



HARRISON

Central School District

www.harrisoncsd.org • March 2004

Superintendent's Message

Dear Community Members,

I am delighted to share the second of our quarterly newsletters designed to keep you informed about the exciting and important work taking place in our district as we advance our goal of becoming a "lighthouse district." Our initiatives span the K-12 continuum and impact every member of our learning community.

An interview with Board President David Brunner, Board Vice President David Singer, and me reviews the value of implementing the district's strategic plan. We hope you will be encouraged by our commitment to long range planning.

Our elementary math pilot will result in the selection of new math text and materials linked to the best research-based practices for math instruction. This will advance our mission of a coherent math education from kindergarten through high school.

The middle school will implement new English Language Arts progress reports in the fall that reflect our on-going efforts to improve the assessment information provided to parents.

Our middle and high school science program is undergoing a renaissance. Secondary Science Supervisor Mary Beth Wilson, is implementing a new, first-ever, middle level science research program, and providing advanced science study for middle school students.

Technology Director Michael Greenfield's leadership will provide an expanded high school digital media program; an interdisciplinary digital literacy course; an improved district network; and enhanced home-to-school communication.

One of the most exciting and enjoyable new developments is the redesign of our central office waiting area into a Student Art Gallery. The gallery provides a space to exhibit the extraordinary work of the students in our high school art program. You will be amazed, delighted, and inspired by the work of these young artists. Please stop by and visit!

Each day my hopes and aspirations for our schools are bolstered by the amazing students of this community. I ask for your continued support as we work to honor their individuality, creativity, and intellect.

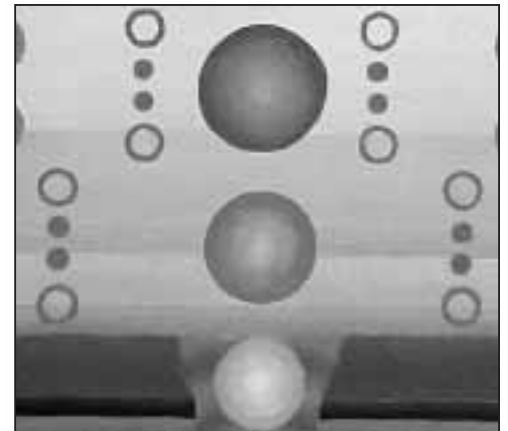
Sincerely,

Louis N. Wool, Superintendent of Schools

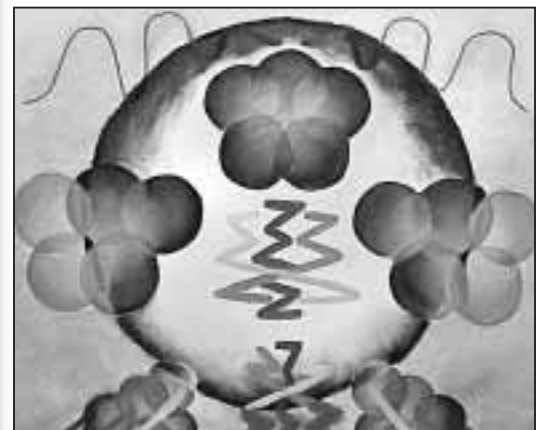
Art Show at HCSD Main Office

Inspired by music, fueled by talent

When you enter the reception area of the Harrison Central School District's main office, you will be amazed at the creativity and life that fills the room as you explore the student art on display in the Student Gallery. The HCSD Student Art Gallery, which opened in February, was established to promote and celebrate the talent of Harrison students. The first exhibit includes oil paintings that explore art inspired by music. All members of the community are invited to view the exhibit located in the district office at the LMK Middle School.



Joshua Yonejubo



Jessica Paris

Defining a Vision for the Future

For the Harrison Central School District, the decision to develop a formal long-range strategic plan is a commitment to support educational excellence for all of the district's 3300 students. Last February, when the district appointed Louis Wool as its new superintendent, Wool shared his vision for Harrison: that it will become a "lighthouse district"- one that values every child who is educated in the district, and one that can compete with the most elite districts in the region. Committed to developing a comprehensive strategic plan to support that educational vision, the superintendent and members of the School Board addressed a series of questions critical to building a foundation for excellence. During a recent discussion, Superintendent Wool, along with Board President David Brunner and Board Vice President David Singer, reflected on the district's decision to develop a strategic plan, the direction of education in Harrison, and their vision for the future.

