

January 10, 2019

Report to the Sharon Board of Education

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

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

- A focus on Student Learning with a Presentation from Kim McLeod and Ian Strever regarding the HVRHS Guidance/Counseling program
- Standard 5 of the NEASC Report
- The revised (and simplified) HVRHS School Improvement Program
- The Regional Calendar
- Homeland Security Assessment review (in Executive Session)
- Transportation (Busses) contract negotiations (in Executive Session)

The Region One Board enjoyed a presentation by Kim McLeod – head of the HVRHS Guidance Department, and Mr. Strever. Ms. McLeod was the primary presenter, and put together a great presentation on the shifting role Guidance plays in HVRHS. Most importantly, the emphasis is no longer on Guidance, and is in reality about being the ‘triage’ unit in counseling at the school. Kim explained the rapidly evolving role of the School Counselor, as the position is now characterized, in terms of being a hub for many activities. Primary of these are College/Career readiness, Academic advising and the Social/Emotional domain. This goes far beyond the role those of us of a certain age presumed was central to this responsibility. In an era of scarce resources, this is an investment which not only serves to prepare students for what comes next, but also fosters a caring culture at HVRHS which is a foundation for student success. The presentation has been made an element of this report, and I encourage all teachers, administrators and board members to take a moment to review it. It’s well worth your time.

Standard 5 of the NEASC report focuses on School Culture, and HVRHS was highly commended for the positive, caring culture that exists. HVRHS was also recognized for its thoughtful teachers, administrators and other staff who all contribute to create this remarkable synergy. It’s very gratifying to know that these efforts are at the forefront of every action taken to improve the school even further. The importance of a culture which actively seeks to reduce anxiety is central these efforts. Marc Brackett of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence made a point of explaining that reduced anxiety brought about through efforts to educate all participants in the techniques of improving Emotional Intelligence serves to improve the ability to promote and pursue learning. It just stands to reason, and the process is ongoing, based on the recommendations made by NEASC. Professional development plays a tremendous role in these goals, and the Board encourages as much PD as can be incorporated, as skills needs are rapidly evolving.

The ongoing effort to define an actionable School Improvement Plan has made available a revision of the plan that tries to streamline the goals, and make them more concrete. They involve Curriculum/Assessments, Data acquisition as the foundation of assessing student achievement, continuous evaluation of all personnel regarding focusing on the goals, and of course the positive social and emotional health of students. The leadership teams are working together to bring the plan into sharper focus, but there is much consensus for both the process and the product thus far. It is a living, breathing document, and will be held up before the Board as the basis for regular review for an objective view of progress, or recalibration.

Discussion was held regarding the Regional Calendar for the 19/20 academic year. It was reported to the Board that there has been a great deal of participation with the 7 building level administrators in crafting the calendar, and what was presented had a majority consensus. There are many goals to balance in constructing the calendar, none the least of which are professional development and student conferences, as well as holidays, etc. A great number of moving parts are involved, and I personally see the generation of a calendar as a remarkable challenge. Not everyone will 100% agree on all aspects, as it touches teaching philosophies, transportation, outside programming (athletics, activities) and professional development. It's an ongoing conversation that will come to an ultimate (and hopefully shared) consensus.

An Executive session was initiated to review a report from Homeland Security's Public Protection Division, which also had input from the CT Department of Emergency Services. Suffice to say that items identified in the report as priorities are being addressed with all due dispatch. The report is very comprehensive, and is in use by the building maintenance staff, as well as the Building Committee and the Safety and Security Committee and is informing the process of defining priorities. As this is the Budget season, some items identified here will certainly have an impact, and again, must be prioritized – another ongoing discussion.

The Transportation contract is the only 5 year contract the Region has. Negotiations emanate from Sam Herrick's office on behalf of all the region's seven districts. So far, the proposals for cost increases are reasonable, but the ultimate structure of the contract is still in the works. Negotiations are ongoing, but should be completed shortly. Given the budget implications, the Board's Budget Committee is closely monitoring this, and it was a topic of discussion at the January 9<sup>th</sup> budget session.

Please feel free to email any questions or comments.

Best regards,



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