Dear Mount Laurel Community:

What an exciting year we are experiencing in the Mount Laurel Schools! I am proud to share with you, via this annual report, the advances and improvements that are taking your schools forward in this pivotal year. I must tell you without a hint of doubt that these advances have been made possible only through your partnership. The more than 350 residents who participated in our Strategic Planning effort two years ago, the 300 additional community members who responded to our survey, and those who served on our writing committees, were critical in shaping a new three-year plan for our district.

Just a few months later, more than 3,000 Mount Laurel residents went to the polls and approved a Special Election question by a wide margin to make critical improvements to our schools and expand classroom space. Those improvements have begun, as has construction and renovation of additional classrooms to accommodate a Full-Day Kindergarten Program, which will begin in September, 2019. Following an extensive informational campaign, more than 350 students have registered for the inaugural full-day program.

Meanwhile, across the district, students and staff are investigating, researching, creating and innovating. In the first year of our new three-year strategic plan, the goals and objectives that were set collaboratively within the community during “A Path To Success 2030” are taking shape. Named in honor of our kindergarten students during planning, who will graduate from high school in 2030, the process has resulted in the long-awaited establishment of a full-day kindergarten program and improvements in every aspect of our elementary school system. Our administration and staff strive for success for every child in meeting the district mission of preparing students for careers we cannot yet imagine.

Throughout the year, our students have amassed awards in the area of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM); Music, Geography, Battle of the Books, Mathematics, Art, and Athletics. They have won honor at the local, county, and state level. Together with staff, they have reached the hand of community service out more times than we might count, delivering holiday meals to local agencies and families, making blankets for chemotherapy patients, providing warm clothing to the homeless, and donating to animal rescue, cancer research, autism research and juvenile diabetes, to name just a few charities.

Educating the whole child means addressing social and emotional growth as well as academics. In this regard, Mount Laurel students are truly fortunate to have an entire community of stellar role models. Parents, community leaders, business owners and professionals in many fields frequent our classrooms as volunteer speakers and mentors. They share practical knowledge and advice, assist with planning school activities and provide support in every form. This partnership enriches our days and expands young minds.

I am proud to share the 2018-2019 State of the District report with sincere thanks for your interest and support. It reflects an elementary educational system that prepares children from the youngest age to be successful community leaders and contributing citizens in years to come.

Dr. George J. Rafferty
Superintendent of Schools

Some Facts About Our Students:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total Enrollment</th>
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<th>Elementary - K-4</th>
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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 2018-2019 Annual Report informs the community, as required by law, about the school district’s current accomplishments and challenges, and provides a statement on the business and fiscal health of the district.

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, 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. Regular board meetings are held once a month. A meeting schedule is posted on our website, where changes to dates, locations and times are also noted as needed.
Major Initiatives in Mount Laurel’s 2018-2019 School Year
Six Goals Emerge From the New Three-Year Strategic Plan

Mount Laurel School District's new three-year Strategic Plan was presented to the Board of Education on January 22, 2019. Many of the specific objectives outlined in the plan had already begun in October, following passage of the special election question. Major among them was the initiation of plans for a Full-Day Kindergarten Program. Seven new classrooms are being built—four at Fleetwood and three at Larchmont Elementary Schools. Alterations to existing classrooms are taking place at Hildene and Parkway Schools. This work will allow space for the inception of a full-day kindergarten program beginning in September of 2020.

Perhaps more importantly, a comprehensive early childhood educational program has been developed by our staff that integrates a number of best practices from across the state and the nation. Last year, in anticipation of upgrading our current program, all of Mount Laurel's kindergarten teachers took part in Kindergarten Seminar and Implementation Guidelines training. Working with the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) based at Rutgers, several of Mount Laurel's teachers participated in or contributed to a research study in support of high-quality early education. The result has been the development of the comprehensive Kindergarten Program Curriculum that will be implemented next year.

One of the primary objectives of Goal #1 was Parent and Community Engagement to inform parents, staff and community members about the various aspects of the Full-Day Kindergarten program. Following an extensive informational campaign and the institution of central district registration, more than 350 students are already registered to begin kindergarten in Mount Laurel in September. A district-wide orientation has been held, and school-wide orientation sessions will be held at all six elementary schools in May.

