

Spring 2017

Superintendent of Schools

George J. Rafferty

State of the District



**Shared Services Agreements**

Mount Laurel Schools share more than 20 different services with other governmental agencies. We buy gas, diesel and rock salt through a county co-op. Our school and custodial supplies, copy paper and art and science supplies come at a great discount through a larger educational cooperative. Electric and natural gas used in our buildings is also purchased through a state-wide cooperative program when rates are favorable. We share trash removal, field maintenance and office supply costs with the township, as well as the services of our School Security Officer. As a member of the Lenape Regional Council, we plan and share in-service programs with other districts at a reduced cost to all. Our insurance costs are greatly reduced through our membership in the South Jersey and Burlington County Joint Insurance Funds, and many of our professional services for Special Education and our out-of-district transportation costs are shared through the Educational Services Unit of Burlington County.

“An Investment in KNOWLEDGE always pays the best INTEREST.”  
- Ben Franklin



**Social Networks Carry Frequent Highlights**

On any given day, you can watch video of exciting student projects, find photos of what’s going on in our classrooms, see student work, or take a virtual part in student learning from anywhere! Check out our website at [www.mtlaurelschools.org](http://www.mtlaurelschools.org) for links to our many Twitter, Facebook and other web-based communication tools. Our staff members ROCK at staying in touch!



**Mount Laurel Township Board of Education**

Marc Jones, President; Diane Blair, Vice President  
Melissa DeClementi, Christine Dickson, Leigh Ann Erlanger,  
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**George J. Rafferty**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Hattie Britt Board of Education Offices**

330 Mount Laurel Road  
Mount Laurel, NJ 08054 USA  
Telephone 856-235-3387

Visit our District Website at:  
[www.mtlaurelschools.org](http://www.mtlaurelschools.org)

For General Information on the Mount Laurel Schools,  
Contact Our Office of Communication Services via E-Mail at:  
[mreynolds@mtlaurelschools.org](mailto:mreynolds@mtlaurelschools.org)

**Dear Mount Laurel Community:**

It is an honor to present the 2016-2017 annual State of the District summary to the Mount Laurel Board of Education and Community. This report offers a comprehensive overview of your elementary public school system during the current school year.

What I hope it also shares with you is the amount of work that is done in our schools each day. Beginning with the first wheel that turns on our buses each school day, the Mount Laurel School District stands ready to serve more than 4,200 students in pre-school through eighth-grade. Our programs are carefully crafted and widely adapted to meet the needs of students with special needs, identified giftedness, varied learning styles and distinct individual interests.

Our district mission of preparing “all children to be successful citizens and workers in the 21st century” mandates that we offer exposure to the world at large within our classrooms, a task that our staff takes seriously and implements creatively. Through community experiences and the use of educational technology, our students are able to “travel” further than ever before in our schools, making real-life connections and enriching learning. Our Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs continue to expand. Students at the elementary level have had exposure to computer coding and students at the middle school level are building and piloting underwater robots in national and international competition.



Just as we hope to educate the whole child, however, we dedicate our efforts to keeping students and staff safe in our schools each day through enhanced security. We concentrate on maintenance and upkeep of our buildings, not only for that reason, but also because we take our stewardship of community resources seriously. We make sure children eat nutritious lunches, and in some cases, breakfast, and we offer nursing and counseling services in all eight of our schools.

We are only able to do all of this because of your support. Mount Laurel parents, community leaders, board members, and residents place a great deal of importance on a sound education. It is a priority to you, and you have consistently shown that by your many contributions to the success of our students.

It is with grateful thanks and great pride that I share the 2016-2017 State of the District report. Continual improvement in a changing world is an exciting challenge for all of us, but nowhere is it more important than in our elementary schools as we prepare your children for true success as our future leaders.

**George J. Rafferty**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Introduction:**

Each year, Mount Laurel School District publishes an Annual Report describing the year’s highlights with staff and community. We are proud to share this information. The 2016-2017 Annual Report informs the community, as required by law, about the school district’s current accomplishments and challenges, as well as a statement of the business and fiscal health of the district.

