



# The BUCCANEER



**BOGOTA  
SCHOOL  
DISTRICT**

Prepared by Dr. Vincent Varcadipane - Interim Superintendent - For parents, students, and members of the community March-April-May 2017-2018

## School security: A top priority

by Dr. Vincent Varcadipane, Interim Superintendent

*Vince, I wanted you to know that your High School lockdown drill was the best I have ever seen.*

*I was so impressed with the students, staff and especially Mr. Kennedy. It gives me great relief to see how everyone reacted. You should be proud.*

*- Dan Maye, Bogota Chief of Police, March 2018*

Bogota HS - With the most recent school shooting in Florida this spring, a heightened awareness and public outcry has been heard across New Jersey, as well as throughout the country...."enough." While there is movement in the revamping of our gun laws and the process involved for obtaining a gun, the sad reality is that guns are out there, and if someone wants to obtain a firearm, there will be a way.

After the shooting in Newtown Ct., it was not accepted that armed police officers be present on a daily basis in our schools. In my previous district, we hired current police officers who were off duty and paid an hourly rate to be present in our schools each and everyday. That practice still exists today, but at the time, the Record wrote an editorial with the opinion that it was not an accepted practice and

*Continued on next column, see SECURITY*

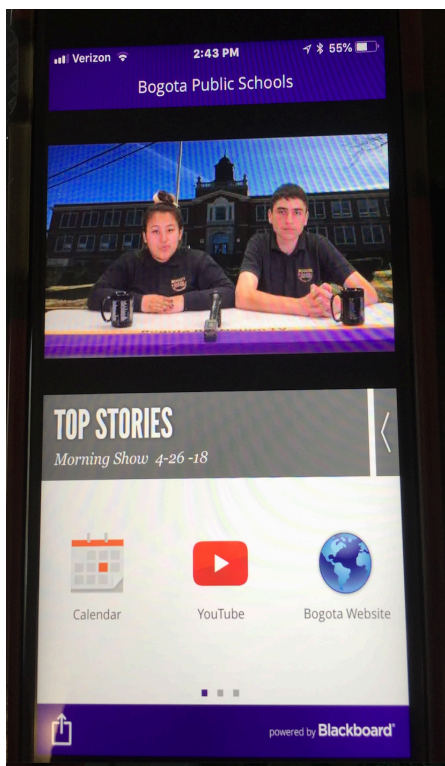
## GET THE APP!!!

by Dr. Vincent Varcadipane, Interim Superintendent



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### SECURITY: From previous column

other means should be employed. This was also the posture of our then governor and many others.

It is fortunate today that that opinion has evolved into employing armed officers in our school to protect students and staff should a shooter come into the schools. Without these armed officers, everyone is a "sitting duck," at the mercy of the shooter until help arrives. By the time local law enforcement can get to a site, it is too late. The Bogota Board of Education is seriously considering the employment of retired officers and a School Resource Officer (SRO) for the purpose of protecting students and staff and for the purpose of providing training to students and teachers.

The School Resource Officer would be an active Bogota Police Department officer who will be assigned to the Jr/Sr HS each day school is in session. His/her duties will be to "take out a shooter," provide general security, educate students and staff on topics such as substance abuse, bullying, and social media issues. The goal is to make students aware of the pitfalls they may encounter without realizing their actions may have consequences for them in the future. It will NOT be the role of the SRO to handle discipline, give counseling, and conduct searches. These jobs fall to the certified teachers and administrators currently employed.

### Bixby students at Barnes & Noble

By Damon Englese



On Friday February 9, 2018 the Bixby PTO organized a fundraiser at Barnes and Noble Book Store in Hackensack. The students arrived at 5:00 for their "Special Guest Reader". The students were extremely excited to have their principal, Mr. Englese, read a book that he selected; "Corduroy". Many parents and teachers were also in attendance to support this event.

Two students were awarded a gift card and a certificate of achievement for winning a poetry contest sponsored by the Bixby PTO. The event was a great success and enjoyed by all!

## STEEN PTO sponsors Science Night

By Dayle Santoro, Steen Principal



Science Night is a wonderful evening where students and families get to try various experiments. This year students built structures out of spaghetti and marshmallows, pulled a table cloth without disturbing the place setting and made a compass out of water and magnets.

