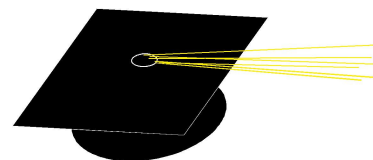


Notes from the Desk of the Superintendent



As we approach the end of the 2008-09 school year, I want to thank the parents, teachers, support staff and community members who devoted many hours to the new improvement initiatives that began in the fall and will continue this summer and into next school year. I also want to extend my personal congratulations to the 21 teachers and other professional staff and the other support staff who will be retiring at the end of June.

Here are several of the activities for the month of May 2009:

A breakfast was held for Teacher Appreciation Day and a luncheon for Nurses Appreciation Day, on May 5 and 6, respectively.

There was a variety of professional development conducted on the early dismissal day on May 6, including interdisciplinary instruction, benchmark assessment and student placement, DRA2 training, CMT assessment analysis and student placement for high school, the data team process, and enrichment academy planning and design. This was the final PD day for the school year.

On May 13, the Ansonia Board of Education held a special meeting to hear from Nick Caruso of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and Warren Logee of the State Department of Education about a new initiative, called the Lighthouse Project. It involves three phases: Orientation and Foundational Learning; Defining, Implementing and Monitoring Improvement Work; and Embedding Improvement in the Culture. The Board strongly supports the project and will be participating in it, in order to better understand and support the improvement efforts in our own district.

On May 15, the District Data Team met, with Board of Education secretary Fran DiGiorgi participating. Two achievement goals were finalized: 1. The percentage of free and reduced meals students scoring proficient and higher in reading will increase by 15 percentage points over a three-year period as measured by the CMT/CAPT while closing the achievement gap; and 2. The percentage of free and reduced meals students scoring proficient and higher in math will increase by 15 percentage points over a three-year period as measured by the CMT/CAPT while closing the achievement gap.

Board of Education President John Lawlor and I met with the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education on May 19 in Hartford to report on our progress for the year. We were joined by Dr. Mitchell, my executive coach, and Dr. Gaspar of the State Department of Education Accountability, Compliance and Monitoring division. We received positive feedback, but we have a great deal of work to do in the area of effective teaching strategies and differentiation, putting an articulated curriculum in place across all disciplines, and continuing the work of our data teams.

The First Student Conference hosted by the Ansonia High School Human Relations Club on May 20 was exceptional. A total of 300 students from nine districts throughout the state of Connecticut attended this all-day diversity conference at Quinnipiac University. Dr. Leon Bass, who was the keynote speaker at the HRC's first community conference in Ansonia last year, was inspirational for all. Congratulations to the students who organized such a successful first event! You continue to amaze all of us.

The Pine High Task Force has been meeting regularly to come up with a new program for the alternative education program, as it transitions to AHS in September. In the near future, the group will be coming to the Board of Education to provide an update on their work, as well as a recommendation for a change of the program's name.

The grand opening of the new Boys & Girls clubhouse in Ansonia on May 21 was exciting and well attended. This beautiful facility will impress anyone who enters; special thanks to William Nimons, a member of the Ansonia Board of Education and chairman of the Boys & Girls Club, who did a great job at the ceremony.

Poetry readings in Yvette Bailey's seventh grade classroom on May 23 were very enjoyable! The students created a poetry café, in which they used props in the poetry readings. They did a wonderful job.

On May 27, I attended a Valley superintendents meeting, along with State Rep. Linda Gentile, to hear about the work of the Connecticut Commission on Children and a civics leadership initiative for parents. We will be looking into grant funds that will be available to bring this initiative to our Ansonia parents, giving them leadership training and a school experience that goes beyond fundraising.

I closed out the month attending a Connecticut Association of Schools meeting on May 29. The guest speaker was State Department of Education program manager Michele Rosado, who shared important information on Supplemental Education Services that must be offered by districts like Ansonia, funded with 20% of our Title I entitlement grant. The SES services involves agencies that provide after school tutoring for children eligible for free and reduced meals in several of our schools, in order to help them with skills tested on the Connecticut Mastery Tests. We will work closely with the state to follow the new guidelines for the upcoming school year.

Sincerely,

Carol Merlone
Ansonia Superintendent of Schools