**Some Facts About Our Students:**

Total Enrollment (April 6, 2017)	4259
Preschool	152
Elementary - K-4	2168
Upper Elementary - Gr. 5 & 6	941
Middle School	998

**Student Demographics:**

Percentage of White	59
Percentage of African American	13
Percentage of Hispanic	4
Percentage of Asian	15
Percentage of Other	9

**Average Daily Attendance** 96.2

Mount Laurel Township is strategically located in one of the fastest growing areas of the Greater Philadelphia Region. It is the fourth largest municipality in Burlington County, New Jersey with convenient access to major thoroughfares and public transportation to Philadelphia and New York City.

Mount Laurel Township School District is a public school district governed by a nine-member Board of Education. Members of the board are volunteers who serve three-year terms. They set the goals and establish the policies for the district. They adopt the annual budget, make decisions on a wide range of educational concerns and serve as a communications link between the schools and the community.

Agendas for board meetings and minutes are posted on the district website at [www.mtlaurelschools.org](http://www.mtlaurelschools.org). Board meetings are held once a month at the Hattie Britt Board Building on Mount Laurel Road. Check our website for changes in dates or locations of the monthly meeting.



**Annual State Assessment**

All schools in New Jersey are required to administer the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Test to students in Grades 3-8 on an annual basis. In addition, the NJ ASK Test is used for Science in Grades 4 and 8.

The PARCC Test is taken on a computer. We have prepared students on how to use technology to “scroll through” the new test, shared some of the new terminology that is likely used in the test, and have supported the sort of creative thinking that is required in responding to PARCC questions.

Detailed information about student performance is reported in our “Annual Testing Report,” which is presented to the board of education each November and posted on our district website.

**Transportation**

Our Department of Transportation provides safe, economical and efficient transportation for all students. This department establishes and supervises daily bus routes and schedules buses for various co-curricular and extracurricular programs. The department trains, evaluates and certifies all bus drivers.

**Did You Know:**

- That our buses travel 3,544 miles per day throughout Mount Laurel’s 22-square mile area?
- Our fleet of 44 large buses and 24 small buses transports more than 4,200 students attending Mount Laurel Schools and eight students attending schools out of district?
- Over 300 students entered this year’s Bus Safety Poster Contest organized by our own drivers!

totaling 669,928 square feet of educational space. Maintenance of plant and minor alterations of facilities are the major function of this department. Last year, our facility maintenance staff responded to more than 1,300 work orders within the district’s eight schools and three administrative buildings. This staff also handles ground maintenance, plowing, emergency repairs and relocating personnel and supplies as needed. The goal is to provide a clean, comfortable and safe environment for all students, staff and visiting public.

Our Board and Administration place great importance on the stewardship of Mount Laurel’s school facilities. All buildings are utilized extensively for community activities in addition to normal school operations. While upkeep is challenging under a two-percent spending cap, we attempt to include infrastructure improvements in each annual budget. Our proposed budget for next year includes the replacement of two roof-top HVAC units and more security cameras at Hartford School. We will be replacing classroom cabinets, repainting classrooms, and replacing the old clock system

**Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Highlights:**

Language Arts:  
 62% of our third-graders met or exceeded expectations  
 68% of our fourth-graders met or exceeded expectations  
 65% of our fifth-graders met or exceeded expectations  
 67% of our sixth-graders met or exceeded expectations

Mathematics:  
 85% of our Algebra I students met or exceeded expectations  
 92% of our Geometry students met or exceeded expectations  
 62% of our third-graders met or exceeded expectations  
 59% of our fourth-graders met or exceeded expectations

**New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) Science Results:**

81% of our fourth and eighth-graders scored in the Proficient or Advanced Proficient range.

Additionally, it oversees the annual inspections of all buses to ensure compliance with Motor Vehicle Administration Standards. Nearly all students are eligible for bus transportation. Mount Laurel operates a 4-tier bus operation at an efficiency rating that ranks near the top in New Jersey.

**School Facilities, Maintenance and Operations**

Our Facilities and Maintenance department is responsible for all Mount Laurel School District facilities,

at Parkway School. We will also install new parking lot lights at Springville with more efficient LED lights. The security system at Larchmont will be replaced. Fleetwood will get some new security doors. Along with this, we will continue to repaint where needed, carpet will be removed and replaced with tile, HVAC controls will be upgraded at Springville, and we will replace old lunch tables at Harrington and Hartford.

