



HOPKINTON SCHOOL DISTRICT School Administrative Unit 66

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Superintendent's Report Hopkinton School District

Submitted: Friday, September 3, 2010 for a Tuesday, September 7, 2010 Meeting.

The buildings are awake with the energy of students and staff eager for the new school year. It is fun to watch the schools transition from sleepy to wide-awake. As mentioned in the board notes, the administrators were asked to consider writing about how a positive tone/climate is established for students and staff at the beginning of a school year.

School, and now central office, climate/tone has always been very important to me. Quantifying the direct correlation between practices that establish a positive school climate and student achievement is difficult. Feel, along with measurable indicators, has to be a part of the analysis of success. School and/or office climate/tone is most often something that is felt rather than measured.

From the district perspective, a positive tone/climate is set in a variety of ways. For new staff, the interview process and early interactions set the tone. This year, the new collective bargaining agreement afforded the administrators the opportunity to spend a full day with new staff. (The agenda is included in the packet.) The time was divided into sections directed by district staff. I facilitated the first session describing the Hopkinton Community, recent work and goals of the district, and shared some of my values and thoughts. The session ended with a video clip from the series *West Wing* that was found to be particularly inspirational. The central office/building administrators, lunch, and the traditional new staff class of 2010 group photo rounded out the day.

For returning staff, a positive tone/climate is set by regular communication over the summer, a personalized welcome back letter, and establishing a district wide theme for the year. The establishment of a theme provides a central focus of work, helping staff connect their work to a larger goal. This year's theme is Aristotle's quote: *"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."*

Though mindful of a colleagues assertion that at times we see more importance in our words than others, I see the opening day address from the superintendent as critical in establishing the tone/climate for the school year. As this year is the second in front of the big bay window, the opening day address was utilized to proffer a vision of the next version of Hopkinton 2.0/Hopkinton School District Goals. Some of the major concepts are outlined below:

- Moving from providing the opportunity for students to learn to ensuring students learn
- Setting the goal of 100% of Hopkinton students are prepared to achieve high school PLUS when graduating from Hopkinton High School.

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- Structuring staff so specialists (numeracy, writing, reading) provide professional development for teachers, remediation, and enrichment for students.
- Continuing the development of the Positive Personal Profile to ensure student achievement is monitored and successful strategies documented.
- Increasing efficiency with the establishment of the parent portal and automating appropriate teacher record keeping responsibilities.
- Establishing *Ensuring Learning Centers* designed to support the variety/complexity of student needs.
- Increasing the use of technology: from wifi on school busses to utilizing phones as instructional tools to the use of interactive white boards.
- Moving grading practices from assigning a label to reporting student progress. Determine the efficacy and consequences of a student earning a zero and other similar practices. (Perhaps some of these ideas will be fodder for discussion at the retreat.)

The beginning of the year is certainly important for establishing the climate/tone. Day in and day out practices are also significant in maintaining a positive climate/tone. A staff member returning from a health related leave said, “I had the best – the best family support, the best health care, and the best support from my employer - I was extremely lucky.”

There is much work to do. We are off to a positive start.

Thank you for your continued support.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven M. Chamberlin
Superintendent of Schools