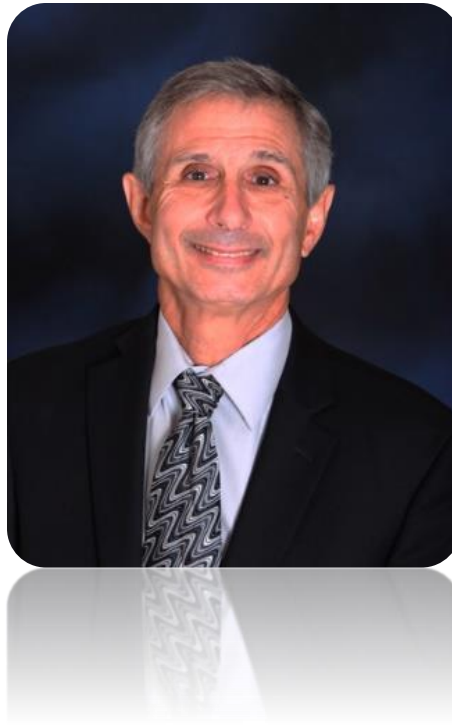


The Thomas F. DiGanci Era Ends – Tom's Legacy Begins

Dr. Thomas (Tom) DiGanci ends his interim principalship at the close of the current school year. His departure will undoubtedly leave a leadership style that arguably will be very difficult, if not impossible, to replicate. Tom (respectfully) is the ultimate educator! He will be fondly remembered by the FHS community as an extremely caring educator, whose high visibility, omnipresence and genuine sincerity define his scholarship and exemplary unique leadership panache. His two-year tenure at FHS culminates a 40+ year teaching career as an admired and respected educator who truly practices the fine artistry of teaching, as well as energetically promotes the process of student learning and actively supports the advocacy of parents and students.

The families and staff at FHS, if not the entire Franklin Township School district, are very privileged and honored to have had Tom as its esteemed leader at our pinnacle school. During the past two years FHS needed a steady, unruffled, professional pedagogical leader in order to create and sustain an educational environment that ensured a focused approach to highly effective teaching and learning. Tom, with his inimitable understanding of the current state of education, provided such an environment for both teachers and students. He recognizes that a student-centric approach to learning has replaced the conventional

teacher-centered approach; hence, he empowered students and parents to be more engaged and involved in the learning process. By means of example, during our monthly PTSO meetings Tom attentively listened to the membership concerns and actively cultivated an enduring partnership with parents via productive engagement and timely



updates about the activities of our children and his administration. Tom's constant presence at PTSO-sponsored parent workshops, academic and student sporting events aptly demonstrated his support and care for the FHS community. It was particularly joyful to witness the visceral pride that emanates from him as he reports on the academic and sporting achievements of FHS students and student-athletes. His fondness for 'his' students and their families confirmed his passion for FHS, its students and staff.

We are all aware of the multitude principals at FHS throughout its existence. Nevertheless, over the years the resilience of its teaching staff, students and parents has kept the school spirit afloat while maintaining a focus on academic growth for all students. Tom was cognizant of the multiple leadership changes and being a great inspirational leader, he and his staff focused on the immediate task of educating FHS students in a nurtured and safe



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learning environment. Based on multiple conversations and communications with Tom, it was abundantly clear that he embraced the changing face of contemporary education, and recognized that his success and that of FHS' teachers includes being effective educators, even though such success may not necessarily be a part of effectiveness. In other words, whereas an effective teacher can lead his/her students to higher test scores, Tom understands that a successful teacher will also attain these instrumental outcomes; however, the students will also be accomplished in extracurricular activities and other socially related outcomes.

