



Superintendent's Report

June 25, 2026

Our fourth-grade moving-on ceremony and eighth-grade graduation were held at Memorial Field on June 17, 2026. Thankfully, the weather cooperated. Both ceremonies were a wonderful celebration for our students and their families. Thank you to:

- Ms. Smith, Mr. O'Neill, Ms. Cipollini, and Mr. McElroy for their efforts in planning the ceremonies.
- Our secretaries, custodians, and maintenance staff for all their extra work in preparing the programs, certificates, diplomas, and setting up the stage and chairs.
- Our teachers from PreK through grade eight for preparing our students for their milestones of completing grade 4 and grade 8. Thank you to the teachers who organized and prepared students for the ceremonies, and a special thank you to Ms. Pidi and Ms. Abbey, who prepared musical performances.
- The Closter PTO, KPG, and parent committees for planning and providing the many year-end extras for our students.
- The Closter Board of Education trustees for supporting our students and staff and for their attendance at the ceremonies.
- The Closter Mayor and Council for granting permission to use Memorial Field and to the Closter Recreation Department and the Closter Police Department for their great assistance!

As we bring the 2025–2026 school year to a close, I am filled with tremendous pride and deep gratitude for everything our Closter Public Schools community has accomplished together. This has been a year of meaningful progress, inspiring achievements, and the kind of steady, purposeful work that defines what makes our district so special. From the first day of school on September 4, 2025, when we welcomed 1,188 students through our doors, to the final weeks of this remarkable year, our faculty, staff, administrators, families, and students have shown what is possible when a community is united behind a shared commitment to excellence.

District Goals: A Year of Achievement

I am proud to share that Closter Public Schools has successfully met all three District Goals for the 2025–2026 school year. This is a reflection not of any single achievement, but of the sustained, collaborative effort of every member of our school community.

Goal #1: Profile of a Closter Learner Rubrics: This year, we convened a Profile of a Closter Learner Rubric Committee comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators. Meeting five times between February and April 2026, the committee developed observable indicators and grade-band rubrics for all six characteristics of the Profile across three grade bands: PreK–2, 3–5, and 6–8. The committee also made key decisions on implementation, including a phased rollout beginning in 2026–2027 and the development of a simplified student progress report to be integrated into the online report card. This work sets the stage for one of the most significant instructional actions our district will undertake in the year ahead.

Goal #2: Data-Driven Instruction: One hundred percent of PreK–8 teachers at both Hillside Elementary School and Tenakill Middle School completed more than five hours of professional development focused on data analysis, surpassing the goal. HES teachers logged six or more hours;

TMS teachers completed eight or more, anchored by a comprehensive 6.25-hour Data-Driven Instruction professional learning day on January 19, 2026. Monthly data team meetings have been in place at both schools since October 2025, with teachers regularly reviewing student performance data from LinkIt!, DIBELS, AimsWeb, and Big Ideas to implement targeted interventions. A culture of data-informed decision-making is now firmly established across our district.

Goal #3: SEL & Character Education SWOT Analysis: Teams at both schools completed comprehensive SWOT analyses of our Social-Emotional Learning and character education programs, ICARE at Hillside and CharacterStrong at Tenakill. The process engaged staff, students, and families through surveys, PAC meetings, and collaborative review. The resulting action plans provide clear, data-grounded roadmaps for strengthening both programs in 2026–2027, with detailed implementation phases presented to the Board this spring.

Academic Programs & Professional Development

This school year marked a significant milestone in mathematics instruction with the full implementation of *Big Ideas: Math and You* in grades K–4, replacing *GoMath!*. Teachers received professional development over the summer and at the start of the year, and our Northern Valley Curriculum Center math instructional coach worked alongside teachers at multiple grade levels to strengthen problem-solving, number sense, and word problem instruction.

Building on the success of the *Units of Study for Writing* in grade five the prior year, we expanded this model to grades two through four in September 2025. Literacy consultant Patty McGee provided literacy coaching support, and a cohort of teachers at Hillside benefited from two full-day professional development sessions through the FOCUS Grant in October 2025 and March 2026. Writing instruction rooted in *The Writing Revolution* approach has also continued to strengthen our work with students receiving special education services.

