

Superintendent Report – January 2019
Dr. Pam Vogel

December was a busy month, as it included the beginning of budget planning for the 2019-2020 year, more discussion regarding board policies, and DCF issues. Unfortunately, the number of DCF referrals/reports has increased in several of our schools. We also focused on seeing that the fencing project at the High School was underway. We now have the Homeland Security Report and this will be shared in closed session at the meeting.

All Region One administrators met on December 20. Topics from the meeting are listed below:

Webinar Discussion- Dr. Doug Reeves: “How Leaders Can Make a Difference Right Now for Student Achievement”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kygSaVzHyZ4&feature=youtu.be>

While we did not have Dr. Reeves come to speak in our region last spring, he continues to work with schools throughout the country and we benefit from his webinars. Our administrators felt his message was meaningful and helpful to them, particularly as he spoke using teacher groups to consistently ask four questions when they meet: 1) Are students learning? 2) How do we know? 3) What do we need to do for those who are not? 4) What else do we do for those who are? He discussed the importance of immediate feedback to students and the need administrators have to observe frequently in classrooms and to provide teachers with the same immediate feedback. The five things that Dr. Reeves said matter the most are: Efficacy, Prioritization, Specificity, Measurability, and Monitoring- particularly the last three. We then discussed something that Dr. Reeves addressed that each principal would try to begin doing. Dr. Reeves also spoke about stopping to wait for teachers’ “buy in”, as this does not come in first. Rather, people need to put the practice into place and make a serious commitment to doing it. When, in time, people see that the practice does work, then comes the belief.

Video-Conference with School Demonstrating Student Achievement Gains

The K-8 principals, Martha Schwaikert, Carl Gross, Lisa Carter and I held a video-conference with East Union K-5 Principal, Mrs. Joan Gordon. Her K-5 school of 220 students has been showing gains in student achievement for the past several years, after having longer blocks of time for literacy and math, using collaboration time on a regular basis to study student data and then plan lessons with general education, special education, talented/gifted, and Title I teachers working together. They incorporated Early Literacy Groups to cluster the students and deliver lessons according to the skills most needed. Class sizes range from 14-29 students per class. They have been doing Student Involved/Led Conferences for about ten years. Students establish goals and report on those goals, along with the data they chart to show over time. The school also uses a teacher leadership model, somewhat comparable to our instructional coaching model. This is a school with higher poverty, with at least 60% of the students on free or reduced lunches, but one that has practices developed for students to reach higher levels. The principal also works with two different math groups each day.

Administrators took notes and had a chance to ask questions. This provided us an opportunity to see another school and their journey to continuously improve. Thoughts for our implementation included:

- Grade level meetings will be constructed differently
- We will get into classrooms more

- The challenge is not just getting into the classroom, but also meeting with the teacher to provide feedback
- Discussing learning objectives and intervention incentives with teachers
- Personalize the learning for each teacher and help alleviate any feelings of being overwhelmed
- Help teachers connect initiatives to see the bigger picture

We will continue to have discussions as an administrative team to determine which practices we need, in the different schools, to have improved student learning.

To view the recorded session: <https://youtu.be/CIVDrnPbd4o>

CT Department of Children and Families (DCF) Reporting

There is a new protocol and new checklist from CT DCF. We went through these to ascertain if all schools are meeting the new requirements.

Administrators were asked to:

- Check board policy regarding reporting abuse/neglect. Is the policy current? If not updated in last 4-5 years, it needs to be added to the BOE Agenda for January
- Distribute the policy annually to ALL staff. Plan in the fall that this should be discussed with staff at the beginning of every school year
- Have all school employees completed their training? This must be done every three years
- We must certify that all employees are in compliance, with some notification from the principal to the superintendent stating this
- When staff completes the mandatory training through Safe Schools, we should be able to use that as a record for completion.
- There is a new online form that must be submitted when reporting a case to DCF. More information to come on this.
- Do we have a confidential rapid response team, as required in the statute? We do not have this, but we will put one together and need to agree when it is appropriate to use the team.
- Do we have a centralized location for all reports? Currently some reports stay in the schools. We should plan to also have a place for all reports at the Region One office

A state meeting was recently held, sponsored by Shipman & Goodwin, to discuss the newly revised expectations from DCF for mandatory reporting (neglect and/or abuse). There will be information coming to us from Shipman and Goodwin about the meeting and I will share this with administrators.

Middle School Sports

Anne MacNeil and I met recently with most of the Middle School Coaches and Recreation Directors to discuss the possibility of having regional teams at the Middle School level. After extensive discussion about what this could entail, the general consensus was that we should explore the idea. The Rec directors said they could adjust their programs accordingly, depending upon what decision is reached. Most present at the meeting were in favor of adding more sports, such as volleyball, track & field, and cross country, to provide more opportunities for students. Anne will talk with students in groups at the Middle School to determine what other sports students might have interest in. Following that, she will meet or survey families to ask their opinions. We will take this information to the ABC Committee at their January meeting to discuss results of the survey and to determine if this is something that Region One would wish to pursue.

