

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 13
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Superintendent's Update

March 11, 2014

Dear Parents and Families,

Lately, as the sunlight stretches farther into the afternoon, I remember the very first time I drove down Pickett Lane for my initial interview. It was a beautiful October Saturday morning and the playing fields were bustling with activity, friends were walking together on either side of the road, dogs and owners walked together, and one little boy proudly wobbled on his bicycle as his training wheels kept him balanced. Soon enough that scene will once again appear and be a reminder of the heartbeat of our school community; there is tremendous pride, support and belonging here. I am reminded of this within our school community and within the community at-large every day.

A few updates for you as we head into March:

Utilization Study: The third Community Meeting was held on February 19th. At this meeting a comprehensive enrollment study prepared by Milone and MacBroom Inc. of Cheshire was presented outlining the enrollment decreases in our district over the past 5 years as well as the continuing trend of declining enrollment over the course of the next ten years. Representatives from DRA who were charged with examining the facilities in our district in light of several variables including current grade configurations, program design and declining enrollment presented the audience with an overview of some potential options for building usage. No final decisions were made, as the administrative team and Board of Education need to further consider the long term outlook for our district. Your input will be critical as we move forward. I hear the concerns about maintaining successful attributes of our school community including specific programs and class sizes that are within the Board of Education's recommended range. In April, Kerrie Flanagan, Board of Education Chairperson, and I will be sending out a comprehensive overview of the upcoming process. Please continue to share your ideas and questions with me.

Budget: We presented the budget at the Board meeting on February 12th. The 2014-2015 proposed budget represents an increase of 1.74% over last year's operating budget for a total budget of \$35,178,402. The budget includes proposed additions: K-4 Technology teacher, music equipment lease, 1 to 1 Initiative (Chromebooks for all gr 9 students), 4 additional AP classes, in-house administration of the PSAT, an increase in administrative assistant's time at Memorial School, and CAFE membership for the Board of Education. Reductions are proposed across several areas including staffing cuts. At the start of the budget planning process, the total number of proposed cuts included 6.1 certified staff, 7.5 non-certified staff, 1.5 custodial staff, and 1.0 related services staff. These staffing cuts which were planned at the start of the school year were primarily based on declining enrollment and potential programming changes. Our budget process was started earlier than usual this year and so there are still budget and staffing considerations before the Board of Education makes a final decision. Therefore discussion continues at the Board level in meetings that will be held March 12th, 19th, and 26th and the Public Hearing on April 10th.

High School Principal Search: I want to thank those of you who responded to the on-line survey. Your insightful feedback, along with the results from the in-school focus groups that were held with staff, administrators, students and parents, was very helpful to me in organizing the interview committee and planning the interview format,

questions, and performance tasks. Clearly, you are interested in having a school leader who embodies and demonstrates our core ethical values of respect, responsibility, honesty, kindness, and courage. Interviews will be held at the end of March and beginning of April. I will update you on our progress next month.

Testing: The following is the schedule for SBAC testing as well as Science testing in grades 5, 8 and 10:

Science CMT/CAPT: Grade 5: March 13, Grade 8: March 20, Grade 10: March 18

SBAC: Grades 3-8 and 10: April 28 – May 16, Grade 11: April 7 – April 25

Students will participate in the field test in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The field test is comprised of two components; a performance task, which includes a classroom activity, and a computer-generated task; and a computer adaptive test. You will receive information from Dr. Berry on March 19th about the SBAC testing and individual school information from your child's principal.

Senior Center Visits: I had the pleasure of being a guest at both the Middlefield and Durham Senior Centers in February. I was grateful to have the experience to talk with people who have lived their entire lives in our community and/or raised their children and in some cases are now sharing the experience of having grandchildren in our schools. Perhaps I met your child's grandparent. Those seniors who have grandchildren in our district marvel at what children are learning today. They are also very concerned about the budget and the decisions we are making as we move forward. I will be working with the administrative team and representatives from the Senior Centers in both towns to explore ways of partnering with our senior citizens. Your ideas are encouraged and welcomed.

Graduation and last day of school: This year so far there is a total of 6 snow days which puts our last day of school and graduation at June 23rd.

Enjoy the advent of spring,

Kathryn Y. Veronesi, Ed.D.
Superintendent

The mission of Regional School District 13, a community that celebrates learning, honors tradition, and embraces change, is to ensure that all students will be engaged and ethical lifelong learners and citizens who will thrive, excel, and contribute in an ever-changing, interdependent world by providing challenging, diverse, and nurturing experiences that empower each student to succeed through meaningful partnership with family and community.