



To: Superintendent Chamberlin and School Board Members

From: Chris Sousa

Re: HSD School Board report

Date: April 1, 2010

Instruction at HMHS takes on many forms. Our staff engage students in a variety of activities that inevitably work to link their world to the classroom. Their work on standards and competency based models allow staff to prioritize their instruction and focus on specific standards. While prioritizing brings to light the many standards or skills that are taught in our courses, the outlying standards do not bear the full weight of assessment. As our power standards and competencies continue to unfold, the emphasis on rigor, relevance, and relationships will continue to be a theme.

- Our instructional practices are wide spread and include but are not limited to; cooperative group techniques, multiple intelligence theory, lectures, hands on projects, and differentiated group instruction. Examples of this are seen throughout our school. For example in our math department we see a clear focus on the Socratic method in our AP Calculus class, which draws on students' knowledge to challenge what they think and pursue avenues that they had not previously thought. In our Integrated Two math classes, armed with measuring tapes, calculators, and quadratic equations, students go outside and based on "hands on" data, develop equations to uncover the height of our building.
- While our FIRST Robotics team's win in the regional competition held in Boston is certainly a feather in that club's cap, it is also an example of the relevancy that is engrained in our engineering classes. The wide ranges of students who take those classes are represented on the robotics team, and their success is our success. All of the Unified Arts' class instruction is built around the varied learning styles and multiple intelligences of our students. The classes incorporate a variety of instructional practices that cater to the strengths of our students, and allow them to take risks, achieve success, and showcase what they learn.
- The HMHS "Poetry Out Loud" program, which involved twelve of our high school students, is an extension of the instruction that takes place in our English classes. This program highlights the diversity in our English classes as well as the variety instructional practices used to excite students and extend the learning outside the classroom. This program culminated with Alyssa Grise and Jillian Peters traveling to Keene to read at the state-wide competition. Another extension of this instruction is the Rotary 4-way speech contest. Our forensics coach and English teacher, Sue McClellan, encourages students to participate in this contest as an extension of what they are learning in their classes. This year the Hopkinton Rotary awarded Maya Bloom – 1st place, Dillon Hawley – 2nd place, and recognized Benjamin Dalzell, and Jacquelin Lewy for their participation.

- Authentic and primary sources are often discussed in education, particularly in the social sciences. Guest speakers are considered primary sources and can be a strong part in making instruction come to life. In our high school civics' classes we have welcomed guests from a variety of local government agencies, ranging from town selectmen and school board members to representatives of the local fire and police departments. These presentations and rich discussions allow our students to make relevant connections between instruction and their lives outside of school.
- Critical thinking is an important aspect of our instructional process and is encouraged in all classes. For example, in our American Studies classes, students engage in meaningful debates with specific parameters, and then, as a class, reflect upon the salient points. Having students act and react to information based on research and learned material, then reflect upon it, is an excellent approach to encourage analytical thinking.
- Our French classes are getting an extra dose of instructional support with French exchange students in our school. The exchange students are visiting classes, participating when appropriate, and generally getting a snapshot of our school. In turn all of our students in the French classes get to hear and speak with native speakers. The instructional technique of encouraging students to use primary sources and peer coaching takes on new meaning in this venue.

All of our disciplines and classrooms are utilizing a variety of instructional practices to encourage students to take risks, stretch themselves, and uncover new learning. We will continue to hone those practices and the development of competencies and power standards, as well as the role that technology plays in our school. A focus on differentiated instruction and assessment will remain a common theme throughout our work as we strive to reach all students. Overall, whether it is a middle school class where students must respond to a historical prompt and then post it on the web, or our Adventure Education class where students are walking across tree limbs and rope bridges supported by their peers, the instruction that is going on every day is exciting and innovative, and changing the world, one moment at a time.

Some upcoming events (for more information please check out our calendar on our website):

- The French Exchange students and teachers arrived Monday March 29 and will be departing April 6
- “Wormeli Wednesdays” Workshops started March 24th and will be held April 7th, April 21st, May 12th and May 26th
- April 14th in the Audi we will be hosting Early College Planning from 6:30pm to 8:00pm
- April 22nd Free Movie Night in the Audi
- Spring Recess begins April 26th