

## Hopkinton Elementary Schools



### Harold Martin School

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Reflection on one's professional practice can be a luxury, practiced only when time permits. The temptation is to use time to continue "getting things done" and not pause the vehicle driving in the fast lane, to mull over what is working and more importantly, what is not. So, it's good to take the time to reflect on a year almost completed.

## POSITIVES

There are many positives to this year, certainly the most challenging of my career. First in my mind is my pride in the many **educators we brought to Hopkinton**. They are caring, smart, and selfless individuals who are truly student-centered. We have also generated new programs in our elementary schools. Curriculum-wise, we expanded our **phonics/spelling programs**, *Foundations* and *Megawords* through fifth grade. For many years we have been dipping our toe into the phonics area without a K-5 approach and now we have strong consistency. Our **music department** K-12 is more solid than ever. We have expanded band to 4th grade and established a Maple Street Chorus for the first time in many years. Our two elementary music teachers are collaborating closely with our HMHS teacher for the first time in my history in the district. The arts are alive and well in Hopkinton. Also, while we have miles to go, I am more optimistic than ever that our English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies curriculums will soon rival the progress that Mathematics has made in our district.

While still maintaining separate identities, there is a much stronger sense of our two **elementary schools being more unified** in areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and behavior. Amy and I have the benefit of experiencing both schools weekly, and the perspective we have gained will continue to help our two buildings be much more consistent in approach.

Thanks mostly to the hard work of Amy Doyle, we have developed a cadre of **mentor teachers** from all buildings. They were specially trained through an NEA program this year and as new teachers come on board, these mentors will help guide them into their new positions. It's a program we have needed for a long time.

I am proud of the way our staffs (as well as the Central Office and School Board) have responded to our **challenges around complex children**. Mid-year we adjusted our support to create a Behavior Specialist in each building, we placed personnel where they needed to be and we adjusted administrative support to create as much consistency as possible. We have established Student Support Centers in each building with a joint Behavior PLC made up of the counselors and behavior specialists at HMS and MSS to help keep everything on course. Next year we are dedicating a full professional development day to *Responsive Classrooms* the leading elementary perspective on classroom management. Amy and I as well as many staff meetings have had experience with this approach. We are also sending a number of our teachers to a four day intensive *Responsive Classroom* workshop which will provide a leadership team for classroom management heading into 2017-18.

## CONCERNS/WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

Of course, we are only one year into our new administrative configuration and we have much more to accomplish. Our greatest struggle is to meet **the needs of our youngest children and their complex behaviors**. There is no lack of energy or vision to accomplish this task and already we have seen considerable improvement in lessening behaviors. Linked closely to this is the **lack of space at HMS** for both instructional and behavioral needs. The Facilities Committee report recently presented to the Board summarized this well. Our options to reconfigure kids for instruction are minimal and having parent meetings in a very small and (this time of year) hot room is not respectful to members of our community.

We are also working on our approach to providing **administrative support in the two buildings**. Amy and I have tried three options. First we worked in one building for three days at a time and switched. Then we went to a week at a time in each building. Currently, I'm staying primarily at MSS with Amy at HMS. I am trying to visit HMS daily as well.

We are also monitoring our new **preschool program** as we are switching back to a full time teacher/case manager model, which we had before this year. With a new teacher in the program, we need to make this work well for children.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me as the Principal of both elementary schools. I have not accomplished quite what I have hoped this year, but the vision is still strong and there is no lack of passion as head into next year. Together we must make our two buildings the schools the children and our community deserve.

Best,

Bill Carozza, Principal