In a new, competitive environment for education, a strategic plan helps to lay out an educational vision for our district, then communicates how the district intends to pursue, achieve and measure excellence in each part of our organization.

Mr. Wool: Success requires planning and a clear vision of our future. As an organization, it is critical to have a vision of where we want to go, and to begin with the end in mind. A strategic plan outlines our vision for the future, and allows us to measure ourselves against that vision.

Mr. Brunner: From a business perspective, any successful organization with a budget and reporting structure has a planning process in place- to set goals, measure performance and report to the people that hold it accountable. A strategic plan is necessary to assess where we are, and define how we are going to get to where we want to be.

Every decision is based on what is best for the children in our district- socially, academically and emotionally.

Mr. Wool: Our goal is to become a lighthouse district. We are striving to become a school system in which every child feels valued and meets with success. The pursuit of excellence and the social and emotional development of all our students is our mission.

Mr. Brunner: The most important workshop held this year by the Board focused on defining beliefs about what an education should provide Harrison students. We discussed a broad range of topics: learning, respect and safety, all focused on helping us make better decisions about what is best for the children in the district.



In Harrison, the development of our strategic plan has been a collaborative effort and is a work in progress.

Mr. Wool: We crafted the primary document after completing a needs assessment and looking at many business and school models. Our plan is an amalgam of the best research on learning organizations in the private and public sectors. It evolved through feedback from the Board, the administrative cabinet, faculty, and the community. The process began in August, and in November, a draft of the plan was shared with the public. Implementation has begun, but the strategic plan is a renewable document that requires revisiting to measure progress against our goals and vision. As the goals change and continue to evolve, so too will our strategic plan.

A good strategic plan takes some of its concepts from business.

Mr. Singer: A large system like a school district needs to have some structures modeled on sound business practices. We need to become more data driven and develop specific strategies and action plans, with effective systems of accountability in place. Our strategic plan identifies the challenges in each part of the organization, and defines an action plan to address them, with measurable benchmarks for each area.

Our strategic plan critically assesses the current status of each part of the organization, but clearly defines the road we need to follow to improve.

Mr. Wool: We have a strong belief that Harrison can become a lighthouse district, a belief that is shared by our community. We have set very high expectations, and appropriately, the assessment of the current state of the organization is critical when measured against that vision. In order for a strategic plan to have value it has to be a

critical assessment- of where we are and where we want to go. While we are pleased with parts of our organization, within other parts the performance is not where it should be. Ultimately, this frankness will build credibility with the public.

Mr. Brunner: Self-evaluation is always difficult, but we don't want to embark on a path that won't get results. To be less than honest would undermine not only our success, but also our credibility.

Effective communication is vital to the success of our school district.

Mr. Singer: There are multiple layers of communication: with the community, within the organization, among Board members, and between the Board and the administration. Up to now, this has not been systemic. The strategic plan requires all communication to be structured to insure clarity.

Mr. Wool: The strategic plan examines communication from different perspectives, and recognizes that a clear internal process of communication was lacking. A priority is to improve the flow of information within our organization. Another focus is making information more accessible for parents and community members in our district.

The key to improved performance among students is high-quality teaching.

Mr. Wool: The strategic plan focuses on improving teacher performance and quality within our system. We have made a commitment to improve our teacher evaluation program, beginning with retraining our administrators in teacher evaluation protocol. We have allocated \$525,000 for teacher training, demonstrating a commitment to professional development. An aggressive teacher recruitment program is underway. We will be recruiting the brightest minds in the teaching profession throughout the northeast.

One of the components of the district's strategic plan is a long-range educational and facilities plan.