Tom's holistic approach to teaching and learning was exemplified by the increased student participation in newly formed clubs, which was an initiative spearheaded by his very capable and dynamic assistant principal, Mr. Frank Chmiel. Another major accomplishment of Tom's tenure is the continued and sustained success of the Guidance department under the competent leadership of Ms. Dana Karas, who steered her colleagues to effectively use social media and electronic mail technologies as communication tools. Like Mr. Chmiel and Ms. Karas, Tom worked very closely with the PTSO leadership to share timely information about important student and school activities with FHS families. These administrators also sponsored important parent workshops on various topics (standardized testing, college nights, financial aid seminars, etc.) and were always available to attend PTSO meetings in order to address membership concerns.

These successes, among others, under Tom's leadership will ultimately lead to improved student learning and academic growth. However, Tom's humility will not allow him to take credit for the improved learning environment at FHS which hopefully will continue to build on his repertoire of setting positive directions and guidance; knowing and developing people; consistent advocacy for students and parents; and managing instructional programs.

Tom's strong and admirable work ethics directly impact student learning by influencing his staff to remain motivated and committed to their students. His positive impactful messages to the PTSO membership have always been welcomed since they were in perfect alignment with the mission of the PTSO leadership of shared responsibility, accountability and student ownership of their educational endeavors.

Tom's exemplary leadership and genuine advocacy should serve as a template for the incoming FHS principal and current school administrators. Despite Tom's long tenure in education, he has always displayed a willingness to learn from others as well as being open-minded to new ideas. These characteristics were clearly observed and admired by many stakeholders including students, parents, staff and his fellow administrators. The following acknowledgments from colleagues and other stakeholders demonstrate the admiration of and respect for Dr. DiGanci during his tenure at FHS.



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JADA EDWARDS

Student Council President, Student-Athlete

Dr. DiGanci will greatly be missed by not only the staff of Franklin High School, but also by the students. Dr. DiGanci always walked with a smile on his face that carried throughout each and every hallway, touching each and every student. A day never went by without him encouraging his students to succeed: whether it be announcing his motivation for an upcoming sporting event or wishing his students luck on an AP exam. Athletes remember him standing on the sidelines of a game, performers remember him attending all of their plays, and everyday students remember the connections they made with such a notable principal. However, Dr. DiGanci will be remembered as more than just a principal. He has been our #1 supporter, mentor, and role model for us students here at Franklin High School.

MARY GINSBURG

Administrative Assistant, School Management Office

I will always remember my wonderful boss, Dr. Tom DiGanci. I just knew from our first meeting that FHS was gaining a very valuable Interim Principal. He sets the perfect tone for any situation. His wisdom and dedication through his years in education helped him make good decisions for the staff and students of FHS. He values and respects his staff and appreciates their hard work. Tom DiGanci is without a doubt a true gentlemen. He balances his love for family life and still manages to go to many FHS school events after hours. I truly enjoyed working with Dr. Tom DiGanci. I wish him the best in his retirement.

KAREN TRAUTMANN

Social Studies Teacher

I could write chapters and chapters about what it has meant to FHS to have Dr. D serve as our educational leader these two years, but I'll keep it brief. Tom is exactly what FHS needed when we needed it most; he brought with him peace and calm during a tumultuous storm, he came with respect, honor, and integrity that healed wounds, and finally, he came with gentleness and kindness that touched the hearts of all.

JOHN P. FELIX

PTSO Co-President, Proud Parent of a Proud Junior

My first meeting with Tom occurred during the first week of my daughter's sophomore year. Before uttering a single word, his firm handshake and pleasant, welcoming broad smile immediately convinced me that he was genuinely pleased and excited to be part of the FHS family. It didn't take much longer, from a brief conversation, to quickly realize that Tom truly valued the support of parents and acknowledged their importance in the education of their children. Needless to say, during my eleven years as a parent-student advocate, the past two years have been the most rewarding and educational. Thank you Tom for being a gentleman and a great leader. You will be missed! Best wishes, and although I'm sure that you deserve a much needed long vacation, I hope that you continue to share your educational wisdom, leadership style and scholarship with other school districts.

