

May 8, 2019

Report to the Sharon Board of Education

By: Bob Whelan – Region One Board of Education representative from Sharon, Connecticut

At the May 2019 Board Meeting, these initiatives and presentations were the key focus:

- Referendum – hope you all voted!
- SRBI process and recap of 2019 – how do we measure success, and who is a ‘counselor’.
- Those who Contribute – Michael Berkeley, the VoAg Advisory Committee and the Arboretum Committee
- New Vo-Ag teachers
- Portrait of a Graduate
- US News report (data from FY 16/17) – SAT Impact
- Scheduling change (4 minute difference in long block, and 40 minute short blocks)
- Executive Session regarding possible litigation

While the Region 1 budget was passed, the actual voter turn-out was very light. When only 460 voters come out in an area (Region 1) with a population of more than 15,000, it bespeaks the need for somehow engaging more people in the education process. These are important investments in our children’s and our region’s future, and it would be terrific if more folks participated in the conversation.

Steve Shibi and Ian Strever presented the particulars related to SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Interventions), and how the Tier 1 through Tier 3 interventions are managed. This is a very comprehensive effort to try to involve school personnel (or outside specialists) in insuring that students who “fall off the track”, either academically or behaviorally are aided. Fortunately, there are few cases that rise above the basics of Tier 1, but the HVRHS administration is committed to successful outcomes and is tracking results. As this is typically a team effort, numerous strategies can be suggested or brought to action. My single biggest concern is insuring that everyone involved has the professional knowledge needed to be effective, and offered to insure that the Board support these efforts with professional development or whatever resources are deemed necessary. This is important work.

A remarkable group of community members came together as the Vo-Ag advisory committee to aid in the selection of the best qualified candidates to move into Maren Davenport’s and Mark Burdick’s positions. At the end of the process, 2 extremely qualified candidates were identified and the Board moved last evening to approve their hiring. Their resumes are available through last night’s agenda posted on the HVRHS website.

This committee was also recognized at the meeting as members of the elite club of “Those who Contribute to HVRHS”. The Vo-Ag advisory committee, the Arboretum Committee and Michael Berkeley of the Housatonic Musical Theatre Society were recipients of the award and recognition, for their tireless efforts in improving the institution we all know as Housy.... There are so many to be recognized, and so little time. We are all so fortunate that so many community members offer their time and expertise in furthering the goal of making Housy a premier institution.

Principal Strever continues with the efforts to develop the “Portrait of a Graduate”, and has uncovered the top ranked attributes by consensus of the participants. They are:

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Confidence
- Perseverance
- Empathy
- Flexibility
- Collaboration
- Global and environmental awareness.

Everyone can agree that these attributes are the harbingers of success in any endeavor, and having each graduate inculcated with these values and skills will certainly insure their effective preparation for “What Comes Next”.

The data from US News about the HVRHS ranking is, minimally, old.... The data used was for school year 2016/2017, and given that the data is slanted towards Advanced Placement (AP) participation, it can’t possibly reflect the fact that the Board elected (and also has the support of the Alumni Association) to start paying for AP tests being taken. As each test is priced at +/- \$80, this can be a real hardship for a family. It has always been encouraging to see the number of students who take the courses just for the rigor involved, but since many institutions don’t automatically recognize this credential, it has seemed that actual end of class testing was less of a consideration. Dr. Vogel has placed data on the Region 1 website and Facebook page that explains situation, and better explains how the outcomes will likely only improve.

A minor change, endorsed by the Leadership group and the teachers has been applied to the block scheduling for the next calendar year. As Mark Burdick explained, the change is minimal as far as actual classroom time is concerned and is more oriented to accommodating early releases for afternoon activities or late arrivals owing to professional development. The change to a long block, for example, is 4 minutes. We are grateful as a Board that the fundamental premise of a long block is unchanged, and reflection and consensus have made minor ‘tweaks’ to the schedule which reflect the exigencies or priorities.

Lastly, the Board received an update regarding a potential circumstance that has not as yet been fully addressed, as the situation is still evolving. As it involves students, school activities and communications with the Board’s attorneys, the matter needed to remain confidential and could only be handled in Executive session.

Please feel free to email or call with any questions or comments.

Best regards,



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