Hopkinton Middle High School

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To: Mr. Chamberlin and the Hopkinton School Board
From: Christopher Kelley
Date: June 6, 2017
Re: School Board Report

Things To Brag About:

U.S. and News World Report ~

Once again, our school has been recognized as one of the top public high schools in the state. Hopkinton High School was ranked 2nd and recognized as one of the best high schools within New Hampshire according to the US News and World Report and earned a silver medal. Only 27% of the schools that U.S. News evaluated earned "Best" status. Schools are ranked based on their performance on state-required tests and how well they prepare students for college. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement® course work and exams. The AP® participation rate at Hopkinton High School is 51 percent.

Donna Zecha ~

Congratulations to Donna Zecha, our school librarian, for being selected as the 2017 Librarian of the Year by the New Hampshire School Library Media Association. This award recognizes ongoing excellence in school librarianship and leadership in the school library community. We are very excited to share this news with you.

Curriculum Work ~

Each department in the middle and high school has been invested in devoting professional development time to reviewing, revising and developing curriculum in order to achieve a working, visible curriculum. Here are a couple of examples of the work that has been happening.

The Social Studies committee has been working to create and collaborate on generating a scope and sequence for what is currently taught in Social Studies. The committee has been purposeful in reviewing state and national standards. The Social Studies committee has adopted the National Council for Social Studies Standards (NCSSS) as a foundation to work from. The committee will also be reviewing grade level standards.

The Science Curriculum Committee has adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The Next Generation Science Standards focus on three areas that are connected and form the standards that the Science Curriculum Committee is currently reviewing, adopting and editing.

Champion for Children ~

Back in September, I shared with the faculty an experience that I had during the summer of 2016 that reminded me of the power of words and belief in students' abilities. Over the summer, I was an assistant coach for a travel softball team in Concord. I had a player who really struggled at the plate most of the season. I simply kept telling her that I believed in her and her ability to hit the ball every time she stepped up to the plate. This doesn't sound like much or very interesting. However, after returning from our family vacation in August, I received a hand made thank you note in the mail from this player, which she thanked me for believing in her and for giving her confidence. I reflected on this quite a bit because I thought this was what a coach and teacher should do for every student. If a coach or teacher can't believe in their athletes or students, then what is our purpose? What is the meaning of "why" in what we do for children and teenagers?

I started to think about how I could turn this into a teaching moment for the staff. I started to research videos, specifically TED Talks, which were about the importance of working and believing in kids. I came across a TED Talk that featured Rita Peirson. Rita was an educator for forty years and the title of her presentation was "Every Kid Needs a Champion". In her talk, Ms.

Peirson talks about the power of one person's belief in a child's ability and potential. It was a great way to end the day and to ask the question of the faculty, "Who's champion are they going to be this year?" I took the time to remind the staff about former students who demonstrated grit and perseverance in completing their graduation requirements and earning their diploma. These were students who attended high school for an additional semester of school, students who truly wanted to earn their diploma. I told the staff that if it wasn't for their hard work, their belief in a student's ability and potential, then these students may not have ever felt comfortable enough or driven enough to complete high school. I challenged them to continue being a champion for all children. Ms. Peirson's story is inspirational and thought provoking. This lead to recognizing any staff member (teacher, instructional assistant, secretary, etc.) as a Champion for Children by one of their peers. I asked the staff that if they saw another staff member supporting a student(s) above and beyond what is done on a daily basis and they believed they should be acknowledged to email me the staff member's name and the reason behind the recommendation. I choose one staff member to be recognized at a faculty meeting. The person making the recommendation also presents a certificate to the faculty member at the meeting and reads the recommendation. We need to celebrate the good work we do throughout the year and I believe this was a successful attempt at acknowledging some of our wonderful staff.

This year we recognized the following staff members as Champions for Children:

1. Bob Woolner
2. Melanie Thornley
3. Dave Shorey
4. Donna Zecha
5. Kim Stevens

Things We Have Been Working On:

Executive Functioning: Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses ~

In October, we took the time to identify our own strengths and weaknesses and compared them to the strengths and weaknesses we see in students. We did this by asking the faculty to complete an executive functioning questionnaire written by Peg Dawson & Richard Guare. We then asked the faculty to share their findings in a small group and share any surprises. The faculty then wrote out the group findings and we shared them with the larger group. We then asked the faculty to collect organizational strength/weakness data on their students to identify the most common deficits.