FRANK CHMIEL

Vice Principal Franklin High School

Tom DiGanci is loving, kind, highly intelligent, super supportive, and makes time for everyone. He is always focused on doing what is best for the school. Dr. DiGanci is extremely responsible and works harder than everyone to make sure that FHS is a safe and secure learning environment where everyone wants to be. The hours that he put in to do this is staggering. Here is a man, who has formally retired from public school leadership, yet gave his heart and soul to something he believes in. No matter how hard Dr. DiGanci works, he always smiles, remains patient and tactful, and tries to find the positive in every situation. In meetings, he takes all evidence into consideration, helps to build consensus and generate a decision, and then follows through on it. Everyone can find some lesson they have learned in the past two years from Tom DiGanci.

DANA KARAS

Director of Guidance

The hallmark of Tom's time at Franklin High School can best be characterized with one word- relationships. From



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our students and their families to the staff and the administrative team, Tom recognizes and celebrates the knowledge, skills, and contributions that each and every one of them makes to the overall fabric of the school culture. Tom possesses a unique ability to make a special connection with every individual on a vast range of topics; from movies, music and sports to more academic pursuits in history, literature and the arts. If presented with a new idea or information, one can always rely on Tom to make the effort to become more familiar with it and then further the conversation and connection with that individual.

Tom is also always "movin' and grovin'". In my tenure as a teacher and administrator, I have never seen someone so completely and fully dedicated to their work. The energy and ever present activity of a high school community fuels Tom like few others. As an instructional leader, Tom is ever present. He is first to arrive and generally last to leave each day, attending every student recognition event, sports games and meets, and student performances. Tom leads by example and encourages and reinforces this ideal with the high school team.

Tom has left an indelible impression on all that have been fortunate to work with him and I personally am forever in his debt for my own professional growth. He shall be sorely missed, but not forgotten.

PHYLLIS BRUNO

Director of Social Studies/Work Readiness

Dr. Thomas DiGanci is a true gentleman and a scholar. He generously shares the wisdom of his years in education in a manner that exudes respect and collegiality. Tom's positivity radiates to all, and his "glass half full" outlook helps others stay afloat when challenges may appear insurmountable.

I feel that I have grown as an educator and a leader from my time with Tom. His advice is something I seek when I am conflicted in how to handle a situation. His kindness is abundant and shared with all.

FHS has been enriched by the presence of Tom DiGanci. I will treasure his friendship always.

ORVYL WILSON

Director, School Management/Student Advocacy

I first met Dr. DiGanci in 2001. I was the new Principal at FHS and he was the Principal at Watchung Hills Reg. H.S. I was impressed with his passion for his staff and students and his dedication to learning and keeping pace with best practices in education. Dr. DiGanci has continued to exhibit that same passion and commitment during the past two years that he has served as the Interim Principal at FHS. Through his experience as a calm and caring leader, he was able to unify the administration, teachers and staff, and student in the push for academic and social excellence.

DR. JOHN RAVALLY

Superintendent of Schools

Although I have only been in my current role for a short time what has become very obvious to me is Tom's deep dedication and love for helping the young men and women of our school district reach their individual potential. He is a fabulous leader and serves as a wonderful role model to our students. On behalf of the Board of Education I want to thank Tom for consistently going above and beyond the call of duty!

ED POTOSNAK

President, Franklin Township Board of Education

Dr. DiGanci hit the ground running at Franklin HS and won over our students, faculty and staff with his deep commitment to their success. Throughout his time with us he echoed how impressed he was with the outstanding offerings at FHS and the achievements of our young women and men. His infectious positive attitude will be missed as Principal, but luckily he is now a township resident! We are grateful for his contributions to our community and wish him and his family continued success.

NANCY LACORTE, Franklin Township Board of Education

Vice-President, added the following comments: Ditto. His enthusiasm and positivity has soared from students to staff to parents and within the community. We have been so lucky to have him as the school leader at FHS and now to be a part of our community.