



Mount Laurel Township Schools
State of the District

Superintendent of Schools
George J. Rafferty
May 24, 2016

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 2015-2016 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.

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 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.

Some Facts About Our Students:

Total Enrollment (<i>April 30, 2016</i>)	4263
Preschool	128
Elementary - K-4	976
Upper Elementary - Gr. 5 & 6	947
Middle School	954

Student Demographics:

Percentage of White	59
Percentage of African American	15
Percentage of Hispanic	6
Percentage of Asian	14
Percentage of Other	6

Average Daily Attendance	95.9
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Dear Mount Laurel Community:

It is an honor to present the 2015-2016 annual State of the District summary to the Mount Laurel Board of Education and Community. This report offers a comprehensive overview of our school system, highlighting its successes and sharing its challenges 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, varying 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.

Just as we hope to educate the whole child, however, we dedicate our efforts on 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 important to you, and you have consistently shown that by your many contributions to our success.

It is with grateful thanks that I offer you the 2015-2016 State of the District report. I hope you share our pride in the many successes we have achieved this year and our commitment to overcome any obstacle to continued improvement in the coming year.

George J. Rafferty
Superintendent of Schools

Instructional Technology

Mount Laurel Schools' Technology Curriculum covers preschool through eighth-grade and offers versatile learning tools that foster problem-solving skills, encourage literacy and promote inquiry and understanding. Once again this year, we continued our Chromebook initiative, purchasing 175 more computers for classroom use. Our total number of Chromebook computers in-district currently stands at 1,763 since the program began three years ago.

During the 2015-16 school year, 200 additional computers were purchased for teachers, and 39 new Epson Interactive Projectors were installed in classrooms. Our staff continues to employ Google Classroom to offer students shared document collaboration. In addition, Google Hangout allows classes to "travel" nearly anywhere in the world for virtual field trips and video-conferencing.

What's New Next Year?

- Our 2016-17 Tentative Budget includes funds for an online Student Registration System. This program will ease that process for new parents to the district and those with students entering kindergarten.
- More Chromebook, teacher computers and projector purchases are included in the proposed budget to allow greater digital access in our classrooms.
- New Journeys reading materials for first-grade students
- Math Investigations 3rd Edition Training for teachers in Grades 2-5.
- Parkway's Classroom casework and closet enclosures will be replaced.
- Fleetwood's door hardware and locks will be replaced for better security.

The availability of student computers is significant in the classroom, and also allows greater flexibility in scheduling administration of the mandatory Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Test to students in Grades 3-8.

In the Mount Laurel Schools, our philosophy is that technology is not a distinct area within our curriculum, but rather a tool to be integrated across all areas of the curriculum. To that end, a comprehensive committee including staff members, administrators and community members will work this summer to develop our new Instructional Technology Curriculum based upon the newly-adopted New Jersey Department of Education Standards.

Some Particular Points of Pride This Year:

- Following an extensive search process, the Mount Laurel Board of Education named George J. Rafferty as Superintendent of the Mount Laurel Schools.
- Tuskegee Airman Pilot Dr. Eugene Richardson visited Harrington Middle School to share his reflections on the history that he helped to make.
- Holocaust survivor Alice Kraus visited with students at the Mount Laurel Hartford School to discuss the history she and her family experienced.
- Harrington's Sea Perch Program was selected for a state visit by the NJ Department of Education and the US Navy.
- Harrington's STEM Students took state and national awards in the 2016 Sea Perch competition, winning five awards at the state level and four more at the national level. The SeaBots Mate Team took home 11 state awards and will compete at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas this summer.
- A grant from Macy's helped to fund after-school STEM Clubs at two of our schools, with culminating events inviting parents to experience "family engineering".

Student Services and Child Study Team Offerings

The Mount Laurel Department of Student Services is made up of school counselors, psychologists, learning support specialists, social workers, Response to Intervention Specialists, school nurses and school police liaisons. These professional staff members with the assistance of teachers, parents, community agencies and numerous other educator and community leaders coordinate efforts to assist students in the areas of academic 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 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.

Transportation

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

Did You Know:

- That our buses travel 3,544 miles per day throughout Mount Laurel's 22-square mile area?
- Our fleet of 47 large buses and 25 small buses transports approximately 4,200 students attending Mount Laurel Schools and 8 students attending schools out of district?
- Over 300 students entered this year's Bus Safety Poster Contest organized by our own drivers!

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.

- Our Cafeteria Service sold 301,503 lunches and 10,330 breakfasts last year.
- Our A La Carte sales totaled \$313,789.
- A total of 587 or 14.8% of our students are eligible for Free or Reduced lunch based on family income.

School Facilities, Maintenance and Operations

Our Facilities and Maintenance department is responsible for all Mount Laurel School District facilities, 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 in addition to daily necessary tasks such as 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. While challenging under a two-percent spending cap, we attempt to include infrastructure improvements in each annual budget. Our proposed budget for next year includes roof repair, carpet replacement with tile, painting in five schools, HVAC control upgrades, and door hardware and lock replacement.

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.

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.

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**

Annual State Assessment

This year, all schools in New Jersey were again required to administer the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Test to students in Grades 3-8.

This is the second year of mandated PARCC testing in the state of New Jersey. Previously, our students took the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) Test for all subject areas. The NJ ASK is now used only for Science and only 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.

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

Language Arts:

57% of our third-graders met or exceeded expectations
65% of our fourth-graders met or exceeded expectations
64% of our fifth-graders met or exceeded expectations
60% of our sixth-graders met or exceeded expectations

Mathematics:

86% of our Algebra I students met or exceeded expectations
85% of our Geometry students met or exceeded expectations
53% of our third-graders met or exceeded expectations
55% of our fourth-graders met or exceeded expectations

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

96.4% of our fourth-graders scored in the Proficient or Advanced Proficient range.

81.8% of our eighth-graders scored in the Proficient or Advanced Proficient range.

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. Working together in this way saves everyone tax dollars.

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. Beginning with our five-day New Staff Orientation sessions each summer, we take great pride in establishing familiarity with district standards, protocols and expectations. Likewise, 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:	729
Certified Staff:	397
Support Staff:	332

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 administrators teach at the college level and many others are continuing students at area universities.

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.



When the Mount Laurel Police Department employed a new canine member this year, one of its first stops was to the Larchmont School to share some of the tactics employed by canines in police work and to discuss areas where he might help the department and the community.



Mount Laurel's STEM Program

Mount Laurel's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Program began in September of 2010. With state aid to schools dwindling, Mount Laurel sought and received a \$15,000 grant from Lockheed Martin to begin the program.

We started in our fifth, seventh and eighth-grades. By November of that first year, Lockheed granted an additional \$5,000. In January of 2012, we received our first grant of \$15,000 from The Sallie Mae Fund. That allowed us to create the sixth-grade Robotics component, and the middle school STEAM Program, which incorporates the Arts into STEM. In 2013, we maximized learning by replacing a study hall period in all Harrington Middle School students' schedules with a full-year elective course of study.

Last year marked the introduction of Computer Coding to our middle-school curriculum. Coding was incorporated into the curriculum at the elementary level this year, and Hartford's robotics classes have expanded.

Harrington's Underwater Exploration STEM Program has earned statewide acclaim, and our students continue to earn awards at every level when taking their remotely-operated vehicles (ROVs) into the competition pool. This year, teams competed at the national level in both SeaPerch and Marine Advanced Technology Education (MATE) Programs. In addition, students have become the teachers on numerous occasions, teaching young children and adults how to pilot an ROV in community gatherings such as the Mount Laurel Fall Festival.



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