In November, we met to share the results of our collected data related to organizational strengths and weaknesses The staff then share their top 3 Strengths and Weaknesses and created a tally system which helped us to indicate what the focus is for the faculty. We then identified personal strategies that the staff used to address the top weaknesses in their class and shared them so other teachers in their classrooms may use them.

Meaningful Feedback ~

In addition to looking at executive functioning, I also took the time to utilize a video series on the Teacher Channel that featured Sean McComb who teaches English at Patapsco High School and Center for the Arts in the Baltimore County Public Schools System. Sean was the 2014 National Teacher of the Year. In December, I introduced the faculty to the idea and practice of Student Lead Focus Groups and showed a video that demonstrated how Sean McComb implemented these focus groups in his class. After watching the video, I asked the faculty to consider the following questions:

- How does this strategy help Mr. McComb develop a positive class culture?
- How does this strategy help students build leadership skills?
- Why might you use this focus group strategy instead of a survey?

We collected the teacher feedback on a shared Google doc and discussed the feedback collected. I have had several teachers implement this strategy and their feedback has been positive. I will be working to expand the use of student lead focus groups in our school as a means to collect meaningful feedback to inform instruction.

As teachers continue to look for ways to increase student engagement and ownership of learning, during the summer TEP meetings I will be asking teachers to implement the use of student lead focus groups to collect authentic feedback from students and to better inform instruction. This strategy will help teachers to develop a positive culture and develop student leadership skills. In order for the focus groups to be well structured and meaningful, students are given the following set of questions on a worksheet and are not allowed to put their name on the worksheet. After the students complete the

worksheets they are asked to give them to four or five of their classmates. These students then review the feedback and meet with the teacher to review the feedback with the teacher. Here are the questions that are used as part of the process:

1) What is something that has been going well for you in this class?
2) What is something that has not been going well for you?
3) Has there been a time in class when you felt disrespected? What happened? How could it have been handled differently?
4) Have you found anything about this class frustrating? Can you think of a way that it could be improved?
5) Do you feel that you are becoming a better learner in this class? Explain.
6) Do you feel like your reading/writing/thinking skills are improving in this class? Explain.
7) If you have anything to share that you have not been able to include. Please share that here.

This process is connected to our building and district goals that address utilizing best practices in the classroom that support and ensure student learning. This process can inform instruction and allows students to have a voice. I believe this process will also increase student engagement.

We have continued our work on supplying students with meaningful feedback. We have been discussing how feedback can help students to become more independent learners and how small group instruction can help students to meet competencies. This work also supports continual growth for our students and teachers by offering opportunities through a non-traditional means, which is part of our Core Values and Beliefs

Reporting Committee ~

I am heading a Reporting Committee that is looking at how we currently grade students in our school. The committee is constructed of middle and high school staff. The main goal of the committee was to analyze and review the current grading scale for Hopkinton Middle & High School. What we have found was that many of the staff has differing views on how to best assess students. In the fall, we read "Rethinking Grading" written by Cathy Vatterott. The book was not well received and was the cause of some rather spirited discussion. Even though the book was not well received, it has helped us to focus on some preliminary steps. I look forward to continuing this work into the next school year.

Reassessment Plan ~

We began an evaluative process back in the summer of 2016 during a summer Administrative Council retreat and we have recently updated our school's reassessment plan. The new revisions include a checklist for planning for students to follow and utilize as part of their planning process and an outline to follow as well. Below is the checklist that is part of the plan. Students are asked to review the checklist and decide which items are useful for them to include as part of their reassessment plan.

___ Complete and/or correct all formative assessments (homework, classwork, quizzes, etc)
___ Review exemplars for specific assignments
___ Peer review of written work
___ Review class notes and/or class materials on topic and discuss with teacher
___ Create study guide (e.g., Quizlet, flashcards, three-fold papers, outlines) to help me review
___ Analyze study strategies and discuss alternate strategies with teacher
___ Discuss important concepts with teacher to check for depth of knowledge
___ Make corrections on the original summative
___ Complete additional practice (e.g., lab techniques, worksheets, practice problems, online work, etc.)
___ Reference grammar/usage guides or reference materials (e.g., the English department's "Seven Deadly Sins")
___ Complete additional practice problems
___ Other - Please explain:

The hope is that the students use this check list as part of their reflection process on what they can do to be prepared to reassess for competency.