Mr. Wool: As we implement the strategic plan, our facilities will need modifications to support this vision. At the elementary level, this means opportunities for special education students to be included, space for enhanced arts, music, theater, and foreign language programs. It means enriched science in middle and high school, and technology-rich classrooms district wide. Our goal is to develop a long-term building improvement plan that is aligned with our educational goals, and that insures the health, safety and welfare of all of our students.

Mr. Singer: Now that we have a clear educational vision, we can build our physical structures to support it. Modernization and expansion fit into our strategic plan.

We have important goals to meet by the end of this school year.

Mr. Brunner: After the Board adopts the strategic plan I'll propose that the board host a series of public meetings to share the progress we're making. It is vital to keep ongoing communication between the school district and the public, especially as new goals evolve.

Mr. Wool: By year's end, we will have completed the implementation of our new teacher evaluation program, which will raise the standards of teaching. I also expect significant improvements instructionally. We will open in September 2004 prepared to be competitive with similar school districts in the region.



As a district, we are committed to a strategic plan that will help take us into the future.

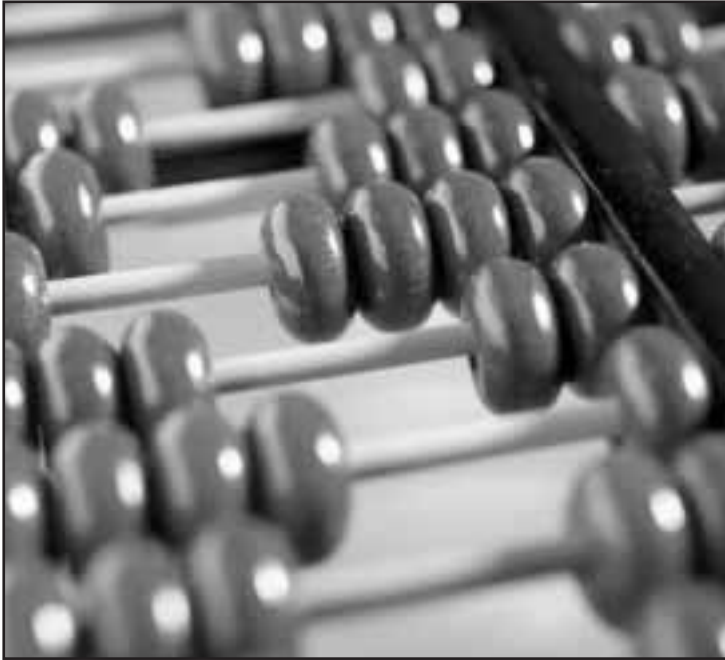
Mr. Singer: My five-year vision is for a district that seeks to motivate, challenge and educate all children at all levels, and strives to help them be the best they can be. I actually believe we can accomplish this in less than five years!

Mr. Brunner: I believe that within five years, Harrison will be the best place to educate children. I also believe that it will be the best place to work - where the most talented teachers will seek us out, because they will want to work in a district with leading edge programs and a sound organizational structure.

Mr. Wool: For me, the goal is very simple- to become a lighthouse district, so that we will be among the most competitive school systems in the country, and one of the most nurturing places for kids to grow and learn.

K-5 Math Program Promises Greater Student Achievement

As part of the district's commitment to achieving excellence at all levels, the elementary math program has been under review and will have a new, unified approach in the fall. A team of 16 teachers and two administrators has worked with a leading expert in elementary math instruction to evaluate and select a math program that helps children achieve at higher levels. "We are looking to adopt a math program that supports the research based on best practices for math instruction. These new texts and materials will support us in



deepening students' understanding of mathematics and making math more meaningful for them," said Kent Leo, elementary supervisor of math and science.

Under the direction of Mr. Leo and the dedicated and highly organized committee, the process of selecting new instructional materials has been expedited. Throughout the fall, the math committee set goals for elementary math instruction and evaluated many programs based on several factors: alignment with New York State standards, whether a program was researched-based, and each program's success in fostering student achievement. The committee's rigorous evaluation process identified two programs to be piloted in classrooms this spring: *Investigations in Numbers, Data and Space* and *Math Trailblazers*.

