

150 Rockland Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10705
Tel. 914 376-8191
Fax 914 376-8245
rarthur@yonkerspublicschools.org

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
Superintendent of Schools

RoseAnne Collins-Judon
Assistant Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction, School
Supervision Secondary Administration

Rodney Arthur
Principal
Yonkers Middle High School

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Dear Student,

I am truly honored and humbled to be appointed as the new Principal of Yonkers Middle High School, home of the Bulldogs. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Ms. Jade Sharp, her leadership team and members of the faculty for creating a nurturing school environment, which has allowed you to feel safe and thrive to be your best, especially during a global pandemic.

Over the past 18 months, we have faced many challenges as a nation and a school community grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and affronts to racial equality. Serving as a principal of a high school for the past 5 years, I know firsthand the impact the pandemic has had on students and families. As a father of two high school aged teenagers, I also know how the pandemic has restricted your social life and how you have had to forego milestone events. Finally, I have witnessed how the pandemic has impacted students emotionally.

I implore you to take the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic seriously, and to follow all health and safety measures. Do not place yourself or your loved ones in danger. While this pandemic has tested our resolve and changed our way of living, it has given us the opportunity to focus on what matters most - family. It has also helped us to value the role of our healthcare workers and educators. Let us always show our appreciation for their commitment and service.

As a school administrator, I too have learned some valuable lessons - to listen more attentively to the voices of students and provide them with a platform to express their thoughts and ideas. For this reason, as Principal of Yonkers Middle High School, one of my first priorities is to meet with the student government committee, which represents the entire student body. This will allow students to meet with me directly each month to discuss issues that are important to them - school-related concerns and issues that extend beyond the walls of school.

As a father of four children ages 13, 16, 17 and 25, I know how important it is for you to know adults are listening to you. As a school administrator for the past 17 years, I have always enjoyed getting to know my students and having great relationships with them. Therefore, building relationships with students is a priority for me. While I may not get to know everyone's name, I will do my best.

As students of Yonkers Middle School, I want you to know a few of my core beliefs:

- I believe in order for you to be your best, you need to feel safe, encouraged and supported
- I believe in setting high expectations for myself and everyone else
- I believe we have a responsibility, as a school community, to be open-minded and accepting of others
- I believe in living each day with purpose and being the example you expect in others
- I believe that dedicating oneself to goals and developing a strong work ethic can lead to unlimited opportunities
- I believe it is important to Aim High, Dream Big and surround yourself with people who support your dreams
- I believe that showing confidence is one of the greatest indicators of future success
- I believe social media provides a unique opportunity to express ideas when used discriminately (*be careful about what you post!*) and with wise time management

As a student, you have a responsibility to yourself, your parents/guardians and the Yonkers community to make Yonkers Middle High School the best school in Westchester County and New York State. In order to achieve this goal, you MUST believe in yourself, dream big and remain steadfast in pursuing your dreams.

While meeting with the student government is one of my first priorities, it is equally important for me to meet your family. In September, I will schedule two separate evening events where students and parents will be invited. These meet and greet events will be held at Yonkers Middle High School and will offer you and your parents the opportunity to get to know me and ask questions.

My third priority is to create opportunities and celebrate your successes and accomplishments with the entire school community through announcements and the school webpage. I will also work hard with our community to provide you with opportunities to tour colleges, and visit other cities and countries with the goal of exploring other cultures. For example, 9 years ago, I had the opportunity to take twenty students and 2 teachers to China for two weeks. This was a life changing experience. Such opportunities will help to shape your thinking.

Finally, I leave you with one of my favorite quotes by the late Nelson Mandela, "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*" I would like to wish you an enjoyable remainder of the summer. I look forward to meeting you at the start of school and welcoming you to our home, Yonkers Middle High School.

Respectfully,

Rodney Arthur