



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

As we move towards the New Year, I am so happy that you are all part of our extended New Dawn Family. As we near the end of 2014, I would like to reflect on some of the changes we have made at New Dawn. While we have definitely had some struggles with our changes, we are also seeing how these changes have positively impacted students' and their academic and behavioral outcomes.

First, we have many new teachers who I introduced to you in my last letter. I am happy to report that these teachers have fit right into the New Dawn culture and have been a wonderful addition to our existing structure. We are looking forward to continuing on our summer Regents results and to have even more students pass their exams this coming January.

Second, we have been developing different strategies to target students who are struggling with different issues, including attendance. By now your student's mentor should have contacted you just to check in. If your student has been struggling with grades (or is on the honor roll), you should have received the mid-term progress report. If your student has ever been absent or late, you should have received at least one phone call if not a number of letters. If you have not heard from the school at all, it is probably due to incorrect contact information. If you have not heard from us, please email your phone number and email to kfields@ndchsbrooklyn.org or call us at 347-505-9103. We believe that parents need to be aware of what is happening at the school regardless of the age of the student.

Third, we have changed our grading policy. In the past it was found that students were being rewarded for attendance whether or not they understood the concepts being taught. Therefore, this semester we have changed to only grading students on the concepts that they have mastered as measured by exams, assignments, and projects. This has two advantages: students



are graded on what they know and not on behavior; and students have the entire semester to make up work. In other words, if a student hands in an assignment and does not do well on the assignment, he or she is given the opportunity to make corrections and resubmit.

Fourth, we are changing how think about and talk about testing. No longer do we apologize for helping students prepare for the Regents. We live in New York State that demands students pass five Regents in order to obtain a high school diploma. Our job is to ensure that your student obtains that diploma. Therefore, we have a series of low-stake tests that are used to prepare students for taking the test. Regents teachers administered old Regents to further prepare students. We have also instituted both a Regents Prep class and a Writing class that is geared towards writing for the Regents—or any test for that matter. This is not because we think your student can only be graded on testing, but facing the reality that your student needs to pass these tests to graduate.

Finally, this has been a great year. Our large graduation rate combined with the expansion of the number of students in the school resulted in bringing in over 120 new students into the school this semester. As a school entering its third year, I am thrilled to say that with all the new students and new teachers, everything has gone very smoothly. This is indicative of a school that has stabilized its culture.

I, along with the entire staff, wish you a happy holiday season and joyous New Year. May you have a successful New Year.

Best,

Dr. Asmussen