Our district-wide professional development days, held September 2–3, October 13, and January 19, 2026, provided targeted, job-embedded learning aligned with our district goals. Sessions covered topics including *Big Ideas Mathematics*, literacy instruction, DIBELS data analysis, dyslexia training, artificial intelligence in the classroom, and science and engineering practices. Teachers and staff also participated in offerings through the Northern Valley Curriculum Center throughout the year.

Student Achievements & School Life

Our students continued to shine this year in academics, the arts, and athletics. Our Tenakill Middle School Science Olympiad Team earned a spot at the 2026 Science Olympiad National Tournament at the University of Southern California, remarkable for the second consecutive year. Under the expert guidance of Ms. Moidu and Mr. Hernandez, these dedicated students demonstrated the competitive spirit and collaborative problem-solving that define the very best of Closter education.

The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation once again recognized Closter Public Schools as a Best Community for Music Education, a reflection of the outstanding musical programming led by Ms. Pidi, Ms. Abbey, and Ms. Riecken. This year's concerts, from the First Grade Thanksgiving Concert in November to the Tenakill Winter Concert and the spring performances at both schools, were wonderful celebrations of student talent. Porchlight Productions delighted audiences with performances of *The Little Mermaid, Jr.* and *Aladdin, Jr.* in March 2026. Both schools presented school-wide art shows that were truly incredible, showcasing the remarkable artistic talents of our students across all grade levels.

Our sixth-grade entrepreneurs once again demonstrated creativity and business skills at the Tenakill TREP\$ Marketplace in December 2025, developing financial literacy, marketing skills, and teamwork in a real-world setting. Our middle school student-athletes also represented Closter with pride, competing in fall, winter, and spring sports throughout the year.

On January 30, 2026, both schools held Lunar New Year assemblies featuring student performances in singing, instrumental music, drumming, and dancing. The assemblies were a joyful celebration of the cultural richness of our school community, made possible through the dedication of the Korean Parents Group and our talented students and teachers.

On April 24th, both schools celebrated Arbor Day with ceremonies featuring the planting of new trees, student council officers, the Closter Shade Tree Commission, and a musical performance by the TMS school band. Mayor Glidden shared a proclamation at both schools.

School Safety & Community of Care

Students at both schools participated in the New Jersey Week of Respect from October 6–10, 2025. At HES, students engaged in daily lessons aligned with our ICARE program; at TMS, students focused on the theme *A Place I Want to Be*. On March 19, 2026, administrators and Anti-Bullying Specialists participated in the district's annual HIB training, led by district counsel Vic LaPira.

This year, we also launched *Raising the Resilient Child*, a four-part evening parenting series led by Josephine Hunt, our Pre-K teacher at Hillside Elementary School, connecting home and school strategies for student well-being across four sessions from February through May 2026.

Community Partnerships & Family Engagement

The strength of our parent and community partnerships was evident throughout the year. The Closter PTO and Korean Parent Group provided programming and events including Back-to-School Nights, the Scholastic Book Fair, the PTO Read-a-Thon, the TREP\$ Marketplace, and the Spring Fair. The Korean Parents Group generously provided lunch for veterans and guests at the Tenakill Veterans Day Observance in November 2025.

Closter Police Department officers visited Hillside Elementary School during Read Across America Week in March 2026, spending a morning reading to students in 18 classrooms. Mayor Glidden, Councilwoman Amitai, and Ruth Rando of the Closter Library visited Hillside Elementary School in February to celebrate Groundhog Day with our youngest students. The Israeli American Council assisted Tenakill Middle School in hosting Holocaust survivor Tova Friedman who spoke to our middle school students in January 2026 at the Anti-Hate Assembly.

