



Superintendent's Report

August 20, 2026

The countdown to the start of the 2026-2027 school year is on! Teachers and staff will return on Tuesday, September 1, 2026, and we will welcome back our students on Thursday, September 3, 2026! Our administrators, secretaries and custodians have everything just about ready for school to open and we are looking forward to a great year of learning and growth!

Next week we will welcome ten new employees at the Northern Valley Curriculum Center orientation. On Thursday, August 27, 2026, the new teachers, staff, long-term leave replacements, and our clinical interns from Ramapo College will attend our district orientation. Thank you to the administrative team for their work on preparing the orientation and to the Closter Education Association for providing lunch for the new hires. We warmly welcome the new hires to our great district!

On behalf of the entire Closter Public Schools community, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Closter PTO for their extraordinary generosity in donating \$337,000 to the district this year! This remarkable contribution reflects the deep commitment of our PTO and broader school community to enriching the educational experience for every student at Hillside Elementary and Tenakill Middle School. We are truly fortunate to have such dedicated partners! These funds will directly benefit our students and staff and I look forward to sharing details in the coming months of how these funds will be used. We also thank the PTO for providing the welcome back breakfast to our staff on September 1, 2026.

This fall, Closter Public Schools will launch the Profile of a Closter Learner (POCL) Rubric, a document created as part of last school year's goals. The rubric, which reflects our shared vision for skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and character alongside academic achievement, will be implemented in grade-band-specific versions for PreK–2, Grades 3–5, and Grades 6–8 at Hillside Elementary and Tenakill Middle School. On September 2, 2026, teachers will receive training in using the rubric and will begin incorporating POCL language into classroom practice and communications this fall. In this year one roll-out, families will receive a report on student progress at the end of the year. In subsequent years, families will receive a POCL report at each report card. I am excited to implement this new tool to help ensure students are developing these essential skills, which matter just as much as academic content knowledge.

In accordance with New Jersey's new "bell-to-bell" law (P.L. 2025, c.195), Closter Public Schools is updating Policy 5516 to restrict student use of personal electronic devices, including cell phones and smartwatches, during the entire school day, from arrival through dismissal, at both Hillside Elementary and Tenakill Middle School. Devices should be powered off and stored (in backpacks in closets at HES and in lockers at TMS) throughout the day, with limited exceptions for documented medical needs. This updated policy doesn't differ from what we have already had in practice in Closter Public Schools, so we anticipate that we can easily adhere to the new law!

Mark your calendars for Back-to-School Nights:

- Tuesday, September 15, 2026: Grades 3–4, HES, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 16, 2026: Grades 5-6, TMS, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 22 2026: Grades PreK-2 , HES, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 23, 2026: Grades 7–8, TMS, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

I look forward to seeing everyone back in our hallways and classrooms. I wish all of our students, families, and staff a joyful, successful, and memorable year ahead. Enjoy these last days of summer!

Vincent Mc Hale