Nearly 50 teachers volunteered to pilot the two math programs. Volunteers were trained in both programs, each of which will be piloted for two weeks. The piloting time frame was driven by current curriculum and the topics being covered, in order not to disrupt instruction.

Once the piloting is complete, teachers who piloted the programs and the math committee will review and evaluate each program. The committee will then make a recommendation to the superintendent. Elementary teachers will be trained and ready to implement the selected program for the start of the new school year in September.

Middle and High School Science Research Programs

For several years the science department at Harrison High School has offered a science research course, the Authentic Science Research Program, a nationally recognized program designed by Dr. Robert Pavlica. The program allows students to conduct an original research project and work directly with a scientist throughout their high school career. With an eye toward improving the existing high school program, and beginning a new and groundbreaking middle school research program, a first of its kind, the district has engaged Dr. Pavlica to work with us as we continue to build a comprehensive, inquiry-based science program K-12.

"I am excited about the possibility of Harrison embracing programs of this level of excellence," said Mary Beth Wilson, the secondary supervisor of science. "Science is everywhere, it is interdisciplinary and these programs will help us redefine what science is about."

At the high school level, students apply to participate in the Authentic Science Research Program during the spring of their freshman year. Their sophomore year is spent formulating a question on which their project will be based and contacting a mentor. During their junior and senior years, students are guided through the research process by their classroom teachers and professional mentors, culminating with a scientific paper to present their findings. Students have the opportunity to receive college credit through the program.

The Authentic Science Research Program provides students with unique "real life" scientific experiences, including formulating hypotheses, conducting research, and formulating conclusions. The program helps students develop time management, critical thinking and interpersonal skills as they interact with professionals in their work environments.

Putting Technology into Students' Hands

Following an assessment of its technology needs, the district has begun to implement its Strategic Technology Plan, which is designed to put cutting edge technology into the hands of all Harrison students. By improving our technology infrastructure, we will be better prepared to improve instruction at all levels and prepare students to meet 21st century expectations.

The long-term goals of the Strategic Technology Plan are to:

- ❖ Improve the capacity of our computer network to support learning and expand instructional access to technology
- ❖ Encourage and support innovative teaching and learning with technology
- ❖ Focus resources on inquiry-based learning supported by technology and aligned with New York State standards
- ❖ Improve efficiency and effectiveness of technology
- ❖ Better utilize data to improve and inform instruction
- ❖ "Digitize" information and communication

Last summer, Michael Greenfield, director of technology, and his staff worked tirelessly to make improvements and to introduce the initial steps of our hardware replacement program. The district replaced 200 outdated classroom computers, incorporated mobile wireless technology at the middle and high school, opened a new high-tech student lab at the high school library/media center and established a technology learning center for professional development.

In addition, Greenfield is working with our principals, curriculum supervisors and teachers to identify ways to use

technology to improve instruction and learning. In September, high school students will benefit from an expanded digital media program, a new interdisciplinary Digital Literacy course and an advanced technology elective. Defining and implementing K-12 student standards for technology is also a top priority.

It is critical to develop an infrastructure to support cutting edge technology needs. Current plans include improving the capability of the district's network, expanding the use of electronic smartboards in classrooms and using technology to improve home-to-school communication. In addition, the district



has adopted a TCO (total cost of ownership) approach to technology management. The TCO model, often used in business, improves cost efficiency and reduces the impact of outdated equipment by considering the overall cost of equipment - including service and upgrades - over its useful lifetime.

Ultimately technology is a key element in attaining many of our strategic goals, including improvement of external and internal communication and the use of data to inform instruction and assess our success at achieving our goals.

Form Foundation for Exemplary Science Education



Components of the high school program will be incorporated into the middle school program and developed with Dr. Pavlica's assistance. According to Superintendent Louis Wool, "It makes perfect sense to provide these extended research opportunities to our sixth through eighth grade students - it is in the middle school that students begin to critically apply the science concepts introduced as part of our district's elementary science program."

