Have you ever gone from a gentle walk to a full sprint? That’s kind of like the transition from summer to the regular school year on campus. During the summer, twelve month staff are busy preparing for the opening of school (hiring, purchasing, maintaining, preparing, scheduling, orienting, learning) and the pace is pleasant. Once the staff and students arrive, the campus is bustling, coaches are whistling, athletes are panting, teachers are teaching and students are learning. The pace changes and it is one of the reasons why, as I begin my 29th year as an educator, that I love to work on our campus. Time truly flies when you are having fun!

Mount Markham and a member of the Mount Markham Middle School Staff, Mrs. Elaine Ojeda, were honored this week by Governor Cuomo. Mrs. Ojeda was selected as a Master Teacher! Mrs. Ojeda participated in a rigorous selection process and her selection tabs her as one of New York’s top teachers! We are so proud of Mrs. Ojeda and we are also proud of Mount Markham Middle School and our academic team.

In this edition of the Superintendent’s Corner, I’d like to invite you on a journey on the Pathway to Excellence; encourage you to engage with our students and staff, and discuss some upcoming events. A lot has been said about President Trump’s “Make America Great Again” slogan. Many feel that America has and will continue to be great. Many feel the same way about Mount Markham. We are confident that Mount Markham provides a high quality education to our students. We are confident that we have an exceptional staff and that we are well supported by the community. The question is what is Mount Markham truly recognized for regionally, across the state, and in the nation. The Board of Education has supported an initiative to work with stakeholders like you to define those areas that Mount Markham is exceptional and to identify those areas that could serve as a priority for improvement. The Board has invited community members to complete an online survey called the Pathway to Excellence Survey that can be accessed on our website (www.mmcsd.org). The Board also invites you to attend an upcoming board meeting to share your thoughts.

One of the amazing things about the start of the school year is that, like New Year’s resolutions, community members begin the year with motivation and a commitment to doing everything that is necessary to succeed. For many, this motivation and commitment lasts about two weeks. It is such a challenge for us, including our youngest students, to change. We must redouble our efforts to support best practice and to identify and implement those habits of success that will make a difference. For me, it starts with wellness. How are we feeling? Are we getting enough quality sleep? Are we exercising regularly? How is our diet? Are we being aware of our mental health? As parents, students or employees, are we supporting the establishment of routines that promote academic success (reading, studying, asking questions, working with others). It truly does take a village to raise a child. Please take the time to ask yourself these important questions and once you are on track, support our students overall wellness by helping to increase their understanding of their mental and physical health as well as their academic success habits.

I am truly proud of all of our students and staff! We have an amazing group of dedicated professionals on our campus working hard to support our students. I’m proud of our coaching staff and student athletes who have been competing hard and representing Mount Markham proudly. I hope that you were able to attend our Homecoming Parade and football game last weekend. I’m grateful to our event staff and the representatives of the Herkimer County Sheriff’s Office that supported this event. Mark your calendar and plan to attend our elementary school open house on October 16 at 6:30. Learn about how MySchoolBucks is transforming our parent’s ability to keep tabs on what our children are eating and buying in our cafeterias. Note that there will be no school on October 19 as Mount Markham staff will be participating in important professional development activities. Finally, plan to attend our fall All School Musical “You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown” scheduled for November 8-10.

Another school day has begun and without running in the hallways, the sprint to challenge and inspire our students to become lifelong learners has begun.