

# OPS Thanks You for Your Service

*There is a famous Japanese proverb that states "Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher." Together our community has had over 13,000 days (that's about 75 years) learning with these three retiring teachers. Their contributions to our community are numerous. We will miss them as they begin the next chapter of their lives. No matter where they are, they will always be members of our OPS family.*

**Scott Duthie** worked as a financial analyst for several years before he began teaching, joining OPS in 1993. He describes his time at OPS as both memorable and fulfilling, and he feels fortunate to have enjoyed educational experiences in every grade level, whether it was in the traditional classroom setting or through the popular Summer Explorations program. Among various contributions to the district, he is proud to have introduced the Stock Market Game to OPS over 25 years ago, acting as advisor to both staff and the upper-grade student body since its inception. Over the years, he has volunteered and served on committees in almost every curriculum area including math, science, social studies, and language arts. Additionally, he served as vice president and negotiations chair for The Oradell Education Association. "My career at OPS has rewarded me with so many invaluable gifts: the thousands of students from over the years who have each brought something uniquely special and beautiful to my

life, the incredible and supportive parent community that made teaching here a truly wonderful experience, and my talented, committed, and beloved colleagues who have opened so many doors and brightened so many minds...it has been my absolute pleasure."

**Julie Helmis** is in her 25th year of teaching second grade at OPS after spending the first 10 years of her career in Leonia, New Jersey. She will truly miss the high energy of her eight-year-old students, and she will always treasure the positive relationships she has formed with her students, their families, and her colleagues. Some of her fondest memories are of the annual international Thanksgiving buffets she hosted in her classroom, and she expects to reflect on those memories each year during future holiday celebrations. "I have seen OPS grow in so many wonderful ways, always moving forward providing the most current educational and professional support. Leaving OPS has been a difficult decision. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to serve this community." A second grade colleague recently reflected on their time working together. "One aspect of her teaching I will remember forever is her ability to reach her students by drawing upon their strengths. She always fosters their inquisitive nature. Rather than give them an answer, she sets her young learners on an exploration to discover the answer. I will forever be grateful for all the advice and laughter throughout the years."

**Corinne Lynch** describes her over 24 years as the school's technology teacher as both rewarding and challenging. In her first year on staff, the building had one internet connection; the computer lab was wired for internet the following year. Student instruction included learning the District's first website address and new terms such as World Wide Web and email. As webmaster, she created grade level curriculum links and started weekly technology workshops for staff. In 2013 she implemented Hour of Code, which is offered to all grades during Computer Science Education Week. Just days before the district went full remote, she facilitated a workshop that included strategies for using Google Classroom in the lower grades. "This past year has shown me how wonderful and adaptive our staff is, which is the biggest reason I have enjoyed working all these years in Oradell. Last March, under the guidance of our administration team, with ingenuity and sheer determination, our teachers successfully switched from classroom learning to remote learning in less than a week...I loved this challenge, and I loved being part of our learning community." Recently she had an opportunity to teach art lessons, bringing her career full circle to her early years as an art teacher. "The students astonished me with their creativity in photography, animation, and illustrating original stories. It reminded me that I enjoyed it all because it's all about the kids! Thank you, Oradell, for an adventure I'll never forget."



Oradell  
Public  
School  
District

350 Prospect Avenue  
Oradell, New Jersey 07649

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# ORADELL: Eye on OPS

FALL 2020



## Oradell Public School District: A New Year, A New Look

The 2020-2021 school year will be different for the Oradell Public School community. Our building will look different with one-way stairwells and social distance markings in the hallways. Our staff and students will look different as they wear masks each day. Our modes of instruction will look different as we transition between hands-on and digital materials. Yet, much will remain the same. We will continue to focus each day on making sure each teacher has the materials and resources to provide a safe, quality education for each student. The following six principles will guide us as we move forward:

- ◆ **Live Instruction Time is Golden** – Whether that time is in our brick and mortar building or via a virtual classroom, we are focused on maximizing the time we are with students.
- ◆ **The Goals Remain the Same** – We continue to focus on the same District goals, increasing mathematics achievement and integrating technology.
- ◆ **Same Approach No Matter the Place** – The schedule, curriculum and materials are the same whether you are attending OPS onsite or remotely.
- ◆ **Relationships are at the Core** – People matter and finding ways to establish relationships between students and teachers is important.
- ◆ **Focus on What Matters** – In each subject, we have done work to identify the most important curricular topics.
- ◆ **Adult Learning Reaps Rewards** – It's a whole new world. The more we help our teachers and parents grow, the better they will be able to help our students achieve.