Ms. Wilson hopes that students will have the same positive experience she had as a young student. "I am always amazed at what kids can accomplish if they are given the right place, the right resources and the right support," she said. In the past several years Harrison has made a profound commitment to improving science education. The curriculum has been tightly aligned with state and national standards in grades K through 8, and the district has placed hands-on science kits in every classroom. Next year we will accelerate our goal to be a district known for excellence in science education K-12."

New Middle School Progress Report Clearly Defines Expectations for Parents and Students

In a continued effort to align K-12 curriculum, standards and assessment, the district will introduce a revised language arts progress report for the middle school this fall. The new progress report moves the district closer to achieving its goal of adopting a common instructional language, clearly aligning standards across grade levels and delivering a program of excellence for all students.

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Over the past five years New York State has been steadily raising the bar on students' academic performance. Harrison has been responding to these challenges by rethinking our approach to teaching and assessing language arts. Like the elementary school report card that was introduced earlier this year, the middle school progress report is developed based on the district's language art philosophy of clearly defining standards of performance. The progress report utilizes language to reflect performance-based learning.

Using a common instructional language and well articulated assessments from elementary school into middle school and through high school will help both students and parents develop a deeper understanding of what is expected at each grade level. It also helps teachers and parents to more clearly determine a child's progress over time. Most importantly, a common instructional language provides a basis for children to better understand expectations throughout their academic careers. Ultimately these assessment criteria become ingrained in student understandings, leading to improved performance and enhancing a student's capacity for self-assessment.

The new progress report was developed by a committee of middle school teachers under the direction of Marie Perrotta, secondary language arts supervisor, Carol Kitson and Anne McCann, co-chairpersons of the middle school English department, and Dr. Sean Walmsley, a leading expert in literacy and assessment. Dr. Walmsley has been working with teachers and administrators to redefine our language arts curriculum and assessment since 2001.

Shortly after school opens in September, there will be a parent workshop to review the new progress report format and philosophy. The first progress reports will be mailed in October.



TV Production in the 'Real World'

In February, the C-SPAN bus, a state-of-the-art 45 foot mobile television production facility, provided Harrison High School students with a first-hand opportunity to learn how location news events are produced.

News & *Noteworthy...*

In December 2003, our primary transportation provider, Beechmont Bus Service, was sold to First Student, Inc. First Student, the second largest school bus operator in the U.S., has maintained all of Beechmont's drivers, managers, and support staff and will continue to provide the same high quality of service and safety that we've always received.

A team of students from Harrison High School has been competing regularly in the Special Olympics games. The students, **Danielle Angiolillo**, **Stephen Capurso**, **Nicole Cocca**, **Jose Morales**, **Michael Rossi** and **Clare Sandor**, compete in basketball, hockey, soccer and volleyball.



The **Harrison High School Marching Band** joined 1,800 students from across the U.S. to perform at the Peach Bowl at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta. They also participated in a pre-game parade and earned several awards for their performances.

Several students from LMK earned the honor of performance at the Westchester All County Music Festival at SUNY Purchase. Representing Harrison were sixth-graders **Natasha Gupta** on flute and **Sara Lynn McInerney** on clarinet; seventh-graders **Matt Crozier** on trombone, **Jacqueline Morgen** and **Daniel Zalta** on French horn; eighth-graders **Lia McInerney** on flute, **Diana Curtis** on French horn, **Sam Hendler** on bass clarinet, and **Scott Weinreb** on timpani; ninth-graders **Melissa Peralman** on French horn and **Dan Zalta** in first chair with the orchestra.

Sam Hendler and **Daniel Zalta** have been selected to perform in the 2004 NYSBDA Middle School honor band. They were among only 93 students selected state-wide.

Seventh-grader **Kenny Dow** was the winner of the Geography Bee at LMK Middle School. He moves on to the next level of competition.

The **Harrison High School Band** and **Honor Society** joined forces on January 30 to host a fund-raiser for a young Harrison resident with cancer. Five-year-old **Peter Barbieri**, a student at Parsons Elementary, and his family were the beneficiaries of the event that showcased the talents of many Harrison students. More than \$15,000 for young Peter was raised.