The Student Faculty Game is an evening where teachers and students are able to engage in some friendly competition. The Steen School bleachers become packed with families that come to cheer for our teachers and the 6th grade students. The first game that is played is volleyball, even though it is played with a beach ball, there are some very dramatic plays. Basketball is played second. This game had some intense nail biting moments for both teams. Ultimately, it is a thrilling night that is filled with lots of school spirit.

## BIXBY SCHOOL RANKED 43 IN TOP 50 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN NJ FOR EXCELLENCE

by Dr. Vincent Varcadipane, Interim Superintendent

BIXBY - The State of New Jersey has ranked their elementary and middle schools. Out of 2000 schools, Bixby School was ranked number 43 qualifying in the top 50 in the state. Criteria used included year-to-year improvement on annual PARCC tests with emphasis and focus on key groups such as English-language learners and economically disadvantaged students.

Teachers, administrators and Bogota Board of Education members are proud of this accomplishment as it elevates the entire Bogota School-Community being recognized for educational excellence. This accomplishment is a credit to our excellent teachers, administrators and students.

While Bixby received this accolade, Steen teachers and administrators along with the Jr/Sr HS teachers and administrators have continued to provide excellent educational opportunities for students as evident from the excellent test score results posted in the January/February edition of this newsletter.

What makes this recognition special is that the State of NJ conducted the rankings as opposed to an outside agency or news association. Test scores are an important part of determining a school district's success. Students need to acquire skills necessary for successful performance on these assessments. Through the years the PARCC has incorporated higher order thinking skills with multiple components that need to be solved before a final answer can be determined. The days of bubbling A-B-C-D- and E (none of the above) on an answer sheet are long gone. When students perform well on these assessments it indicates that we are on the correct path. When recognized by the state, it makes that path more pleasant.



Mr. Englese, Principal and the Bixby Faculty



Steen Faculty





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Lisa Kohles, President  
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Patrick McHale  
Maureen Miller  
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## Student TECH CLUB makes positive impact



Written By: Joseph Lechuga and Eliah De La Torre

The Bogota Jr./Sr. High School recently added a tech club coordinated by the school's Technology Coordinator, Mohammed Saleh. The tech club started off with only one or two members but slowly started growing as more and more people began to speak about it. It was designed to inform interested students about everything there is to know about technology.

The club is relatively small with ten frequent members who always strive to help make the Bogota Jr./Sr. High School technologically capable. It consists of sophomores: Joseph Lechuga, Christopher Meli, Richard Rodriguez, Matthew Mullins, James Mullins, Brian Rubiera, Jeziel Marte, Eliah de la Torre and one freshman, Jesus Michel. Senior Luis Marte is also a part of the club and currently holds an intern position as well.

The tech club assists in certain areas that the school needs technology-wise, but is also there to educate its members on just about anything tech-related with the greater majority of it being about computers. Members of the group tend to be intrigued and always want to know more each and every day that passes by. The members have worked on multiple projects in the high school and there are more to come with the expansion of the number of student-used electronics.

Additionally, one of the larger projects they have completed was the creation of the new videography room, located in the library, with newly purchased equipment. The team set up new Macbooks, cameras, and various other equipment all in the span of a few weeks.

Another project the students have completed was the development of inventory of all the electronic devices in every classroom of the school. They were neatly organized in a chart with different sections and was quickly finished in one week.

All of the tasks assigned to the team are managed and supervised by Mohammed Saleh. He makes sure they are not only working efficiently but also learning something new along the way. Some of the things they do on a daily basis are making sure the Chromebooks and Chromebook carts are working properly. They even maintain the iPads that the students use during their school day whenever requested by the teacher. Many of the technological systems and devices distributed and used by the students are maintained by the tech club.

Continued on 2nd column **SEE TECH**

## A word on PARCC

Written By: Sam Chiang, English Department Chairman

Spring has arrived which means different things to different people. For some it's the beginning of another long baseball season, for others it's allergies, sneezing, and itchy eyes, and for many schools it means the beginning of testing season. In the months of April and May, students throughout New Jersey gear up for a couple of different tests: AP tests, NJ ASK tests, and PARCC tests.