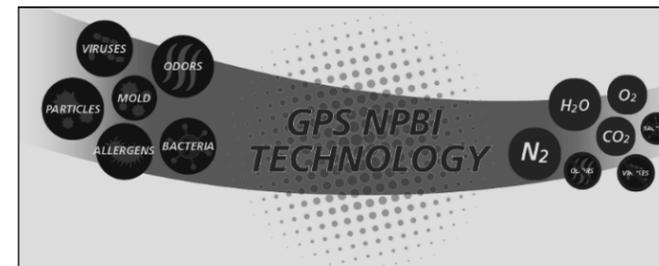
### CREATING A PHYSICALLY SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

As the District focused on creating a reopening plan, the first task was to identify the steps needed to create a physically safe learning environment for our students and staff. Using the state's reopening guidelines and the advice of experts in the fields of air conditioning, air quality and medicine, the following actions were taken.

#### Clean Air

When designing reopening plans, districts across the state evaluated how to best create physically safe learning environments. One area to look at was the air quality in the classrooms. While all OPS classrooms have installed filtrations systems that bring in fresh air from the outside, the District decided to implement an added layer of protection. This fall, Global Plasma Solutions (GPS) Needlepoint Bi-Polar Ionization (NPBI) products were installed in the three types of air filtration units at OPS. The products inactivate viruses by removing particulate matter from the circulating air including pollutants, dust, allergens, mold bacteria and viruses, including the strain that causes COVID-19.

**So how does it work?** The technology creates a high concentration of positively and negatively charged ions. These ions travel through the air looking to attach themselves to particles. When they come in contact with the particles, they disrupt the pathogens' surface proteins, making them inactive and unable to continue to spread.



While our electrostatic sprayers disinfect surfaces, the GPS technology targets the air, which is an important component when dealing with an airborne virus. While the technology will help us with the war against COVID-19, it will also continue to improve the air in the building for students with allergies, asthma and other respiratory issues. Additionally, NPBI is ozone free, a concern with other ionizing products. We are thrilled to report that the project was completed ahead of schedule. The District joins many other local school districts, major institutions of higher learning, such as Harvard University, and hospital facilities, such as the world-

renowned Mayo Clinic, in providing our students and staff with the benefits of improved air quality through the use of needlepoint bi-polar ionization.

#### Clean Surfaces

To keep our surfaces clean (including our Kindergarten playground), the District purchased three additional electrostatic sprayers, bringing the total number of sprayers in the building to four, to be used on a regular basis each day. The handheld sprayers utilize an electrostatic charge that allows for a quick and even application of the cleaning materials onto a surface. This more complete and consistent coverage ensures that all surface areas are cleaned thoroughly. Classrooms, bathrooms, door handles and common spaces are routinely sprayed.

#### ADDITIONAL STEPS TAKEN

Installing products to improve air quality and implementing protocols to ensure the highest level of cleaning is just part of the District's reopening plan. The next step was to ensure that appropriate distancing was achieved in classrooms, in hallways and outdoors. Based on the square footage of classrooms, additional furniture was removed so all students would be sitting six feet apart and could still easily move around the room. Additionally, markers were added to the hallways and stairwells, identifying which direction to walk. Markers were also added on the floor outside bathrooms to create a system to enforce social distancing within the bathrooms, where safety glass dividers were added between sinks. Safety glass dividers were also purchased and are being used for office spaces, small group instruction spaces and testing areas where closer teacher/student work is needed. *(cont'd. on following page)*



Each student in the building has a personal basket of materials to ensure there is no sharing of materials in the classroom. Protocols were also put in place for the storage of personal belongings to minimize contact.

# A New Year, A New Look

(cont'd. from cover)

## DESIGNING THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Once physical safety was addressed, an instructional program that would work within the safety parameters established (i.e., maximum number of individuals who could be placed in a physical classroom) was developed. The New Jersey Department of Education requires that all districts provide families an opportunity for a full remote program. On top of running both a hybrid program (where students do some work onsite and some work remotely) and a full remote program (where students do all learning at home), Oradell Public School also runs two different schedules.

