



Yorktown Central School District



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Dear Yorktown School Community,

I hope this letter finds you well and enjoying the start of summer recess. This is the first week without students, and I miss them already. The month of June moved so quickly. Between high school graduation, our moving-up ceremonies, awards banquets, and concert performances, there was much to celebrate in the Yorktown Central School District. Our students are enormously talented, and anyone who attended any of the myriad events hosted in the District would agree.

A very big part of my month was attending the many moving-up ceremonies. This is a special experience for me because I get to see the marvelous progression of our students from Mohansic and Brookside to Crompond, the Middle School, and finally the High School. At the three schools with our eldest students, I am afforded the opportunity to address our students, and I always try to impart a message that will be inspirational and transformational. While difficult to do amidst a flurry of speeches and advice densely packed into a short time, I resolve to at least try to inspire students through my words.

As you will come to know, I end nearly all of my addresses to students by reminding them to hug their parents. I feel very strongly about this. As you likely know, I am the father of two children in the Yorktown Schools. Each morning, before leaving my children, they run to give me a hug and we wish each other a great day. It isn't a short hug either. I first hug my daughter, and then my son is quickly behind her awaiting his hug. Then, as I make my way out of the house, they rush to the door once more to ask for another hug. This happens nearly every morning. As I tell people of this, I am told to "enjoy it while it lasts." I am heartbroken by this message because I wonder why a child hugging his or her parents ever needs to end. Is it that children become too cool or too old to hug their parents? Is it that we simply become too busy to take six seconds out of our day to hug the people in our lives who mean everything to us? Is it that we take each other for granted? I hope that never becomes the case.

Thus, in my addresses to students I try to impart the importance of hugging their parents. I want them to see that it is 'cool' to hug their parents. What's more, they should take the opportunity to appreciate their parents every time it presents itself.

I thought it appropriate to share with you the message that I gave to students at the Crompond moving-up ceremony.

Hug your parents. Now, I know you are going to be middle schoolers next year, but you are never too cool or too old to hug your parents. Trust me when I say, your parents understand you. They have been where you are, and they have been

where you are headed. Believe me--they get it and they get you. Now, I know sometimes it might sound like they don't understand you, but that's not true. They understand you better than you understand yourself, they love you more than anything in the world, and they will always support you. Trust your parents. You may not always agree with them when you get to middle school, and they won't always be able to tell you why they are not allowing you to do something that your friends are doing, but trust them anyway. No one in this world loves you the way your parents do.

When I gave my commencement address to Yorktown High School's Class of 2018, I sent the same message, but in a different, more age appropriate way. As students move on to college and the next stages of their lives, I remind them that since their very first breaths in this world, their parents have cared for them, protected them, and loved them. Now, as they move on to college, the hugs are even more important.

This summer, I wish you the very best with your family and friends. I hope these next two months are filled, with love, laughter, wonderful family memories, and yes, lots of hugs.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Hattar', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Hattar

Please enjoy the remainder of the newsletter and the pictures on the pages that follow.

New Website Design Coming July 1st

I am pleased to announce that we will have a new design to our website. We will maintain the domain address, www.yorktown.org, but the look will be a bit different. Our goal in redesigning this website was to provide those visiting our district and school sites with an intuitive interface that makes the most important features of our site most readily available. Thank you to the more than 600 community members who responded to our website design survey. Please know that each response was carefully reviewed, and I am confident your voice has been reflected in our newly designed site.

Budget Update

Thank you to the Yorktown community for approving our budget last month. Our budget passed with a nearly 90% approval rate. This is an outstanding testament to your commitment to supporting our schools, and we look forward to working tirelessly to ensure that we provide your children with the greatest programmatic opportunities possible.

Also, we learned that the tax rate in Yorktown will decline by 0.76%. Previously we were informed that the tax rate would decrease by 0.22%. Due to some updates to the tax roll in our town, residents in Yorktown will see an additional reduction to the tax rate.

