Happy 2017!

I hope that everyone enjoyed a wonderful holiday season!

As we hang the 2017 calendar, we have much to look forward to in the final six months of the school year. Six months, that’s right, just six months remain to the 2016/2017 school year! Soon, our seniors will be firming up their post-high school plans; students in grades 7-11 will begin to consider course selections for the 2017/2018 school year; students across campus will participate in tryouts for our annual spring All-School Musical (Addams Family) and our elementary students will continue to work hard to master early literacy and numeracy skills. These activities and much, much, more will highlight the remaining months of the school year. I’m grateful to everyone in our community who works to support the success of our students.

This fall, a group of school community members have been participating in a program study. The study is considering whether to add courses to the high school program in agriculture science, information science and/or mechanical engineering. The committee has visited area schools, farms and has consulted with area business leaders and professionals. The committee will hold its second and final community forum on Wednesday, January 25 at 3:30PM (high school lecture hall next to office). This meeting is open to the public and we invite and value your input. The board of education will consider all of the information presented as it begins to develop its budget for the 2017/2018 school year.

A difficult issue that we have had to address over the last two years involves state assessment. All public school districts in the country are required to test students in grades 3-8 in English Language Arts and mathematics. Over the last two years, the tests have been the focus of a great deal of attention. Significant changes have been made to the content, format, and creation of the assessments in our state. For example, each test now has fewer items; each test is untimed; and New York State teachers have been actively involved in developing test items and scoring. New York State teachers and parents have been actively engaged by a new education commissioner and this has resulted in these positive changes. As an educator with three children, I feel that it is critical for the school to be able to communicate to me my children’s progress toward meeting learning standards. The intent of these assessments is to provide schools, teachers, parents and students with critical information about this progress. I encourage all of our parents to have their students complete and do their best on these important assessments that will be administered in late March/early May.

Finally, a word of thanks and praise; the holiday season is filled with reminders of the kindness and generosity. Holiday movies and songs share cheerful messages of love, hope and goodwill. In November and December, members of our school community participated in activities which brought hope and kindness into the homes of well over a hundred school children. I want to thank and praise the work of our Gram Lorraine volunteers and coordinators, our Rotarians and Optimists, as well as our student volunteers. Each of these people and many more meaningfully contributed to the purchase of gifts, the provision of food and supplies that let needy families in our area know that they are loved and they are part of a supportive community.

May 2017 be a happy and healthy year for you, your family and the Mount Markham School Community!