Harrison High School's **Math Team** is ranked number one in Westchester County after a series of regional competitions. The team is currently ranked sixth in New York State. Three Harrison students are ranked in the top 35 in the state. **Michael Kruskal** and **Frank Zovko** have scores of 17, and **Andrew Sasso** has a score of 16 - second and third highest scores in the state.

Girls track team member **Erica Plannamento** has qualified to compete nationally in the 1500 meter. She will travel to Maryland in March for the competition. Her best time of 4:50 also earned her a state ranking. Erica also is state ranked in the 1600 and 3000.



Boasting two state championships in the last five seasons, our high school football coach **Arthur Troilo Jr.** was inducted into the Westchester County Coaches Hall of Fame. Mr. Troilo has been coaching at Harrison for 17 years.

Harrison High School biology teacher **Dr. Christopher Tyler** presented a research paper at the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience. His research focused on the cellular and molecular control of the states of consciousness, specifically sleep and wakefulness. The paper, presented in New Orleans, dealt with how a specific brain chemical, a peptide called Orexin, can regulate the activity of brain cells that are known to be involved in regulating aspects of sleep-wake cycles.

Eighth grade students **Michael Nesheiwat**, **Michael Giorgio** and **Andrew J. Lee** were among the winners in a Bee Line Bus sponsored essay contest to name 15 of its buses after people, places, objects and events related to Westchester. The students' winning entry was "Half Moon." The name comes from the boat that Henry Hudson sailed on to explore the river that was eventually named for him. For their efforts, the students earned a \$500 gift card to Barnes & Noble for the school.

Dates to Remember

- March 17 Board of Education Meeting
Preston Elementary School
Regular Business Meeting and
Presentation: Kent Leo
Elementary Math Program
- March 23 Referendum vote regarding
conveyance of land to Town of
Harrison. At local elementary
schools: 7 AM – 9 PM
- April 14 Board of Education Meeting
Harrison Avenue School
Budget Adoption
- May 5 Board of Education Meeting
LMK Middle School
Regular Business Meeting
- May 18 Budget Vote and Board of Education
Trustee Election at local elementary
schools: 7 AM – 9 PM

Writers Among Us Program Recognizes Excellence in Writing

Harrison High School students now are recognized for exemplary writing as part of the new *Writers Among Us* program. Developed by Marie Perrotta, secondary language arts supervisor, the program celebrates student creativity and imagination. *Writers Among Us* winners are pictured to the right. December/January: Alexa Lutchen (grade 9); Adam Berkey (grade 10); Marisa DiLemme (grade 11); Shriya Palekar (grade 12). February: Iliana Goncalves (grade 9); Esther Jang (grade 10); Jeff Marcone and Freddy Perez- not pictured (grade 11); and Frank Zovko (grade 12).



/// NOTICE ///

Applications for transportation to parochial and private schools are due into the Transportation Department no later than April 1, 2004.

Referendum to be Held March 23

On March 23, 2004 the Harrison Central School District will hold a public referendum to determine whether the district should convey approximately 10.9 acres to the Town of Harrison. A depiction of the parcel, adjacent to the Louis M. Klein Middle School, is available on the district's Web site at www.harrisoncsd.org. The town has requested the land conveyance in order to provide a means of egress to its planned recreational facility located adjacent to Veterans Park. In consideration for the transfer, the town will contribute \$1,000,000 to the school district to be used for the renovation/rehabilitation of the athletic fields behind the LMK Middle School. The school board has consulted with engineers and architects, and believes that this property transfer will not negatively impact any potential future use of the remaining school district property.

Under New York State law, the school district may transfer property only with voter approval by referendum. All registered voters in the Town of Harrison are eligible to vote on the referendum. Polls will be open on March 23, 2004 from 7:00AM to 9:00PM at each of the four district elementary schools: Harrison Avenue School, Parsons Memorial School, Preston Elementary School and the Purchase Elementary School.

Harrison Central School District
Harrison, New York 10528

Board of Education

David Brunner, President
David Singer, Vice President
Debbie Imperia
Daniel Monteforte, Esq.
Georgia Riedel
Philip Silano
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Louis N. Wool, Superintendent of Schools

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