



**Dr. Ronald G. Taylor**  
Superintendent of Schools  
Tel. (973) 762-5600 x1820/Fax (973) 378-9464  
rtaylor@somsd.k12.nj.us

Dear South Orange & Maplewood Family,

Please allow me to be among the first to welcome you to the 2019-2020 school year! I am honored and humbled to serve as your Superintendent of Schools. Thank you to our Board of Education for entrusting me with the enormous responsibility of leading our District as the designated Chief School Administrator. I do not take this opportunity/responsibility lightly.

You may be aware that I have had several opportunities to meet with parents and stakeholder groups in the months prior to my official appointment. This summer I have been constantly meeting with (or responding to) stakeholders, both internally and externally on a daily basis; in doing so I am gathering very valuable information that will increase my effectiveness. I am however aware that these previously mentioned meetings represented just a very small percentage of our SOMSD Family. So please allow me to tell you about my beliefs and educational philosophy.

- I am **child-centered**, **research-based** and **data-driven** (in that order).
  - I constantly remind our educational professionals that all of the work that we do should be able to be backwards mapped directly to how we positively impact our students. We must also be transparent with our students and families regarding the reasoning and logic behind the decisions that we make;
  - I do not believe in ‘experimenting’ on our students. We should seek *tried and true* methods and materials that have the support of robust high-quality research; and,
  - I am a staunch proponent of keeping a close eye on our progress. This has to be done by comparing our actual data to the goals that were set prior to implementation. This allows us to both avoid surprises in our achievement outcomes and adjust our instructional practices as needed to have the best academic results.
- My educational philosophy is rooted in Maslow’s *-Hierarchy of Needs*, that in short, surmise that we must first meet (satisfy) our students’ needs (i.e. physiological, psychological, emotional etc.) before the learner can truly realize their highest potential.
  - As a servant leader I view removing impediments to our school family’s success as a very significant part of my charge.

I began my official appointment on July 8, 2019. During this transition time I utilized my first few weeks to focus on three (3) priorities:

1. **Learning** the culture, practices, processes and challenges of our District;
2. **Instilling** confidence in stakeholders with regards to my *commitment, abilities* (knowledge-base) and *character* (responsiveness, decisiveness and empathy); and,
3. **Verifying** that we are prepared to open the school year successfully.

Part of the process of verifying that we are prepared to open school of course includes the high priority of filling employment vacancies. Human Resources has been working diligently with both our Central Office and School-based Leadership Teams to vet the professionals that can potentially become a vital part of the service that we give our community.

Other high priorities include, the deep cleaning of our school buildings, the completing of the master scheduling process for each school, the student registration and residency procedures for new and returning students, the completion of the procurement process for needed goods and services. All of these pieces are critical to providing our community with a successful opening of our school year. I would like to take a moment to recognize all of the members of our SOMSD family who worked long hours this summer to ensure that this vital tasks are completed. Much of what they do is not seen but without their efforts we would not be successful.

In closing, please know that I believe our journey is **collaborative**. It's a true cyclical partnership...Students, Parents, Teachers, Support Staff, School Leaders, and Central Administration etc. We need each other to fulfill the mission of our School District...

*“The mission of the South Orange Maplewood School District is to empower and inspire each student to explore and imagine, to pursue personal passions, and to collectively create a better future by creating a learner-centered environment through multiple pathways; re-imagined structures, systems and supports; innovative teaching; partnering with families; and maximizing community expertise and resources.”*

**Together** we can ensure our children thrive as we successfully embrace this mission...but we cannot be successful in silos. This work must be done **together**...listening to **everyone's** voice and contributions toward the collective betterment of our district. **Equity** is non-negotiable...**Progress** is non-negotiable...**Student Achievement** is non-negotiable.

Educationally yours,



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