

## WELCOME from Dr. Sharon Ann Festante!

It is my pleasure to serve as the principal of Ola Edwards Community School and has been an honor to serve the Hillside community for the past 14 years. I hold a Bachelor Degree and Master of Education Degree from Rutgers University, as well as, a Doctorate in Urban Educational Leadership from Kean University. In addition to my principal position, I have served as the Hillside School District Anti-Bullying Coordinator for the 6 years, as well as serving on several other district committees. Prior to coming to Hillside, I was an elementary teacher with the Watchung School District.

As an educator and administrator, I believe that students need to develop into responsible citizens, as well as, good students. Developing positive self-esteem and feeling good about oneself allows for greater risk-taking and greater creative expression. Students should be recognized for small and great achievements. It is important to focus on the strengths of students and have high expectations that learning will occur. Curriculum should be designed to cultivate a student's personal and intellectual growth, develop responsible citizens, and prepare them for further education and the world of work. Students love of learning must be encouraged by ensuring all classrooms foster a supportive learning environment where all students are motivated to learn.

Our mission at Ola Edwards School is to involve our students in an educational program that fosters their confidence and abilities across all academic content areas to enhance their lives and better prepare them for the future.

We embrace the concept that all children, including those with special needs, can excel given the opportunity to maximize their potential. This is achieved by recognizing that learning takes place in a variety of ways and providing instruction that addresses unique learning styles. Therefore, we strive to create an atmosphere conducive to the development of self-appreciation within an ethnically diverse student population.

Our school's program is enhanced by a strong link between home and school. Cooperative and ongoing communication between parents and teachers nurtures the development of productive, responsible, and well-rounded individuals. Through a close and collegial partnership with everyone associated with Ola Edwards Community School, I am confident we can make our school an even better place for our students to learn and grow!

Respectfully,  
Dr. Sharon Ann Festante,  
Principal