This year, an analysis of communications efforts is being conducted to identify the most effective means of reaching the majority of our families. Data on access to our district and school websites, social media outlets and targeted direct communications will be utilized to inform administration and staff via creation of a district communications guide.

The first phase of work approved under the referendum election has begun, with contracts awarded in February by the board of education. Included in the initial projects are the additions at Fleetwood and Larchmont Schools and renovations and alterations at all six other schools. Courtyard, Springfield, Hartford and Parkway Schools will be re-roofed, and the HVAC systems in all eight schools will be replaced by new, more energy-efficient units. Plumbing, drainage and electrical work associated with these improvements will also be undertaken. Contractors are on site now and will continue to work during the summer as soon as school has been dismissed for summer break. Much of the work in Phase II of the project will include exterior work, such as paving. That portion of the program will be bid separately and done once heavy equipment and trucks are no longer required on site to avoid damage to new surfaces.

Dr. George Raftery and Assistant Superintendent for Business/Board Secretary Robert F. Wachter Jr. were both certified as School Security Specialists following training last summer, and an additional School Security Officer has been assigned to our schools full-time under a reciprocal agreement with the Mount Laurel Police Department. Two officers are now assigned to the schools on a full-time basis.

With an objective of implementing a Whole Child Initiative, training is ongoing this year for our guidance counselors, administrators and designated teachers in the use of Responsive Classroom and Developmental Designs. The emphasis in Responsive Classroom is on helping students develop their academic, social, and emotional skills in a learning environment that is developmentally responsive to their strengths and needs. Developmental Design includes comprehensive practices to integrate social and academic learning within an age-appropriate framework. Both programs will be rolled-out to all staff next year. Restorative Practices have been implemented at Hartford and Harrington as a means of recognition for all students of the effects of conflict. All elementary school staff members will be trained in Restorative Practices over the next two years. Over the next two years, this year, we also welcomed a Student Assistance Coordinator, who is based at the middle school to provide resources for students in need.

In our effort to create a curriculum that integrates content areas and supports authentic problem-based learning, our administration and supervisors are researching integrated curriculum and identifying linkages across content areas.

This year, our state-mandated testing has changed. All schools in New Jersey were required to administer the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Test to students in Grades 3-8 last Spring. In addition, the NJ ASK Test was used for Science in Grades 4 and 8. Effective this year, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has ended its membership with PARCC. This year, students in Grades 3-8 are taking new assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics called the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment-ELA (NJSLA-ELA) and the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment-M (NJSLA-M). NJ ASK for Science has been replaced for students in Grades 5 & 8 with the New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA). Detailed information about student performance is provided in our Annual Testing Report, which is presented to the board of education each November and posted on our district website.

The primary objective of our Students and Students with Special Needs goal area is to provide a tier system of academic, social, emotional and behavioral support for all students. To that end, our administration is reviewing our class inclusion model, assessing the delivery of English as a Second Language services and looking at the process and procedures associated with Intervention and Referral Services and Response to Intervention.

Staff knowledge of Universal Design for Learning is being assessed to develop flexible learning environments for all learners, with a goal of working towards full implementation of the Universal Design model in the third year of the plan.

This year, we welcomed a new position in the addition of a Student Assistance Coordinator (SAC) at Harrington Middle School. The SAC provides individual and group counseling to at-risk students and consults with district personnel to aid at-risk students. We are reviewing our district discipline code and policies for adoption and implementation next year, as well as the state’s Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) model. District training for administrators in Diversity and Cultural Awareness is ongoing and will be expanded to all staff next year. The action plan for this goal includes adoption of a district-wide system for collecting data on student behavior, which will help to define school-wide behavior patterns more effectively.

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In the area of teachers and staff, a goal of a communications platform that will allow staff members to share best practices across content areas, grade levels and schools is being studied, with pilot anticipated next year and implementation in Year 3. We have also expanded our outreach for recruiting and retaining high-quality staff that reflects our student population. Under study are a number of resources aimed at improving climate and culture through communication at the school level and recognition programs at the district level. One of the objectives of this goal is development of a long-range professional development plan and model that considers alternative delivery methods for staff development. This objective is ongoing.

Don't Miss A Beat!
Keep in touch through our website www.mtlaurelschools.org and our many social media outlets!