

August, 2021

Greetings Springhurst Families!

I am delighted to welcome you to the 2021-2022 school year. I hope it is one in which we will see a more full return to “normal”. No matter what, Springhurst is fully prepared to meet any challenge that may present itself and we are eager to dive into another rich year of learning with your wonderful children!

To launch this new school year, Assistant Principal Cavallo and I created a video in which we are reading a story titled, *I Will Be Fierce*, by Bea Birdsong (click [here](#) to watch). This story aligns with Springhurst’s ongoing commitment to fostering a school environment with a strong focus on students’ Social Emotional Learning (SEL). I hope that you and your children enjoy the story, and that its important message about courage, confidence and kindness resonates with you. For students new to Springhurst, and for students returning to in-person learning from the fully remote-model, we thought this story would especially connect to your experience with starting school in September. We look forward to welcoming you to Springhurst with open arms and supporting your transition.

It has been a busy summer at Springhurst! When you arrive on our campus, you will be greeted by new construction, which includes a new sidewalk leading to the Springhurst main entrance, a new entry way at the main entrance, and an enhanced kindergarten playground. We also eagerly await the opening of our incredible new library space! Tell your children to rest assured that the beautiful fish tank that used to adorn the main entrance (made possible by the Dobbs Ferry PTSA) has been enhanced and moved to a very special new location! Make sure to ask them about it after the first day of school!

I am also pleased to share that we have some exciting new developments underway that will ensure our academic program is as rich and vibrant as ever. In the spring of 2021, after resuming full day in-person learning, we started revisiting curricular goals that were on pause due to COVID. As such, this school year will include enhancements across the content areas.

This September we will introduce Science 21 to grade 4! This curriculum, aligned to the new NYS Science Learning Standards, is one that is rolling out one grade level at a time; Springhurst has grown with the program to now include grades K-4. We have seen tremendous results and high levels of student engagement as a result of using Science 21. As such, our 5th grade Math/Science teachers are also eager to join the program and will be participating in the Grade 5 Science 21 Pilot, which they will officially adopt in the fall of 2022. Throughout the year, Springhurst teachers new to Science 21 will engage in rigorous and ongoing professional development.

This year, we will also be expanding upon our schoolwide exploration of math curricula. As you may recall, we were fortunate enough to be selected to engage in the Beta Pilot for Illustrative Math during the 2020-2021 school year. Unfortunately, due to COVID, our plans changed slightly which resulted in a more truncated pilot experience this past spring. This fall, we will be expanding our pilot experience and incorporating additional resources. After soliciting feedback from staff and students, and researching various new approaches to mathematics instruction, we will be piloting both Illustrative Math and enVision Math units throughout the fall and early winter across a wide variety of Springhurst classrooms and grade levels. As we engage with these curricula, we will continue to seek feedback from staff and students and reflect on what works. Our ultimate goal is to decide on a K-8 approach to teaching mathematics that will bring coherence to the student experience and enhance our practice as a district.

In addition to math and science development, work that began in 2019 regarding English Language Arts (ELA) will resume as well. This includes taking a closer look at our practices and making efforts to enhance effectiveness and coherence in our approach to teaching reading and writing K-5. One way that we continue to grow in this area is through our partnership with the Putnam Northern Westchester (PNW) BOCES Social Studies (SS)/ELA resource. The PNWBOCES SS/ELA site has gone through, and will continue to go through, revisions to better align ELA and SS through a culturally responsive lens.

Districtwide, our professional development surrounding the implementation of [New York State Education Department's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#) will be ongoing and aligned to the [Dobbs Ferry School District's Race Matters Committee Recommendations to the Board of Education](#). Our goal with this work is aligned with the four principles of the Framework which are to support and enhance a welcoming and affirming school environment, an inclusive curriculum and assessment program, high expectations and rigorous instruction, and to provide ongoing professional learning and support.

We are fortunate to receive the support of many parent organizations including the PTSA, the Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation (DFSF), SPRING, and Trailguides. The DFSF is already supporting Springhurst this year in tremendous ways! Thanks to a generous grant from the DFSF, one of our beloved music teachers, Mr. Nathaniel Wardlaw, will be opening the year with a completely furnished music classroom complete with brand new xylophones/metallophones, tubanos, hand drums, boomwhackers, rhythm instruments and ukuleles! Springhurst kindergarteners are also in for another special treat this fall with the construction of a new and improved playground also funded by the DFSF! I cannot think of a more joyous way to welcome our youngest eagles to Springhurst and kick off a new school year than with a beautiful new playground! We are extremely grateful for the DFSF's support in making this all possible.

Logistically speaking, two essential things to know for the start of the school year is that the grade K-2 and 3-5 start times have changed slightly, and all parents/guardians need to download the NEW mobile app for School Dismissal Manager in order to ensure a smooth and effective student dismissal process. Information on these points and other essential items that require your review can be found on our [School Information and Procedures](#) document.

Finally, this year we anticipate our highest enrollment yet and continue to see that space at Springhurst is at a premium. As we look to the future, we expect that our enrollment will continue to rise. Therefore, throughout this year, and in the years to come, space planning is going to be one of our top priorities.

I wish you and your children a wonderful start to the school year and look forward to seeing you soon.

Best,

*Julia D. Drake, Ed.D.*  
Principal