We continued to partner with a parent volunteer group that translates district communications into Spanish, Hebrew, and Korean, ensuring that our district's mission, vision, and goals remain accessible to all families. I thank our parent translators for their generous gift of time for translating documents that we send home! Our district and school websites also received a fresh redesign in March 2026, improving navigation and communication with families and the community.

Staff Recognition & Professional Community

This was a year of remarkable achievements for our professional staff. At the October 15, 2025, Board meeting, we proudly celebrated Kerra Corio, Ellen Monaghan, William Potkulski, Yudelka Sanchez, Adam Sidrow, and Kerry Sidrow, each of whom reached the milestone of twenty years of dedicated service to Closter Public Schools. Their loyalty, expertise, and passion are a testament to the remarkable professional community we have built.

In March 2026, Josephine Hunt, our Pre-K teacher at Hillside Elementary School, was named the 2025–2026 recipient of the prestigious Ringelheim Award by the New Jersey Council for Exceptional Children. This honor, awarded to an educator who embodies a lifelong dedication to advancing education for children with disabilities, reflects the exceptional caliber of the professionals who serve our students every day. In June 2026, our Business Administrator, Floro Villanueva, was named the recipient of the Bergen County Association of School Business Officials (BCASBO) 2026

Distinguished Service Award! This prestigious honor recognizes Mr. Villanueva's outstanding leadership, his many contributions to the educational community, and the generous mentorship he has provided to colleagues throughout Bergen County and beyond.

We welcomed eleven new certificated staff members to tenure-track positions this year, along with three long-term leave replacement teachers and six new paraprofessionals. All new hires received comprehensive onboarding, including a three-day instructional orientation through the Northern Valley Curriculum Center beginning August 18, 2025, followed by a district-level orientation on August 21. The participation of twenty-one tenured teachers in our alternate observation process this year, up from six in 2022–2023, reflects the sustained trust our teachers place in our administrative team and their embrace of a more reflective, self-directed model of professional growth.

In the area of collective bargaining, formal negotiation sessions with the Closter Education Association were held from December 2025 through February 2026, resulting in a Memorandum of Agreement signed on March 6, 2026. A successor salary guide was mutually agreed upon on May 4, 2026, and was ratified by both the CEA and the Closter Board of Education in May 2026.

Facilities, Operations & Budget

Over the summer of 2025, we completed several significant facilities improvements: new lockers were installed at Tenakill Middle School, air conditioning was added to the TMS gymnasium, the blacktop at Hillside Elementary School was repaved in the area of the modular wing and playground, and our technology network infrastructure was fully upgraded.

The 2026–2027 budget was developed collaboratively with Business Administrator Floro Villanueva Jr. and the Finance and Physical Plant Committee. The preliminary budget was presented to the Board and the community at the March 12, 2026, Board of Education meeting, approved by the Executive County Superintendent, and the public hearing was held at the April 30, 2026, Board meeting. The approved budget maintains all current positions and programs, a reflection of the Board's commitment to preserving the high-quality education our community expects.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead to 2026–2027, we do so with clear priorities, strong momentum, and a deep sense of purpose. The Profile of a Closter Learner Rubric will be formally launched with all teachers in September 2026. Our SEL and character education programs will move from analysis to action at both schools. Our culture of data-driven instruction will deepen from compliance to genuine impact. And as we prepare for a NJDOE District Performance Review (QSAC) next year, we will continue to document the thoughtful, evidence-based work that defines Closter Public Schools.

As I conclude this annual summary, I want to express my deepest gratitude to our Board of Education for their unwavering support and vision; to our entire faculty, staff, and administrative team for their dedication, creativity, and tireless commitment to our students; to our students, who inspire us every single day; and to our families and community members, whose partnership and involvement make this district an extraordinary place to learn and grow. It has been my privilege to serve as your superintendent, and I look forward with great enthusiasm to everything that lies ahead.

Summer programs will begin on July 6, 2026, and will serve students through July 30, 2026. I wish everyone a safe, restful, and rejuvenating summer. I look forward to welcoming our students and staff back for the start of the 2026–2027 school year.

Vincent Mc Hale