**Food Service**

The primary goal of our Food Service department is to support student learning, since well-nourished students attend school more regularly, and have longer attention spans and more energy. This goal is supported by:

Ensuring that all students receive nutritious meals, regardless of their ability to pay. Providing affordable, well-balanced, quality meals that meet current U.S.D.A. guidelines for nutrition. Hot lunch is provided each day at our eight schools, and breakfast is offered at Fleetwood and Larchmont Schools each school day.



**Mount Laurel Schools’ Staff Is Second To None**

Mount Laurel School District has long placed great emphasis on the Professional Development offered to our staff members. During our five-day New Staff Orientation sessions each summer, we familiarize newly-hired teaching staff with our curriculum, procedures and programs. Similarly, our district administrators spend a week each summer training in educational best practices. Throughout the year, all certified staff members take part in several mandatory in-service training sessions. Some of these are dedicated to new curriculum or practices; some are spent in building-level collaboration or planning. All are intended to enrich the education being offered in Mount Laurel’s classrooms.

**Some Facts About Our Staff:**

Total Staff Number:	732
Certified Staff:	410
Support Staff:	322

It is significant to note that the majority of our staff members are life-long learners. In fact, 51-percent of our certified staff members hold Masters Degrees, while 48-percent hold Bachelors Degrees and one-percent of our staff holds a PhD. Several of our staff members teach at the college level and many others are continuing students at area universities.

**Student Services and Child Study Team Services**

The Mount Laurel Department of Student Services is made up of school counselors, psychologists, learning support specialists, social workers, Response to Intervention Specialists, and school nurses. These professional staff members work with teachers, parents, and community agencies to assist students in the areas of health care, personal, social and interpersonal matters and attendance.

The Child Study Team oversees the provision of a full spectrum of services to students with disabilities from age three in our inclusive preschool program to eighth-grade students with severe learning challenges. Our Basic Skills Program and Intervention and Referral Services Teams assist students in need of remediation at all levels.

In addition, our special services personnel ensure the effective delivery of special education and related services to all eligible students. In all cases, parents and team members work together to develop an educational plan addressing the special needs of students in the least restrictive environment.

**Environmental Considerations**

The Mount Laurel School District is committed to lessening our carbon footprint through initiatives involving lighting modifications, solar energy, and recycling programs. This year, we expanded our solar project to Larchmont and Hillside. Each of these initiatives saves the district money on an annual basis, in addition to diminishing our long-term impact on the environment.

**School Security**

It is a simple fact that students who do not feel safe cannot learn. It’s as simple as that. Security in our schools is of paramount concern. All of our schools continue to follow very precise guidelines set by the New Jersey Department of Education as to the practice of school drills. Our procedures for student movement, dismissal and accountability are addressed in our emergency plans and updated annually.

**By law, each of the following drills must be conducted a minimum of two times per year in every school:**

- Active Shooter
- Evacuation
- Bomb Threat
- Lockdown

Next year, we anticipate adding more panic buttons and strobe-light systems in several locations. Our staff can summon police silently and alert the community to lock-down situations immediately via these systems. Mount Laurel Police and Fire personnel have remote access to our building floor plans and train annually with school personnel.

**Support For Our Schools**

Not a day goes by in the Mount Laurel Schools that we do not acknowledge the contributions of our many benefactors. Our students and staff are truly rich in support.

First, our families. Mount Laurel’s parents place a high priority on education at every turn. Our annual Back to School Night events fill parking capacity at every school - a minor inconvenience for a great cause. Our parents show up for school concerts, parent visitations and ever-important teacher conferences on a consistent basis.

Our seven Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs) work tirelessly to raise funds for our schools, organize family and school events and activities and pitch-in with many extra sets of hands throughout the year. The PTOs fund school-wide assemblies, organize volunteers and coordinate activities both during the school day and after school. In many ways, they create the core of the community.

The Mount Laurel Public Education Fund Inc. is a non-profit organization formed in 1994 specifically to benefit the Mount Laurel Schools. Since its inception 21 years ago, the Fund, through its annual Golf Classic, has raised more than \$750,000 for our schools. Together with our PTO groups, it provides extra-curricular opportunities for students, as well as tutoring, technology and teacher grants.

And it goes without saying that the support of the Mount Laurel Board of Education is paramount. This group dedicates endless hours on a volunteer basis to the governance of our schools.

