



MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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JONATHAN PONDS, ED. D.

Superintendent of Schools

July 8, 2020

Dear Families/Caregivers, Colleagues, and Community Members,

I am thrilled to be officially serving as your Superintendent of Schools. These coming months I plan to get acquainted with you as we embark on a journey of working together to ensure that all students achieve, thrive, and feel safe and secure while in our care. You will soon learn that I have strong beliefs for which I and my team aspire, and they are: *All Kids can Learn* and *All Kids are Special*. I look forward to a long-lasting relationship with our talented educators and building leaders as well as our dedicated and caring community partners as we strive for the best for our students, our district, and our community.

This month I will be working with stakeholders and conferring with neighboring districts to design plans for the fall that will provide high quality instruction, address social and emotional needs, and ensure that if we return to school everyone feels safe and secure. Each day we are learning more as this is an ever-changing landscape. I know you are eager to learn if we will be back in school, but much depends on how well we can assure that our educational spaces will allow for social distancing and that students and staff feel safe and secure. We will do our best to communicate plans as quickly as possible, and I expect to report out at the end of July giving you the month of August to make necessary plans.

Now, as a first order of business, it is my pleasure to introduce two permanent administrators appointed at the June 25 Board of Education Meeting; namely, Mr. Damen Cooper as Director of Personnel effective July 1 and Dr. Kalisha Morgan as Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum and Instruction effective July 6.

Director of Personnel

Joining the Montclair team as the Director of Personnel is Mr. Damen Cooper. Mr. Cooper knows our district well as he previously served as an Assistant Principal at the high school. He returns with an outstanding combination of strong administrative skills, collegial style, and a dynamic ability to recruit and retain staff through the cultivation of relationships with universities/colleges and key partners to our district. His recent experiences were as a Principal in Hackensack and a state-trained member of the Affirmative Action Team. He has also served as a Middle School Principal in Summit and Assistant Principal in schools in Jersey City. His experiences have come from both urban and suburban communities which will serve him well in Montclair. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Central State University in Ohio and a Master of Arts in Special Education and another in Administration and Supervision from

New Jersey City University of Jersey City. He is committed to our district and eagerly looks forward to engaging with the community.

Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Kalisha Morgan joins our district as the Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Curriculum and Instruction. I am delighted to have a seasoned administrator fill this highly-regarded and much-needed position. Dr. Morgan has held positions of Elementary Principal, High School Principal, Supervisor of Alternative Education, Supervisor of English-Language Arts and most recently Interim Principal of Columbia High School and Director of Planning and Assessment for the South-Orange Maplewood district. Her education encompasses a doctoral degree in Instructional Leadership from Nova Southeastern University, a Master's degree in Educational Administration and a Master's degree in Instruction and Curriculum, both from Kean University. Her love of teaching and learning is evidenced by her continued role as an adjunct professor at both New Jersey City University and Essex County College. We look forward to her work in our district as she is at the forefront to establish protocols and form guiding coalitions to enhance our equity efforts; strengthen our magnets; provide specific and meaningful professional development; and manage critical learning data to ensure that programs meet targets for equity and student growth.

Please join me in welcoming Mr. Cooper and Dr. Morgan to our district.

Montclair High School Principal Search

On the immediate horizon is the search for a high school principal. In order to plan for a smooth transition, we will initiate the principal's search process immediately. The district will advertise in local, tri-state, and trade publications. We will also use our professional contacts to seek out the best possible candidates.

We will be seeking and providing opportunities for input from all of our stakeholders. The search for a new high school principal is an exciting opportunity for us to work together to select Montclair High School's next leader.

In closing, please know that I am excited to be part of this vibrant, diverse community. Diversity is one of the driving forces that brought me here. I look forward to collaborating with you to support my beliefs that *All Kids can Learn* and *All Kids are Special* which will be integral to what I hope to be a long-standing relationship.

Sincerely,
Dr. Jonathan Ponds
Superintendent of Schools

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