



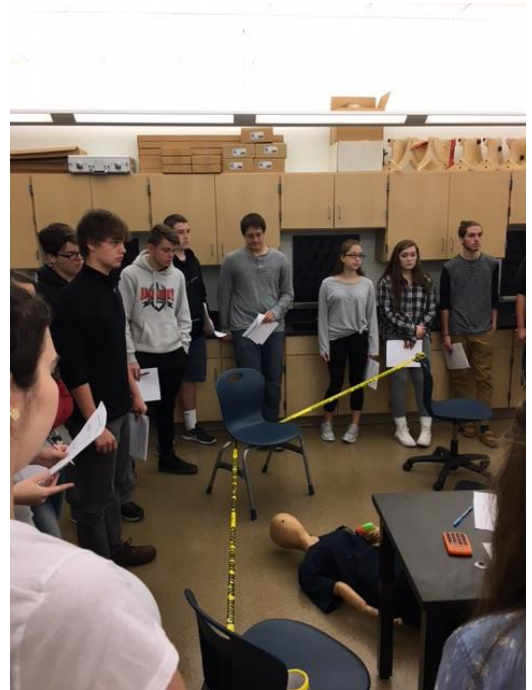
## Superintendent's Corner

Gary S. Reese, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

October 21, 2016

### In our schools this week...

*Amesbury High School* – Northern Essex Community College Assistant Director of PK12 Partnerships, Adam Cutler, reached out to the high school in September about an opportunity to have two of their professors come to the high school and create a “Crime Scene Workshop”. The Crime Scene was set up in two rooms. In one of the rooms, they had a mannequin with a mock crime scene which included a suicide note and a gun. The students had to survey the room and look for inconsistencies. They then walked over to the next room where they had a lab set up with 6 scientific stations including blood analysis. The Crime Scene side was facilitated by Professor Paul Cavan from the Criminal Justice Program and the Science Lab side was facilitated by Professor Michael Cross from the Science Program. A group of students from Tricia Cignetti’s Forensics class and Paul Jancewicz’s Criminal and Civil Law classes had the opportunity to participate in this exciting hands-on learning opportunity. Both teachers had students write brief reflections on the process.



Feedback from students included:

*“I personally thoroughly enjoyed the mock crime scene investigation. My favorite part was analyzing the scene itself. I wish to go into some investigative business in the future, so that was a very interesting experience.”* Jonah Longacre

*“The CSI investigation was fun and I am glad that I got to participate in it. Formerly having taken a forensics class last year, it was good to be able to apply that knowledge to the case.”* Sonia Sayre

### **Whittier Tech – Regional Superintendents’ meeting**

On Tuesday, I visited Whittier Tech for a meeting with Superintendent Maureen Lynch, as well as other superintendents in the area. We meet periodically to discuss issues that we are collectively facing and to problem solve collective solutions. It is fascinating to me how much overlap there is across communities on the challenges that we are facing. Some of the topics discussed included:

- Social Emotional Learning
- Fostering positive relations with union leadership
- Budgeting
- Upcoming votes – ie. question 2 vote on lifting the cap on charter schools

### **Contract Negotiations – Teachers’ Union**

As you may have recently heard, the school committee has reached a tentative agreement with the teachers’ union for the contract period beginning July 1, 2016 and ending June 30, 2019. I believe the process worked well and appreciate both the member of the school committee and the teachers’ negotiating team for their thoughtful and respectful discussions to reach a tentative agreement that both recognizes the teachers for their hard work and at the same time continues to support the school committee’s goal to continue to support our school district’s improvement. The next step in the process is for the proposed contract language to be reviewed with the teachers’ union members in order to secure a positive vote from the union membership to ratify the updated language.

### **Curriculum Work**

This week, the district continued to work on updating our curriculum to reflect new understandings about learning, as well as to embed social emotional learning competencies into the curriculum. Wellness, foreign language, fine and performing arts, and social studies teachers met to review their transfer goals. In addition, teachers had the opportunity to watch a couple of short YouTube clips that highlighted the type of learner we have in front of us today and stressed why we need to approach both the curriculum and our instructional repertoire differently based on changes in society. The thinking in these videos help guide our curriculum development work. The videos offer some pretty fascinating statistics about how our world has changed over the years. Check out the videos at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqZilO0Y17Y>  
<https://www.macfound.org/videos/106/>

As mentioned in prior weeks in review, the work that is being undertaken is substantial and inclusive of all our staff. We are revising our entire curriculum, pre-k – grade twelve to meet current frameworks and reflect current understandings about how students learn. At the October 31<sup>st</sup> school committee meeting, there will be a presentation about this undertaking by Lyn Jacques, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Ronit Carter, the outside consultant from McTighe and Associates that we have contracted with to help guide this work.

### **North Shore Community College**

On Thursday, high school principal Elizabeth McAndrews and I attended a regional meeting at North Shore Community College to learn about a potential grant for districts to partner with the college on a national program developed by the Gateway to College National Network. This program is geared towards closing the attainment/achievement gap for disconnected youth by providing students who are at risk, drop-outs, etc the opportunity to re-engage with a learning opportunity where they can attain their high school diploma, while at the same developing the foundational skills necessary to be successful in college. Students in this program would attend the college to complete their coursework needed for high school completion, while at the same time earning college credit. The data from the Gateway to College National Network suggests that the average student participating in this program (during the 2014-2015 school year) earned 20.3 college credits and completed high school graduation requirements with 17 months. This program can offer a great

opportunity for a specific population of students that either left Amesbury High School prior to the completion of their high school program or that are at risk of dropping out from school.

This program would serve a very different population of students than are currently participating in our early college partnership with Northern Essex Community College. I will continue to provide information as we learn more about this opportunity and identify specific issues around topics such as transportation, funding, etc.

Be well and have a great weekend!

Gary