



# Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

A Community of Learners Seeking Excellence Together

Oct.  
2023

## A Message From the Superintendent

Dear Scotch Plains–Fanwood  
Community,

October is National Bullying Prevention Month – a time to **stand up against bullying** in our schools and online. Please join me this month, and all year round, in making our schools kinder places where staff, students, and visitors feel welcome and safe.

I especially want to remind everyone, amid the ongoing violence in the Middle East, about the importance of using social media as a tool for good – rather than as a tool to bully, harass, or intimidate others. As parents and educators, we can help guide students on how to use social media appropriately and how to process troubling images that they may be seeing from the war.



**Open Communication:** Start by having an open and honest conversation with your children about current events. Encourage them to share their thoughts, fears, and questions. Provide context and factual information to help them understand the situation better.

**Limit, Monitor, and/or Restrict Their Online Activity:** Regularly check on your child's social media usage to ensure they are not exposed to graphic or distressing content. You can use parental control tools and privacy settings to help with this. However, if you have significant concerns, we recommend having your child remove all social media applications from their devices.

**Be a Role Model:** Remember that children often learn from the behavior of their parents and caregivers. Be mindful of your own social media usage and engage in constructive conversations about current events.

**Support Emotional Well-Being:** Monitor your child's emotional well-being closely. If you notice signs of anxiety or distress, offer support and encourage them to talk about their feelings. Reach out to your child's school for support if needed.

Even in challenging times, we can protect the **safe, inclusive environment** that we have built in our schools and can use social media as a positive tool in that work.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Joan Mast  
Superintendent of Schools

## SPFHS Black Student Union Leads Statewide Teen Voter Town Hall

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The SPFHS Black Student Union partnered with the National Pan-Hellenic Council of Central Jersey to host a Teen Voter Town Hall on Oct. 7. Teens from across the state learned about the electoral process from elected officials including New Jersey's Lt. Gov. Tahesha Way, explored some of the issues that could impact them in the next election, and discussed how to make a positive difference in their communities.

Held at Union College, Scotch Plains Campus, the free event drew more than 50 teens and adults. The National Pan-Hellenic Council of Central Jersey, which represents historically Black fraternities and sororities, participated to help teens and young adults under age 21 be well-informed as new and soon-to-be voters in New Jersey.

SPFHS Black Student Union (BSU) members attended and led the one-hour, non-partisan Q&A panel discussion at the end of the event.



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"It was amazing to meet the people who represent us and to hear directly from them," said Sequoia Pilgrim, SPFHS Black Student Union President. "My favorite part of the Teen Voter Town Hall was before the Q&A started, I got to speak to some of the elected officials in one-on-one conversations."

The event brought together several notable elected and non-elected

officials. The BSU students led a one-hour Q&A panel with NJ Assemblywoman Linda Carter, who is from Plainfield, Eric Pennington, City of Newark Business Administrator, Jazz Clayton-Hunt, City of Plainfield Chief of Staff, and Zelda Spence-Wallace, Montgomery School Board President

“I feel like to really understand someone you need to be able to ask them questions and hear what they think about important topics,” Pilgrim said. “It was very insightful to be able to do that and it made me think about where I stand on these topics.”

## SPFHS Students Connect with 100 Visitors from South Korea

A unique cultural exchange experience bridged students and teachers from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School and Suwon Academy of World Language, South Korea. One hundred visitors from the South Korean school visited SPFHS on Monday, Oct. 2 as part of a years-long relationship between the two schools.

During the visit, teacher Ryan McKenna’s current and past students in Global Perspectives welcomed their new friends with the warmth and enthusiasm that is characteristic of SPFHS. The 94 students and six teachers from Suwon Academy of World Language were treated to a day of cross-cultural conversations and a view into everyday experiences at an American high school.

“It was fun to have them visit our school,” said junior Jake Lukko. “I realized that while our cultures are very different, we also have a lot in common.”



The day started with an assembly in the auditorium in which



Superintendent Dr. Joan Mast and Principal Dr. David Heisey spoke, as well as performances by the Moonglowers jazz band and SPFHS cheerleaders. Suwon's dance team also performed.