Substance Use in Schools: Vaping and Marijuana

Vaping has been an issue coming up in a number of our schools recently. We are seeing this problem at the middle school level, as well as the high school level. Some schools (outside of Region One) are using vaping sensors in restrooms. We will wait to see how effective this is, before making any purchases. HYSB has been helping the High School with this issue, as several athletes would have been out for a season, with the current policy. Instead, an arrangement has been made for HYSB to meet and counsel students.

The principals reviewed Salisbury Central's current policy with vaping language added from Attorney Craig Meuser. We also reviewed a comprehensive policy from CAFE that addressed vaping and other substances. After some discussion, the consensus was that we preferred the CAFE policy for its comprehensiveness. We will take the CAFE policy to all boards for a first reading in January.

English Language Learners

Mrs. Celina Huber presented information about the English Learner (EL) Program that included:

- EL Modification Plans exist for every EL student. The plan is distributed to the schools through the EL teachers.
- EL Grading Modifications-If teachers are not following the student's modification plan, the student cannot be given a grade of "Not Yet Proficient".
- Progress Monitoring: In the past, there was nothing specific for EL students. We would like to implement the Test of English Language Learning(TELL). It is \$80 per school. There are eight progress monitoring tests and the test identifies learning gaps. It is tablet based and for grades K-12. Title III funds can be used for this.
- EL Learner workshops for educators are available and they are free. Administrators were asked to encourage teachers to attend. There is an offering on the March 15th Regional PD day.
- There is an online teacher survey being sent out to assess teachers' needs and levels of support.
- International Family Night is being planned and Celina is working on the details.

The Power Point presentation can be viewed here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1H17idja8XhxWdbhWfGvSRaNG2JgS710zgreQ6qsBWvc/edit?usp=sharing>

HYSB Executive Director, Laurie Collins

Laurie presented some of the issues that HYSB faces and discussed ways we can work better together, in light of many pressing concerns that students and families face. The following items were discussed:

- We can develop a stronger partnership with our schools and HYSB
- HYSB can support the schools in other ways, beyond 1:1 referrals
- HYSB can help with crisis interventions with students, including situations where there is not a protocol
- The agency is currently assisting with vaping at the HS, through meetings with students
- HYSB has connections to other groups/agencies in the community that can also help students and families
- Pupil Services staff frequently wants to assume responsibility for 504 cases, however, students with 504 plans are not special education. Can HYSB fill in some of the gaps?
- Currently counselors are pretty stretched and some students may be on a waitlist basis over the winter

Comments/Issues from Administrators:

- Many students are seeing school counselors/psychologists in regards to home life/family situations, not school related.
- The current program with Becca at HYSB for students caught vaping has been very positive.
- How can we reach families who don't necessarily want the help and who will not come into the school for a meeting?

2019-2020 School Calendar Discussion

A draft calendar of the new school year was presented. Administrators requested these changes to the initial version:

- Keep both Jewish holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur)
- Schedule PD early dismissals (K-8)/late starts (HS) on weeks without holidays
- Good Friday has been a day with no school; we need to continue this
- Move the March 25-26 professional development to June 3-4
- Ensure that the day before Thanksgiving is not a school day
- Add Jan 2 to Holiday Break. Most teachers want the extended winter break, but are amenable to professional development on Friday, January 3.

The changes were made in the calendar and this version will be presented to the school boards.

Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators:

I encourage administrators to help educators extend their learning by attending conferences and to enable those who attend to bring new information back to share with staff members. Last year, over 35 administrators and teachers attended the annual ASCD Conference in Boston. Those attending believed that they learned much that could be utilized in our schools. The 2019 ASCD Conference is March 16-18, 2019 in Chicago: [ASCD Empower19: the Conference for Every Educator](#)

Pre-conferences are one, two, or three days prior to the main conference. If ASCD is not the conference that a principal feels is most needed, each administrator can look into other options for professional learning. Title II and REAP funds are designated for professional development.

Other Items:

Administrator Mid-Year Evaluations

These are being scheduled for late January and February, to determine the progress that is being made with student achievement in each of the schools.

Social/Emotional Programs/ Substance Abuse/Prevention

The Northwest Corner Prevention held their December meeting at HVRHS. Mr. Strever, Mr. Schibi, Mr. Gross, and I attended, representing Region One. There was extensive discussion regarding what types of prevention programs are most effective in reaching families and students.

The Task Force continues to study the data from the student groups (grades 7-12) and plans to have a report prepared next month that will help inform about the most pressing concerns and next steps to take.

Special Olympics

Students are currently enrolling in track and field, swimming, and/or basketball. We currently have three coaches and are holding a Coaches Meeting with the Special Olympics State Coordinator on January 10.