I am also pleased that the use of the Capital Reserve Fund was authorized by voters this May. Our team has already begun working toward the summer of 2019, when the first projects are set to begin in earnest. I am often asked about why a delay exists between the date when voters authorized the monies to be released to when the projects can actually begin. The answer is simple: The review process by the State Education Department takes upwards of a year, and we can only approach the State after funding has been authorized and secured.

Calendar

As we embark on summer, the least likely thought you will have is that the first day of classes is in 68 days. With that said, enjoy every single one of those 68 days with your family and friends!

Congratulations

There are so many wonderful achievements by our students. I attempted to capture many of those achievements in our last print newsletter that was mailed home in early May. I did miss a very important achievement. Ryan Onatzevitch received area All-State honors. This is a tremendous honor and I am so pleased to be able to acknowledge Ryan.

Congratulations to Wesley Cancro for being named the PNW BOCES Student of Distinction for the month of June. Wesley is a wonderful young man and we are all so proud of him.

Congratulations to our spring athletic teams. There were so many accolades in athletics, both at the team and individual levels, and we are so proud of our students. Each of our spring teams had a wonderful season. Several students were named All-American Athletes, All-State, All-Section and All-League. We had several teams compete for sectional championships, with our softball winning back-to-back titles in impressive fashion. I wish all of our student-athletes the very best in the school year to come.

Congratulations to our outstanding Science Research Students for a wonderful symposium. I was so impressed by the level of research in which our students participated. Most importantly, their passion for research is inspiring.

Congratulations to our WISE Students for a wonderful symposium. Our students in the WISE program truly impressed me. I attended several final presentations as well as the culminating symposium, and I was so pleased with what I observed. Our students presented their experiences in a most formal manner, and their growth as individuals was evident. All who attended, were so proud of our students and their wonderful journey through WISE.

The art shows in our district were amazing. I enjoyed attending the art shows of each of our schools to witness the terrific works our students created. As I moved from one display to the next, I marveled at the enormous talent in Yorktown.

The wonderful spring concerts by our band, orchestra, and chorus groups were spectacular. I was so pleased to see the growth in our students' musical abilities over the course of the school year. Kudos to our outstanding band, orchestral, and choral directors for all of their efforts.

The Board of Education, at their June 4th meeting, honored several parent and community groups who volunteer their time to support the work of our schools at the first annual School Partner Recognition Night. It was a pleasure to acknowledge the outstanding work of many wonderful volunteer organizations who devote their time to our school district. The individuals within these organizations invest countless hours to support our students and the programs offered by the District.

At the June 18th Board of Education meeting, the Board celebrated those teachers who are retiring or celebrating milestone anniversaries with the Yorktown Central School District. It was a lovely evening, and I enjoyed recognizing those who have contributed so much to the children of Yorktown. I wish all of our retirees the very best of luck in their future endeavors.

Closing Thought

I had a most amazing experience in one of our 5th grade classes. Mrs. Shiland's class invited me to their Empa-Tank presentation. This unit of study culminated with a project that was adapted from the television show Shark Tank. Students were charged with engineering products to help the world. Some students designed large scale solutions using robotics and computer programming, and others developed products for daily living. One group designed, programmed, and built a robotic page-turner. Students marketed this idea as a new lease on life for those not physically capable of turning pages in a book. Suddenly, as I stepped back from the presentation, I found myself beaming with pride and emotion. So much has been invested in this concept ESTEAM, and to see students living the vision was quite emotional for me. Still in its infancy, ESTEAM has blossomed into an amazing philosophy and approach to teaching and learning in Yorktown. It has been embraced by students and faculty alike, and the impact it has already had on our students is immeasurable. I am so proud of our teachers for bringing this vision to life. I am so thankful to our Board of Education, Mrs. O'Shea, Mr. Cole, and our school principals for their support and enormous role in moving the ESTEAM philosophy forward. I am so inspired by our students for using the ESTEAM platform to demonstrate how amazingly talented they truly are.

Thank you for a wonderful first year in Yorktown. Your support and kindness have been unwavering, and are profoundly appreciated.

There have been so many wonderful things happening across our district. I hope you enjoy the photographs on the next several pages. As always, thank you for all you do to support this excellent school district.

Respectfully,

Dr. Hattar











