



# Morris Hills High School



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Dear Colleagues, Parents and Guardians, and Students,

I have never been able to quite figure out just how the beginning of a new academic year presents itself so suddenly, reminding us that summer is rapidly winding down and the month of September is rapidly winding up. Was it not just yesterday that we were celebrating our graduation proceedings, June 2023, on that wonderful morning on Gifford Field, saluting the Class of 2023 in stately splendor? It never seems to fail that the re-opening of school abruptly appears, full of sound and fury, as students, parents, teachers, and the entire school community re-group and begin anew. Once again, with a keen sense of time running away with itself and forever winning the race, I welcome you to the 2023 - 2024 academic year, filled with promise, anticipation, and renewed excitement. If our “playing field of partnership” continues to fuel our goals and hopes once again, then we meet each other at the entrance to Morris Hills High School ready to write a new script together, one in pursuit of new accomplishment and renewed aspiration. May that script challenge us all to reach for high ground and to find unbridled satisfaction in our shared journey ahead.

It has been my practice as your building Principal to offer a school-wide theme each September that connects directly to our district’s summer reading experience, an attempt to underscore the message of that read and emphasize its relevancy. Great books invite us to examine, to evaluate, to reflect, to consider, and sometimes to change; and this year’s summer read, a true story, an inspiring memoir, certainly offers that potential to us all. It is a story of truth, of bravery, of amazing accomplishment. *Butterfly: From Refugee to Olympian*, by Yusra Mardini, tells the incredible story of Yusra, a Syrian refugee who swims for her life and goes on to compete in the 2016 Olympics as a member of the first-ever refugee Olympic team. Her story is powerful. It showcases the decisions of a young girl whose actions define the very best in the human condition - actions that underscore how the decisions people make can truly change the world. Although we may never find ourselves on the exact same life course as the protagonist, her bravery, her self-sacrifice, her determination, her decision-making, her belief in herself are, indeed, forces that may just visit and influence our own lives in similar ways, through similar callings - as students in a classroom, as athletes on an athletic field, as participants in student activities, as friends, as sons and daughters, as teachers, as counselors, as educational support staff, as administrators, as parents, and as human beings. How bold will we be in order to contribute to a better world? How determined will we be in order to make a difference? Will we go for the gold? That answer lies within us.

So, from Yusra’s story, I identify our school-wide theme for the 2023 - 2024 academic year: “Go for the Gold - Excellence Has No Finish Line.” May her story become ours as we chart our year ahead and fulfill the roles we are privileged to know, as colleagues, as parents, as guardians, and as students. May we “Go for the Gold” together.

One of the highlights of a new academic year is opening our doors to the new staff members joining our family. Current staff members anxiously stand ready to offer support, inspiration, and guidance to new staff members, generating the kind of collaboration that grounds successful school systems. Joining the team this September are the following:

- Kimberly Auer - School Nurse
- Nancy Chiang - Teacher of Science
- Rosa Ciullo - Administrative Assistant
- Nikolette Fischetti - Teacher of Mathematics
- Jill Frendo - Administrative Assistant
- Daniel Gust - Teacher of Social Studies - Maternity Leave Replacement
- Jaime Ingling - Teacher of English
- Rebecca Jacobson - Teacher of English
- Catherine Leonard - School Nurse
- Seth Mandel - Teacher of English as a Second Language
- Melissa Montoya - Teacher of English as a Second Language
- Justine Sobieski - Teacher of Science
- Kimberly Steimke - Reading Specialist - District

I also take this opportunity to welcome our new Superintendent of Schools, Mr. Nicholas Norcia, and pledge to him our full cooperation in supporting his visions and realizing his goals.

Since partnership is central to successful school systems, I encourage all parents and guardians to make every effort to attend our fall Back to School Nights (September 19th A - L and September 27th M - Z) and meet these new professionals personally. Moreover, I call upon all students to extend a warm welcome in your classrooms and define for our new staff the quality of the student body in our exceptional high school.

Campus improvements and facilities management are ongoing district priorities. Someone once said of schools: "Let your setting send your message." Since 1953, that has been a mantra of insistence. Seventy years later, that mantra is alive and well. Central to this summer's attention are the following:

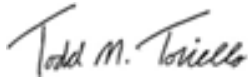
1. Seating in our security vestibule
2. Additional wall art in the faculty room
3. New Public Address (PA) system in the entire building - year long project
4. Upgrades of three (3) bathrooms in the main entrance - year long project / two (2) bathrooms completely upgraded and updated on the 2nd floor will open at the start of school
5. New roof over the chorus room and the band room
6. Esports Room in the Academy Building - Esports officially stands for electronic sports, not to be confused with video games. Esports takes video gaming to another level with organized competitive gameplay between two teams, governed by its own strict set of rules and guidelines. Esports requires teamwork, communication, critical and strategic thinking, creativity, sportsmanship, and leadership — much like traditional sports.
7. New banners around the campus

8. Drop ceilings in several classrooms, the Main Office, and the Health Office - the ceilings were installed to cover all the units and pipe work that was done last summer when MH installed new uninvents and a new boiler system
9. Class of 2023 Bench honoring the graduating class
10. New benches by the tennis courts
11. Removal of the dilapidated stairs leading to the baseball field by the tennis courts
12. New pictures lining the auditorium hallway to spotlight the Arts at Morris Hills High School
13. Completion of the second cafeteria serving line in the new section of the cafeteria
14. 44 flags of every country that our students come from - flags from around the world that represent the cultural diversity within our school - placed in the main academic hallway on the 1st floor
15. 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 rather contributed to our country in dimensions reserved for only a few

Yes, it has been a busy summer in the Morris Hills Regional District as another opening chases us all. I, and all of your administrators, enthusiastically look forward to the "race" beginning in the 2023 - 2024 school year and starting a new year with you in partnership. May each of us find deep personal and professional satisfaction in the journey, one grounded in trust, in openness, and in transparency. May we "go for the gold" together, guided by the pursuit of excellence, always looking for unending finish lines that invite us to push on. Thank you for all you do to make Morris Hills High School the special place it is. Your presence and your actions define the reason why.

Enjoy the remaining days of summer with your families and loved ones. Stay safe and healthy as we return to "The Hill" and begin once again to influence each other's worlds and forge another new beginning. May each of us arrive at the conclusion of this academic year, look back, and say to ourselves and to each other – it was an extraordinary run, 2023 - 2024.

In the Spirit of Partnership,



Todd M. Toriello, Ed.D.  
Principal