



Superintendent's Report

June 26, 2025

As we conclude the 2024-2025 school year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for what our Closter Public Schools community has accomplished together. This has been a year of remarkable achievements, meaningful growth, and continued excellence that truly exemplifies the spirit and dedication that makes our district so special.

I am thrilled to report that we have successfully achieved all three of our district goals for this school year, demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement and student success. Creating the *Profile of a Closter Learner* was one of our most ambitious undertakings. The profile has been shared with parents and we have received positive responses about the final product. The *Profile of a Closter Learner* will continue to guide our school district so that we develop students who have the knowledge, skills and experiences valued by our school community.

Our goal of improving guidance and counseling services for students transitioning from middle school to high school has been met with success. Our Tenakill Middle School counselors, Ms. Cipollini and Mr. McElroy implemented numerous enhancements including student assemblies, information tables during lunch, parent information sessions, NVD elective visits, scheduling conferences, and regular communication through the Tenakill Times Newsletter. Our special services department also provided comprehensive transition support with meetings for parents and students with NVD counselors and case managers. While this goal has been technically achieved, our counseling team continues their exceptional work supporting families through the remainder of the transition process, even over the summer months.

Expanding student advocacy at each school has been actively pursued by teams at both Hillside Elementary School and Tenakill Middle School, with our principals leading these important initiatives to empower our students to be their own advocates. The *Hillside Highlight: Student Advocacy* video and the Tenakill Student Advocacy Project/Plan Showcase on May 2, 2025, demonstrated what our students learned about being a self-advocate.

Our students have achieved extraordinary recognition this year, bringing honor to themselves and our entire district. Three of our middle school students - Alivia Chu, Sophia Lee, and Katelyn Seo - became national finalists in the prestigious NPR podcast competition for their creation "Rice is Life," selected from over 2,000 submissions nationwide. What an incredible accomplishment!

Our Tenakill Middle School Science Olympiad Team made history by winning the New Jersey State Championship and representing our state at the National Science Olympiad Tournament in Lincoln, Nebraska. The dedication, collaborative problem-solving, and competitive spirit demonstrated by these 23 students under the expert guidance of Ms. Moidu and Mr. Hernandez exemplifies the very best of Closter education. The overwhelming community support for their national competition, raising nearly \$25,000 through various fundraising efforts, showcases the strength of our Closter family.

In mathematics, our students excelled with Changha Rho and Jean Park ranking first and second in the region in the New Jersey Math League Contest for seventh grade mathematics, even more remarkable because they are sixth grade students enrolled in advanced coursework. Our entire seventh grade team ranked first place regionally, a testament to the outstanding instruction provided by Mr. Bomzer, Mr. John, and Mr. Rota, as well as all the teachers who prepared these students from PreK through their current grade levels.

Our performing arts program continued to shine with Samuel Berenfeld and Sohum Advani being accepted into the prestigious Bergen County Band. The National Association of Music Merchants Foundation once again recognized Closter Public Schools as one of the "Best Communities for Music Education" for 2025.

Our sixth-grade entrepreneurs impressed the community with their successful TREP\$ Marketplace in December, developing creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, financial literacy, and communication skills through hands-on business experiences.

Our middle school students excelled in athletics throughout the year by participating in fall, winter and spring extra-curricular sports. Our co-ed soccer team, boys' volleyball, girls' volleyball, boys' basketball, and boys' baseball teams all won their league championships. We are proud of our student athletes!

This year featured exceptional performances by our students in concerts, assemblies, and competitions. From the first grade *Thanksgiving Concert* to the magnificent winter and spring concerts, our student musicians consistently demonstrated their talents under outstanding musical direction by Ms. Pidi, Ms. Abbey, and Ms. Riecken. The Porchlight Productions of *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Lion King, Jr.* showcased the remarkable theatrical abilities of our students. Both schools held impressive art shows presenting our students' skills in creating beautiful artwork.

Our Lunar New Year celebrations in January were particularly memorable, featuring diverse performances including singing, instrumental music, drumming, and dancing, while providing important cultural education about the Year of the Snake. These assemblies celebrated the richness of Closter's diverse cultures and reinforced what makes our community such a wonderful place for living and learning.

Our commitment to professional development remained strong throughout the year. Summer 2024 professional learning sessions in *Phonics First* and mathematics and English Language Arts workshops prepared our educators for excellence. Our Professional Development Day in January 2025, that was held virtually due to a snow storm, featured a keynote on wellness, a special session for the child study team, and various workshops including multilingual learner support, artificial intelligence in the classroom, and behavioral strategies for teachers.

I want to especially recognize Ms. Charlene Gerbig, who was selected by New Jersey Department of Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer to serve on the *Working Group on Student Literacy*. Her selection to represent northern New Jersey in this important state-level work brings great honor to our district.

Our maintenance and custodial teams worked tirelessly throughout the school year to ensure our facilities remained pristine environments for learning. Major construction projects were completed successfully, including the addition of five modular rooms at Hillside Elementary School that opened for learning in September 2024, roof replacements at both schools, and ongoing boiler and window replacement projects. Mr. Scaglione and his entire team deserve our heartfelt appreciation for their dedication.

The strength of our parent and community partnerships has been evident throughout the year. From the PTO's generous support of author visits, book fairs, and their successful annual gala with a "Viva Las Vegas" theme, to the Korean Parent Group's contributions to our Veterans Day observance and Lunar New Year celebrations, to our partnership with the Shade Tree Commission to observe Arbor Day, our community consistently demonstrates its commitment to our students' success. The Closter Education Association organized the amazing RISE for Hunger event, led by Laurie Rochlin, that engaged our entire Closter community to help combat hunger internationally and food insecurity locally through the Closter Food Bank. This effort was extended by the Birthday Kit project, led by Sylvia Jost, that provided birthday cake supplies for Closter Food Bank families. Our students learned the importance of helping others who are in need.

As we conclude this remarkable year, I extend my deepest gratitude to our Board of Education for their unwavering support and vision, to our entire faculty, staff, and administration for their dedication, creativity, and tireless commitment to our students; to our amazing students who are the heart of everything we do, and to our families and community members whose partnership, support, and involvement make Closter Public Schools an exceptional district.

Our summer programs will start on July 7, 2025, and will serve 85 students. These programs will provide academic support and enrichment for students through August 1, 2025. All students can access summer learning resources by visiting the school webpage, select "programs" from menu links at the top of page, then click on "academics" and look for [summer recommendations on the HES page](#) or [summer reviews on the TMS page](#).

I look forward to having our students start the 2025-2026 school year on Thursday, September 4, 2025. Our teachers and staff will return on September 2 and 3, 2025.

Enjoy a safe and restful summer!

Vincent Mc Hale