The students then split off into small groups for conversations in the Media Center and school tours, as well as lunch. A highlight for the students was embedding into 12 different SPFHS classes, ranging from environmental science to ceramics. McKenna said the conversations were both special but also surprisingly normal and easy for the students to have.

McKenna said hearing the conversations and seeing students form bonds across cultures was powerful.

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**It didn't matter if they were from South Korea or New Jersey, they were really similar. Many have the same hobbies and interests; they connected about social media, music, video games, and more. It was very interesting for both students to understand what their regular school life is like in another country.**

**- RYAN MCKENNA -**

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## Meet the Candidates for the Board of Education

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Three candidates are running unopposed for three seats on the Scotch Plains–Fanwood Board of Education in the Nov. 7 General Election. The candidates include two incumbents Amy Boroff, of Fanwood, and Evan Murray, of Scotch Plains, as well as newcomer Sonali Phatak Barve, of Scotch Plains.

Each candidate was asked to answer questions about themselves for the public to learn more about them, their interest in volunteering for the Board and their plans for the Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools.

*Read their responses on our website!*



*Amy Boroff*



*Evan Murray*



*Sonali Phatak Barve*

## Congrats to the Newly Tenured Staff

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Congratulations to the teachers and support staff who achieved tenure! They include:



Alexander Antonelli

Maria Barreiros

Katherine Bertogli

Colin Boyle

Yolanda Chendak

Mandee Leonardis

Sophie Litos

Lauren Markovitz

Jacqueline Marsh

Colleen Meyer

Mackenzie Conway

Aycan Eren

Alyssa Fairweather

Ashley Farhan

Jacquelyn Garafola

Isabel Gomez

Alexandra Graham

Pamela Hendrix

Tatum Ignatowicz

Paige Kovacs

Melissa Paine

Veronica Painter

Cynthia Raices

Stacy Rayner

Kelly Ruggieri

Kelly Schmidt

Jennifer Sorrentino

Kelley Sponheimer

Hillary Tennant

Jamison Tibbals



## Featured Events



**Nov. 1, 7 – 8:30 pm** – Talk Saves Lives Zoom Presentation

**Nov. 8** – Brunner Veteran's Day Guest Reader

**Nov. 8** – Coles Veterans Day Assembly

**Nov. 9 – 10** – Schools Closed NJEA Convention

**Nov. 13** – School One World Kindness Celebration

**Nov. 13 – 17** – American Education Week

**Nov. 14, 7 pm** – SPFHS College and Career Night

**Nov. 17 and 18, 7 pm** – Fall Play at HS Auditorium

**Nov. 22** – Single Session Day for Students

**Nov. 23 – 24** – Schools Closed for Thanksgiving

**Nov. 30, 8 pm** – Board of Education Meeting





## From Scotch Plains to Hollywood, this Alum is Making Waves

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**Daniel Catullo** '90, well-known director and producer, grew up right behind the Scotch Plains–Fanwood High School, and clearly remembers waking up to Mr. T leading the marching band practice. Daniel would often grab his own snare drum and join them.

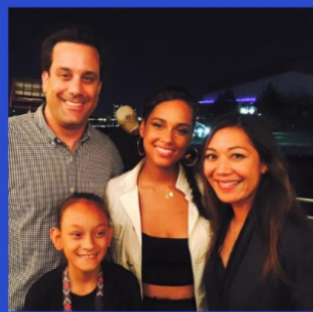
Daniel reflected on how music played a big role in his childhood. He started playing the drums at four years old and was in every band he could be in throughout his school career in Scotch Plains–Fanwood Public Schools. All the while Daniel was a well-rounded student who played football and was a part of clubs as well.



After graduating from SPF in 1990, Daniel's most notable work includes his live concert specials, "Foo Fighters Live at The Acropolis," "Alicia Keys Live from NYC," "Sebastian Maniscalco Live from MSG," "Dave Matthews Band Live in Central Park" and many more. He is also an Emmy winning documentary director and producer, from his work titled "Breathe, Nolan, Breathe" about a hazing death at West Virginia University in 2014.

While Daniel continues making waves in the music and film world, he always finds time to travel back to his hometown.

"My roots are there," said Daniel. Now a California resident, he returns often to visit his family who still lives in the same house in Scotch Plains that he grew up in.





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