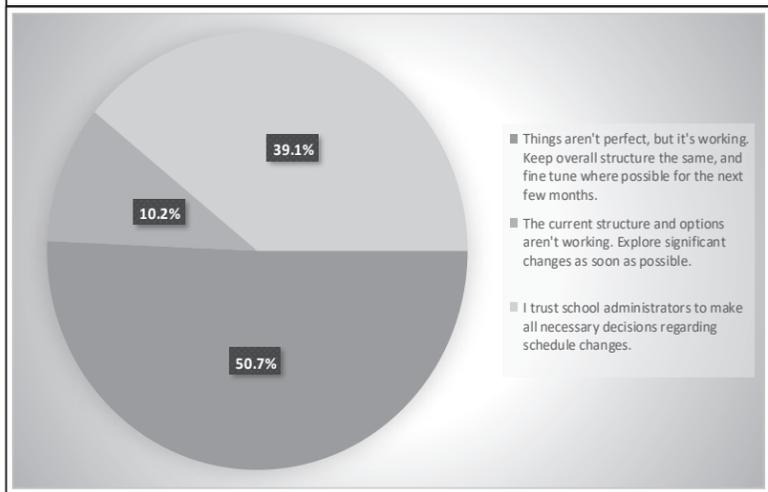
### Learning in Grades K-2

Students in grades K-2 attend school five days a week for 2½ hours each day. Students either attend from 8:30-11:00 or 12:30-3:00. If a family has chosen a full remote program, the student attends school virtually by being in a Zoom call with a dedicated remote teacher for the time period they would be onsite. During this live teaching time (whether onsite or remote), students receive direct and explicit instruction in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. There is also time allotted for social and emotional learning. When students are at home, they do additional work to reinforce their learning in the classroom and attend special area classes such as music, art, physical education, world language and library.

### Learning in Grades 3-6

Students in grades 3-6 attend school onsite two days per week for 4 hours and 10 minutes. (Our remote program mirrors this schedule with students being in a Zoom call on the days they would be onsite.) On the days they are not onsite, students stream into the classroom for a read aloud and language arts lesson. They also connect to their teacher virtually in a Zoom call at the end of the day. This structure ensures that all students see and hear their classroom teacher each day. Students in the upper grades, like their primary-aged peers, attend special area classes virtually.

From the mid-October reopening survey: *All things considered (balancing safety, social development, education, logistics, etc.), would you be in favor of significant changes during the winter months?*



## INSTRUCTIONAL SUCCESSES

We are so proud of our students and our teachers. They have learned new technologies and are using them to move instruction forward. Our students are as adept at manipulating a Zoom call as many CEOs. Our teachers have learned how to record lessons and utilize Google Classroom to assign work and provide feedback. Recently, an administrator sent the entire fourth grade class an email with a new web link to use to access a class lesson, and within minutes, numerous students acknowledged receipt of the email and thanked the administrator for the information. Yes, that was the behavior of nine year olds!

## MOVING FORWARD

No approach is perfect, and a big part of the District's reopening plan was an acknowledgement that we will need to revise our systems over time. In the middle of October, a survey was given to families and staff members to gather data to inform future changes. Additionally, when the District did go remote for two weeks at the end of October, a survey was also used to collect data. We recognize that the 2020-2021 school year will be one of constant change. With whatever uncertainty and change that comes, the Oradell Public School District will continue to be a place where every decision we make will focus on our children – our hope and our future.

**For the most up-to-date information about the Oradell Public School District's response to COVID-19, visit the District website and click on COVID-19 Communication.**

# The Importance of Self-Compassion

By Rima Mason, MA, LPC, OPS School Counselor

It has been eight months since our world first shut down due to COVID-19. That's a long time to be dealing with any stressor, much less one where any end is questionable. Stress and anxiety levels are understandably high right now, especially in light of the recent shift to online learning at OPS. Couple that with the knowledge of how stress and anxiety can impede learning, and it's clear that COVID has interfered with our children's education in many ways.

By now most people are familiar with the usual advice about coping with stress (eat right, exercise, get enough sleep, do things you enjoy), but there's one proven stress reducer often overlooked: self-compassion.

Back in March, people seemed to be very understanding of each other. No one minded if a child yelled in the background of their Google Meet or a pet zoomed in front of their Zoom. And because we saw everyone else going through these things, we were forgiving of ourselves when it happened at our house. Now that it is months later, many of us have settled into new routines, figured out multiple workspaces at home, and made a habit of grabbing a mask before leaving the house. Those "mistakes" that were so prevalent in the beginning aren't as visible anymore. When we don't see others' mistakes, we tend to assume they are not happening. This can create an expectation for ourselves that we shouldn't still be making them. Of course, mistakes are inevitable. If we expect not to make them, we may judge ourselves harshly when we do. This harsh judgment is the opposite of self-compassion and only serves to elevate our stress and anxiety levels.

## WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

 <b>SELF-KINDNESS</b> vs SELF-JUDGMENT Being supportive and understanding of ourselves during a hard time, rather than being harshly self-critical.	 <b>COMMON HUMANITY</b> vs ISOLATION Remembering everyone makes mistakes and experiences difficulties at times. We are not alone.	 <b>MINDFULNESS</b> vs OVER-IDENTIFICATION Recognizing when we're stressed or struggling without being judgmental or overreacting.
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Self-compassion, on the other hand, means extending the same kindness to yourself that you would show others in a similar situation. It recognizes that mistakes are a universal, inevitable experience, and it acknowledges one's negative emotions without exaggerating or minimizing them. When we practice self-compassion, we treat ourselves the way we would treat a good friend. It is important to note, however, that expecting mistakes is not the same as lowering standards. In fact, making mistakes – and learning from them – is the only way to reach those high standards.

