

Superintendent's Report

August 19, 2015

Community Forum Topic Updates:

Last spring at the community forum, participants identified topics in three categories: Likes, Concerns/Frustrations and Hopes & Dreams. Many of the items in the latter two categories have been addressed and the following is an update on them.

- **More college and career prep advice:** A new high school guidance counselor, Paula Breault, was hired in July. She has already planned to attend professional development workshops which will address these needs. Additionally she has plans to meet personally with each senior during the first three weeks of school and has been working collaboratively with Karen Thompson to review the 4 year plans of 8th graders for implementation.
- **Challenges for high-achieving students:** The class of 2017 will be required to earn 24.5 credits for graduation by having to take an additional year of math and an on-line course. Opportunities for engaging in ELOs that are tailored for students' talents, skills and interests are available. Currently 35 students are enrolled in one or more ELOs for the coming school year. At the elementary level there has been a shift from a remedial model for additional instructional time (formerly RTI or Response to Intervention) to a model that provides all students with what they need (WIN or What I Need).
- **Social skills learning:** The district's counselors and health professionals will present the plan for district-wide implementation of social/emotional education to staff at one of the opening day workshops on August 21st. The counselors and health professionals will be responsible for coordinating student plans, staff training, behavior plans, small group and individual counselling, while teachers will be responsible for imbedding lessons into their curriculum.
- **Music program:** Both music teachers are now working full time. At the elementary school six blocks have been set aside for individual and small group lessons. At the high school there is a dedicated music room.
- **Scheduling of required classes:** Our new counselor and administrators have reviewed individual student schedules for compliance with the requirements taking into account the information in students' 4 year plans. This summer we have also made available an open lab so that students could take on-line required classes if desired.
- **Earlier receipt of student schedules:** Schedules are due to be mailed mid-August along with the student handbook.
- **Staff familiarity with IEPs:** On August 21st Julie Fenrich will meet with all professional staff to discuss student IEPs. On August 25, she will meet with all paraprofessionals to familiarize with their students' needs. On-going meetings with paraprofessionals also take place twice a month during the school year.

- **ELO transportation:** There are 3 options for transportation – our van, our drivers’ education car and the Career Center van which will be parked here on site and available for the first block at the career center.
- **Technology:** Prior to the end of the fiscal year, the district’s fund balance allowed us to take advantage of “deals” on 40 computers, 2 switches, a replacement internet filtering device and a replacement projector.
- **Retention of teachers/better pay:** An on-going problem for Hinsdale has been the proximity of nearby districts in New Hampshire as well as those in Vermont and Massachusetts who offer more generous pay scales. As we enter into a negotiating year with the teachers, it is the hope that a more competitive package can be achieved while remaining cognizant of the town’s fiscal constraints.
- **Outside time for high school students:** Students are currently able to take advantage of eating lunch outside at picnic tables, weather permitting. Providing additional tables and possibly umbrellas would allow more students to comfortably take advantage of this option.
- **Vocational opportunities:** Currently 9 students are enrolled in courses at the Career Center for the first semester and 35 students are slated to take advantage of one or more ELOs.
- **More planning time for teachers:** At HMHS, teachers are currently scheduled for 10 planning periods per week – one more than last year because teachers will no longer have a study hall duty. This request unfortunately is harder to achieve at HES. The current teachers’ contract calls for a required 7 planning periods per week.
- **Designated weight room and new bathrooms:** 2 new bathrooms and a separate weight room are now located in the high school math wing.
- **SAU building:** Restoration to the exterior of the building will take place sometime before the snow flies – unfortunately no bathrooms are included in the plan!!!!
- **Additional foreign language classes:** These are available as on-line courses since it would not be cost-effective to offer them within the building.
- **More parent educational meetings:** Progress has been made at the elementary level with plans for more parent meetings since the school social worker has been returned to full-time status.
- **Cursive writing:** Cursive writing is still being taught beginning in grade 3. A nice sample written by a 4th grader last year is available for view upon request.

Items on the list such as a new SAU building with bathrooms, an auditorium at the high school, fire escapes at the elementary school, a track and any other capital improvement items should be part of a long-term strategic plan.

We are committed to on-going efforts to support the list of “Likes” and will work cooperatively and diligently to add more items to that list!