Tuesday Topics ~

A good example of voice and choice at work at the high school is the *Tuesday Topic* program, a weekly Guidance lesson that targets various steps in the college process and delivers them in small group to interested students. This happens during Tuesday advisories. As there is no structured guidance period in the day, no organized vehicle had existed previously to help

groups of students navigate the process. Students expressed a need for more help during a Civics class Question and Comment session with the school administration. That led to a conversation with Guidance and *Tuesday Topics* was launched. In the fall, Guidance offers a different topic every Tuesday during advisory and interested seniors drop in. In the spring, the audience is juniors. Topics include things like the basics about choosing a college, planning a college visit, interview tips, writing the college essay, decision types (early decision, early action, regular action, rolling etc.), using Naviance, managing the Common Application, the FAFSA, and more. At first, numbers of students attending were low. Happily, numbers have grown and this has been a well-received service to our students.

HMHS Library ~

This year, the HMHS Library staff has collaborated with teachers on several research projects across the curriculum, such as teaching students about fake vs. real news and the reliability of sources (see the [Research Guide](#) on this topic as an example), poetry, social justice/action research, primary sources, and citations. In collaboration with the Art Department, we had an independent study student, working on digital media and technology related to school-wide projects. This student created a [Research Guide](#) for students to reference, and provided comparisons between free web-based tools and purchased software applications, such as Pixler vs. Adobe Photoshop.

The statistics demonstrate that the library is a well-used and busy space. To date, collection statistics show that 14,750 items have circulated this year. Through May 2017, 231 classes have used the library space, and the librarian has directly instructed and/or assisted with instruction for 181 of these classes.

We continued to create weekly podcasts about the 2017-2018 NH Isinglass Award nominees, a list of recommended book titles for 7th and 8th graders. We ran successful middle and high school book clubs, using social media (Twitter and Instagram) to connect students with the authors of the books we were reading. This allowed the students to ask questions to the authors while reading the books.

This spring, we are currently in the midst of a survey regarding our services. To date, we have had 25 staff and 111 students respond. These results will help shape library goals for the next 1-2 years.

Among staff, over 75% of respondents noted that their experiences with library services such as teaching research skills, helping find materials and information, and helping with AV and technology needs were "very valuable," which is quite encouraging. Areas where staff felt students needed more help included evaluating web-sites more effectively, avoiding plagiarism, and managing complex research projects effectively.

Among students, over half of those who responded noted that they visit the library for tasks like homework/studying, printing, researching for classes, checking out books, and using the computers. Over half of those who don't often visit the library noted that it was because they did not have time in their schedule. 78.4% stated that they were comfortable asking for help, and 18.9% stated they were hesitant to ask for help. Most respondents rated the library atmosphere as "friendly" (85%) and "comfortable" (73%). In the students' eyes, the most valuable library resources and services were books, online databases, technology (such as laptops), and research guides. When students were asked what they liked BEST about the library (free response question), many answered the atmosphere, the staff, and the resources. When they were asked to note what they liked LEAST about the library, many stated "nothing" and some stated the business/crowded feeling of the space when classes were there.

Once all the results from the surveys are in, the data will be compiled and shared with the students, staff, and administration.

Lastly, we are excited to note that we were able to obtain a one-year digital subscription to the New York Times, free of charge!

Areas of Focus Moving Forward:

Grading ~

The Reporting Committee will continue to review our current grading practices. The committee will be looking to develop and identify standard grading categories that will be used by all teachers.

Assessment and Feedback ~

Looking forward to the 2017 – 2018 school year we will continue to look at how we assess students and supply them with feedback that is meaningful and connected to their learning. We will be implementing the use of student led focus groups to help teachers collect data on instruction, learning and assessment.

Addressing the needs of all students ~

Addressing the needs of all students continues to be a challenging endeavor and after six years in the seat as a principal, I feel confident in saying that it will remain a challenging endeavor. Students learn in multiple ways and in order to address the needs of every student, a school must be willing and able to support them in many ways. I have been attending UDL Conferences and LEA trainings to increase my knowledge base in pedagogy and in Special Education. On a special education level, qualified staff needs to be available to work with our students. I believe instructional aides prove to be an essential part of the learning community when utilized appropriately. As we continue to search for ways to continually support students I am glad to say that our ADL program continues to serve an important population of students in our school.

Self Reflection ~

At the end of the school year I'll be asking for feedback from our staff regarding the administration. This process will be similar to the student lead focus groups. I'll be asking each department head to run a focus group in their department. I have been working on developing a list of open-ended questions that can be used in the process. I'll look forward to meeting with the department chairs to discuss the feedback.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher M. Kelley