

# A Message from the Holmdel Township Board of Education

## **10 Minutes per Day Translates into More Learning**

The Board has long recognized that our school day is much shorter than the state average. For instance, the 2009-10 NJ Department of Education School Report Card shows the Holmdel High School day was 6 hours 17 minutes versus the state average 6 hours 53 minutes. With ever-increasing material to be covered in class, we believe our students would be better served by increasing instructional time at the high school. We also believe a longer school day in the elementary and middle schools would enhance our Character Education program, which has been a standing district goal in recent years. Through the negotiations process, we have added 10 minutes to the school day in all four schools, effective this September when we welcome the students back to the school.

The longer school day at Village, Indian Hill and W.R. Satz Schools will add 10 minutes to the homeroom period for Character Education, providing an additional 30 hours in Character Education instruction annually, or double what we had before. Character Education specifically teaches pupils about good citizenship and making positive choices, while targeting bullying and other destructive behavior. At Village and Indian Hill, Character Education will continue to focus on Responsive Classroom with its positive themed messages, with more time for student discussion.

At Satz, the added 10 minutes allows us to introduce a new Character Education program called Generation TextOnline, which was recommended by Ms. Shana Nussbaum, our recent past Satz AP, based on her current district's good experience with it. The program's goal is to build positive school climate, involving everyone in the school system. Its focus is empathy, and understanding the devastating effects of cyber-bullying. Rather than try to discourage students from using social media (text messaging, Facebook, online gaming, etc.), Generation TextOnline teaches students how to use social media in a safe, caring way

At HHS, the longer school day, combined with changes in the school schedule, will lengthen each class period from 43 minutes to 46 minutes, effectively adding 21 instructional minutes daily, or 63 hours per school year, for the typical HHS student. The 3 additional minutes per period may seem minuscule, but they offer teachers extra time to re-cap an important concept or explain it in greater detail, answer one more question, or provide more depth or sustained class discussion. We believe this will benefit students of all academic levels.

Adding 10 minutes to our school days is a win-win for everyone – the students will no doubt benefit from it, and the teachers also welcome this opportunity to better serve our children – something our teachers always strive to do. Over the summer, we've been working on program and curriculum design, and adjusting the bell schedules and school starting/ending times to maximize the benefit of the added 10 minutes. While these changes will likely have minimal impact on your family's schedule, we encourage you to check out the new bell schedules at:

[http://www.holmdel.k12.nj.us/schools/pdf/2011\\_2012\\_bell\\_schedules.pdf](http://www.holmdel.k12.nj.us/schools/pdf/2011_2012_bell_schedules.pdf)

## **Transportation Outsourced but Safety Remains our Priority**

Four years ago, I remember pacing back and forth in front of my house worrying about my eldest daughter and wondering if she would be safe traveling by school bus to her first day of kindergarten. That day, when the bus driver dropped my little girl back home after school, it was such a relief that she was happy and arrived home safely. Now my youngest daughter will be attending kindergarten this September. Based on my past experience, I feel so much more confident she will get to school safely every day.

In the past, 60% of our school bus transportation was outsourced and 40% was not. In order to generate savings, as of September our busing will be 100% outsourced. Economically, by outsourcing the remaining 40% of busing, the school district has been able to allocate that money for other educational needs and offer tax relief. However, we are confident our transportation providers will maintain the quality, safe service for all of our students that we have come to expect.

Bus drivers will be informed well in advance of our new school schedules so there will be a smooth transition for drivers and students. By now parents should have heard from the district Transportation Office regarding their anticipated bus stop, and pick up/drop-off times. As in the past, our transportation coordinator will be available to address any questions or concerns.

Our district – Administration and Board -- will continue to assure that bus transportation remains as safe and efficient as it has always been. We just ask for your patience, especially as the new school year begins. There is no reason for concern because the safety of our students remains our main priority.

**On behalf of our Board colleagues,**

***Ray M. Tai, Chairperson of the Curriculum & Instruction Committee***

***Dennis Pavlik, Chairperson of the Building & Ground Committee***

There are two easy ways to stay informed of district/schools happenings. Please visit the district website at [www.holmdelschools.org](http://www.holmdelschools.org) for event updates, school announcements, district progress reports, board meeting information, and much more. You can also subscribe to our E-Alert at <http://www.holmdel.k12.nj.us/home/joinlist.shtm> to receive email alerts on your choice of topics, such as school security alerts, committee notes, parent support group minutes, the district calendar, career opportunities, and school lunch menus.