



## **Superintendent's Corner**

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Superintendent

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### **In our schools**

This week, I had the opportunity to visit Amesbury Elementary School, Amesbury Innovation High School and Amesbury High School. While the lessons observed varied in each of the schools, there were some common themes noted. First, I was impressed with the ways in which teachers were making connections to information previously learned. This is an important component of learning, as it helps students to understand the relationship between concepts and to see the bigger picture in a content area. Of particular note were Ms. Pelletier (AES) and Mr. Baker (AHS). In Ms. Pelletier's class, she reviewed with the students what they had been learning all work and how it was building up to long term skill acquisition. IN Mr. Baker's class, the students were just beginning French 2. For some students, it had been about a year since they completed French 1. He had created some online review and quiz materials to highlight some of the key concepts from French 1 and to better understand what he might need to revisit as the students began French 2. Another theme I noted, was the ways in which teachers made connections to the material being learned and real-life situations. In Mr. Hamilton's class (AIHS), the students were learning how early settlers utilized the bartering system. The students were each assigned professions and provided with a limited number of resources. They had to work together to obtain all of the resources by communicating with other professions. This activity also highlights ways in which we are incorporating social emotional learning competencies into daily instruction. In Ms. Sconce's class (AHS), the students were learning to create websites based on information provided by other students. These students would then be working with Mr. Thibideau's marketing class to create websites for the marketing students as part of a long term project. I was also impressed with ways in which teachers were encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. Mr. Angerhoffer (AHS) was pushing students to focus on process, not final answer, and to examine how their solutions to problems 'fit' with what they had been discussing for the week.

I have also been enjoying attending some of our sporting events. This week, I watch the Freshmen and Junior varsity boys' basketball teams play against Newburyport. This weekend, I will be attending the Junior Varsity and Varsity Hockey teams play at the Haverhill Valley Forum.

### **School Committee – Policy Subcommittee**

On Monday afternoon, the policy subcommittee met to discuss athletic policies, including cut policies/procedures, and the hiring, retention and evaluation of coaches. Ms. McAndrews and Mr. Gearin participated in the discussion in order to give input regarding day-to-day operations and the implications of policy changes to the athletics program. It was a healthy conversation and some areas where we could continue to improve were identified. The school administration and school committee will continue to engage in conversations on these topics in upcoming meetings.

## **Leadership Team Meeting**

Tuesday afternoon, the leadership team met to discuss the following topics:

- Budget development – As we continue to move forward with the development of the budget for the 2017-2018 school year, the team discussed overall school goals and how their requests fit into overarching needs of the district. There are many fixed cost increases that are going to impact our budget proposal for this year including negotiated salary increases, increase in health insurance costs, and increase in costs for retirement benefits. We will continue to work together and with the school committee to develop a budget proposal that is both fiscally responsible, but at the same time recognizes the continuing needs of our schools.
- Curriculum Work – the leadership team debriefed our ongoing curriculum work. We discussed next steps and strategies to continue to keep all staff engaged and committed to the process.
- Strategic Plan – we continue to make some changes and updates to our plan based on the feedback we have received from community members, teachers, etc.

## **Whittier Tech School Committee Representative**

In addition to needing to fill the seat on the Amesbury Public Schools school committee, we are also seeking applicants for an individual to represent Amesbury on the Whittier Technical High school committee for a three year term, beginning April 1, 2017. This position is currently held by Mr. Charles LaBella whose term expires in March. It is the responsibility of the school committee to appoint this individual and then for the city council to accept the appointment. Letters of Interest should be filed with the Mayor's Office no later than February 20, 2017 at 10:00am. The applicant must be a registered voter and a resident of the City of Amesbury. A Hearing will be held to fill the vacancy at the School Committee meeting on Monday, March 6, 2017. All applicants will be expected to attend that meeting.

## **City Council Finance Committee Meeting**

Tuesday night, I attended the city council finance subcommittee meeting to any questions about the allocation of funds for a feasibility study for our Amesbury Elementary School project. This request is in alignment with our next steps in the process. Through a feasibility study, we will work with an architect (a designer) to explore all options for the Amesbury Elementary School building. At the conclusion of this work, we will have a proposed design, along with anticipated costs and timeline for the school committee and city council to review and consider. I am appreciative of the finance subcommittee for their support of the feasibility study. Now, the city council as a whole will vote on the approval of these funds.

## **Energy Walk Through with Tom Barrasso**

Norm Fredette and I toured the high school building with Tom Barrasso (the City's Director of Energy and Environment) to identify ways that we could decrease our energy consumption. We have come up with some ideas that we will be exploring further over the coming months.

## **Looking for something to do this weekend?**

The high school drama club is presenting *The Three Musketeers* on Friday and Saturday evening at 7:00 pm. Tickets at the door are \$8.00 for students and \$10.00 for adults.



Be well and have a great weekend!  
Gary

