



# Morris Hills High School



520 West Main Street • Rockaway, NJ 07866-3799  
Todd M. Toriello, Ed.D. • Principal • 973-664-2301

August 2024

Dear Colleagues, Parents, Guardians, and Students,

On July 26, 2024, most people around the globe sat glued to their television sets, as the beautiful, historic city of Paris invited us to experience the lighting of the “Torch,” the symbolic, official opening of the Olympic Games. We watched, with respect, for the athletes who came, who devoted themselves to training and preparing for their contests of a lifetime. We watched, with respect, for the nations who came together in harmony, saluting excellence of the best kind. We watched, with respect, for the inevitable action to unfold: LET THE GAMES BEGIN; and begin they did, with the lighting of a torch. I sat in my living room that night realizing that in the not too distant future, we too would find ourselves lighting our torch, passing our torch, as we like to say at Morris Hills High School, passing it to a new school year full of promise, full of training, full of preparation, and full of contests, all in pursuit of excellence of the best kind; and here we are. LET THE GAMES BEGIN. With a keen sense of privilege, I welcome you to a new school year, asking you to join me in lighting our torch together, one that will guide us on a path of partnership and summon us to demand the very best from within ourselves.

It has been my practice as your building principal to offer a school-wide theme each year that connects directly to our district’s summer reading experience, thereby underscoring the message and the relevance of the reading and extending that message to other school happenings. As you know from earlier correspondence from the District Director of Instruction for Language Arts, this summer students were granted an opportunity to select their summer read from a diverse selection of books, with six choices to experience. Although each book provides students with valuable insights, diverse perspectives, and thought-provoking themes to explore, there is a common thread within each selection that brings us to a collective point of anchor, one that enables all students, regardless of book choice, to focus their thinking. That anchor is found in the individual challenge of the human condition and our individual response to it. To help students ponder and consider such a challenge, students will experience a district-wide September assembly program that will help them synthesize their reading, as well as their experience, on assembly day. The program will host Scott Chesney whose message will connect to each book on the summer reading list.

At age 15, Scott Chesney experienced a life-altering event - paralysis. He awoke to a rare stroke that left him paralyzed from his waist down to his toes and changed his life forever. Scott met this life changing moment head on, becoming a highly inspiring and engaging motivational speaker, teaching everyone to dream, believe, work, and achieve their goals. For over 20 years, he has addressed over 1.5 million people in 40 countries. Over 500,000 of those individuals have been K-12 students.

So, I identify a school-wide theme for 2024 - 2025 against the backdrop of Scott Chesney's amazing human challenges and the choices he made to respond to those challenges and triumph: **WRITE YOUR OWN STORY - IMPOSSIBLE - I'M POSSIBLE**. May his story and the stories within the district's summer reading choices become ours as we navigate new waters in a new school year, fulfilling the roles we are privileged to know as parents, guardians, students, and colleagues. Let's reach beyond that which is limiting, difficult, or frightening at first, and write our own stories. Let us become the architects of our own lives and, in doing so, assume the responsibility and accountability for our own outcomes.

One of the greatest joys of opening a new school year for those of us already occupying a place on the Morris Hills High School staff is welcoming the new staff members joining our family each August. In next to no time at all, strangers become trusted colleagues, experiencing support, outreach, and friendship from returning staff. If professional collaboration and cooperation mark successful schools, Morris Hills High School knows the formula. With deepest enthusiasm, we shall be welcoming the following new staff members in August 2024:

- Jenna Chirico-Berman - Science
- Brian Dillon - Physical Education & Health
- Nicole Grignon - Administrative Assistant
- Daniel Gust - Social Studies
- Jeffrey Jimenez - ESL
- Vinny Limon - Business
- Eleta Milovic - School Counseling
- Tara Roy - Science

A commitment to school/community partnership stands central to Morris Hills High School practice; in fact, it is a basic imperative. Therefore, I encourage all parents and guardians to mark the calendar now and plan to attend our fall Back to School Night Program on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 (Last Names - A through L) and Wednesday, September 25, 2024 (Last Names - M through Z), in order to meet our new staff, reconnect to many you already know, and begin the 2024 - 2025 academic year with us.

I am always full of pride and gratitude when a stranger comes to our building/campus and marvels at its condition, especially a building that opened its doors in 1953. The Morris Hills Regional District believes deeply in facilities management and embraces this mantra: "Let your setting send your message." Through the efforts of a dedicated maintenance and custodial staff, a Central Office Team with long-term vision, and a Board of Education sensitive to the needs of smart resource allocation, our building still shines, and we are proud to open its doors to all. Central to this summer's efforts are the following:

- Annual painting and cleaning
- New public address (PA) system in the entire building
- Upgrades of three (3) bathrooms in the main entrance
- New banners around the campus
- New pictures lining the auditorium hallway to spotlight the Arts at Morris Hills High School
- New MH sign on the front circle
- New fencing around the Transportation Building

- New banners in the Main Gym spotlighting the accomplishments of our athletic teams
- A tribute to General Raymond Odierno, one of Morris Hills High School's favorite sons - a tribute to recognize him as a scholar, a gentleman, an athlete, and a special human being, who distinguished himself not only in his career and in his community, but also through his contribution to our country in dimensions reserved for only a few - the naming of the General Raymond T. Odierno Athletic Complex

Yes, it has been a busy summer in the Morris Hills Regional District as another school opening calls to us. With summer rapidly winding down, I am reminded of the fleeting power of TIME and of our race to find the magic to slow it down. In truth, I do not see that race as ever being won. Instead, we bow to it and position ourselves to meet it head-on at the entrance of Morris Hills High School and begin to write new history. We welcome you all in partnership.

May the remaining days of summer be kind to you and those you most love. May those days be safe, relaxing, and full of new adventures. As your administrative team and I eagerly await your presence, in whatever role you play, be it parent, guardian, colleague, or student, we hope you re-enter with your characteristically renewed enthusiasm and begin anew, working in tandem to participate in the most privileged process on earth - coming together in partnership to teach, to learn, to guide, to grow, to thrive, always hoping to contribute to a better world for each other. May each of us arrive at the conclusion of the 2024 - 2025 academic year, look back, and say to ourselves and to each other - I did my part to contribute to an extraordinary year on "The Hill."

In the Spirit of Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd M. Toriello". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Todd M. Toriello, Ed.D.  
Principal