PARCC tests, in particular, have been controversial and politicized but nevertheless all the districts, including Bogota, have to administer PARCC tests to students in grades 3 through 11. The test itself is divided into two general subjects: English Language Arts and Math. Each subject areas has three sections. For example, in ELA at the middle and high school levels, students are tested in literary analysis, narrative writing, and research writing. Each of these sections lasts 90 minutes. There is no doubt that completing the test does require some discipline, stamina, knowledge, and skills on the student's part. Furthermore, it is imperative that teachers have a solid grasp of what this test entails.

The goal and difficulty for teachers is to balance authentic curriculum and test preparation. The PARCC is supposed to be a reflection of the state educational standards. Thus, if teachers are teaching to the state standards, students should fare well on the test as well. The danger lies in the temptation to make test preparation equivalent to authentic curriculum. With that said, it is this teacher's belief that PARCC does not equal the curriculum. Instead, PARCC is just one assessment that indicates major student learning objectives. If, in fact, students came to school and only prepared for the PARCC exam then our school would be failing our students. Teachers try their best to teach in an authentic and organic manner that reflects not just the realities of testing but also the skills and knowledge required to be successful in college and the real world. Yes, in college and in the real world, we often face daunting high-stakes tests like the SAT or college examinations, or the Bar exam or the MCATs, or even certain licensing tests for specific trades, however, most tasks in life are not multiple choice tests. Therefore, teachers should prepare students in a manner that not only sets them up for success for the standardized testing but for life as well.

PARCC is not the end-all-be-all but it is important for students to track certain aspects of academic growth. It is important because teachers want to evaluate students in an objective way. Since standardized

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**TECH:** Continued from 1st Column

No matter what the job is, the group always tries to have a clear mind when working together for a common goal. They have already gained a general knowledge about the technology they've been working with. Some of that knowledge consists of understanding how inventory in the school is recorded, the process of preparing multiple computers for school use, and comprehending what the functions are of several devices. The students in the club help and work with Mohammed Saleh almost everyday of the school week

testing varies little year to year, there is a certain amount of objectivity that helps schools determine how students are faring in the big areas of English and Math. Moreover, PARCC scores reflect a certain academic reputation for the district and the community as a whole. Ask a young couple house hunting and they will mention real estate with good schools. These prospective buyers, unfamiliar with all the towns, will often use the easiest method of doing school research--google. Beside random anecdotal comments from anonymous people, test scores like AP tests, SAT, PARCC, etc are often familiar measurements of a school district. Therefore, it's important that students just give it their best effort.

**In our district, over the past three years, scores have improved across the board in both math and language arts.**

Reasons for improvement run the gamut: schools have adjusted to teaching to the common core standards (now the NJ student learning standards), teachers now understand the testing expectations, and teams have been formed to deliver interesting data that PARCC provides annually along with the standard scores. In the high school, a data team was formed which compiled massive amounts of student academic data and organized this data in a way that could provide some clues as to the school's strengths and weaknesses. This probably has been the most interesting thing that PARCC has manifested.

As for the students, the truth is that many would rather not take the exam, or any other exam for that matter. However, students are testing and should be commended for their effort and hard work and preparation in taking exams. As stated before, test scores have risen consistently through the entire district, and these improvements cannot simply be attributed to administrative and teacher adjustments.

**According to ELA PARCC data, the district has improved passing rates by over 15% since 2015. That is a tremendous amount of growth in a very short amount of time.**

Standardized tests begin and end with the student in mind: have they prepared? Are they giving their best effort? What skills and knowledge do they possess? In the end, students are the ones who take the test and should be commended for their efforts.

With the recent declaration by Governor Murphy that he'll be moving on from PARCC, many educators are wondering what will happen next. Recently, the education commissioner stated that PARCC will be here for at least another year during this transition period. Perhaps, the state moves in a completely different direction. Maybe the PARCC changes in name only and essentially remains unchanged. No matter what standardized test comes next, our district will be ready to be successful if the recent past is any indicator.