Why is the school counselor writing about how you can be a better friend to yourself? Because when we fail to expect mistakes and we fail to treat ourselves kindly, our children learn to expect perfection and judge themselves – and others – harshly for those mistakes. Just as in adults, this harsh judgment could contribute to a child's stress and anxiety, pandemic or not. Because we *are* in a pandemic, self-compassion is more important than ever, not just for lowering our collective stress and anxiety, but for decreasing the obstacles to learning our children are facing as well.

So next time your WiFi is spotty, you send an email with more than one typo, or you are late for school, practice self-compassion and treat yourself the way you would a good friend. You will be calmer and healthier for it, and so will your children.

For more information about self-compassion, please visit [www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org). As always, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns at [masonr@oradellschool.org](mailto:masonr@oradellschool.org).

# Welcome to OPS...



### Lauren Didio, Fourth Grade Teacher

Ms. Didio spent the past seven years teaching fourth grade in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey. She is certified in elementary education for first through sixth grades. She is excited to join OPS as a leave replacement teacher in fourth grade.



### Candida Hengemuhle, Interim Director of Special Services

Ms. Hengemuhle has over 37 years of administrative and Child Study Team experience. She brings extensive knowledge of special education and corresponding laws, social emotional learning, professional development and guided supervision through a collaborative model.



### Amanda Lozano, Sixth Grade Teacher

Ms. Lozano joins OPS as a leave replacement teacher after 12 years as a middle school science teacher. She is currently working on becoming a Google Certified Educator and looks forward to working with the children of Oradell to share her love of learning.



### Kaitlin Menhinick, Second Grade Teacher

Ms. Menhinick joins OPS as a leave replacement teacher bringing several years experience teaching kindergarten through fourth grade in two Bergen County districts. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Denver.



### Alexandria Pallotta, First Grade Teacher

Ms. Pallotta served OPS in several capacities before her current role as a leave replacement teacher. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Marist College with a dual certification in elementary and special education. She is pursuing a master's degree in educational psychology.



### Daniella Pic, Fifth Grade Teacher

Ms. Pic joins OPS with six years experience teaching various subjects in the private school sector. She is certified to teach English in kindergarten through 12th grade, and she holds a master's degree in writing. She is serving as a fifth grade leave replacement teacher this year.



### Shannon Sharkey, Director of Special Services

Ms. Sharkey joins OPS with over 20 years experience in education, last serving as supervisor of special education in the Warren Township School District. She earned a master's degree in speech language pathology and an educational specialist's degree in educational leadership.



## Recognition of Years of Service

The Board of Education recently recognized several staff members for achieving years of service benchmarks. A certificate and pin was awarded to each staff member.

### 25 Years

Thomas Ackerman  
Missy Warnet

### 20 Years

Doug S. Durling  
Melissa Pizza

### 15 Years

James Butcher  
Patricia Cuddy  
Nicole Hendricks  
John McManus  
Denise Pallotta  
Kristen Terzano

### 5 Years

Kristen Falotico  
Estelle Haberman  
Michael Hagopian  
Kaitlin Sinclair  
Amy Skroce  
Gina Stross

*Congratulations and thank you for your service to the families of Oradell.*

## Superintendent's Message

### REOPENING SCHOOLS IN A PANDEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Dear OPS Families, Faculty, and Community Partners,

Once again, I would like to thank the many community members who participated on our reopening committees. Your insight and dedication directly contributed to the success we had planning and implementing our reopening this year. It was a tremendous task and one that remained ever changing right up until the opening of our building on September 1.

COVID-19 continues to present challenges to us in every phase of our planning and preparation. As we design plans for Phase II, we continue to address the changes and updates from the state and county. First and foremost is our concern for the safety and welfare of our students and personnel.

Our surveys and the hard work of the Pandemic Response Team will help us to reach the next phase of our school year. While there is no identified time frame for Phase II, it is important that we continue to discuss all options for a safe learning environment.

Please visit our new COVID-19 Communication website for health guidance, NJDOE direction, and mandates as they continue to evolve.

Barbara Longo  
Interim Superintendent



## Couldn't attend the Board Meeting?

Logon to the district website @ [oradellschool.org](http://oradellschool.org), click the Board of Education tab, and go to Board Meeting Recordings.