollwood is proud of their dedicated citizens and looks forward to participating in the Hero Squad fundraiser again next February.

## Schor National Junior Honor Society Giving Back to Community

The Schor National Junior Honor Society began offering peer one-on-one tutoring for Schor students on December 3, and to date, have 61 tutoring groups meeting several times each month. The



NJHS members offer students assistance with homework, organization, and motivation and look forward to assisting more students as needed. Congratulations to NJHS members Semiat A, Kavi B, Jasmin C, Crystal D, Suhani D, Kritin G, Kayla G, Soham G, Gabriel H, Dheeraj K, Garv N, Manan P, Yash P, Sofia P, Kaavya P, Suhavi P, Diya R, David R, Param S and Ishaan T, and their advisor, Ms. Mary Ann Williams.

## The PHS Show Goes On!

The show must go on — virtually! On Friday, March 19 at 7pm, join the PHS Drama Club live on Zoom as they perform *She Kills Monsters*, a play that explores grief and discovery through Dungeons and Dragons role-playing. Zoom links will be available closer to the performance date.

## She Kills Monsters east list

Agnie	Amara Pinal
Tilly	Maha Bulshan
Chuck	Ashen Schahr
Kabope	Adrienne Giam
Lilith	Morgan Fitch
Cycus	Brooke Shaw
Miles	Glennell Baker
Vera	Sevannat Weaver
Steve	Jacob Hall
Farran	Milly Merida
Narrator	Abigan Jones
Evil Gabbi	Juliet Pearce
Evil Tina	Lea Babara
Gabri	Ashley Hamilton
Tina	Steph Westberg
Lily	Raoni Marslar
Kelly	Jane Howard
Banue	Lathan Gu
Monster Miles	Ishamir Wheeler
Beholder	Rachel Rivera



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