



WEEKLY WARRIOR

Webutuck Central Schools

194 Haight Road, P.O. Box 405

Amenia, New York 12501

March 4, 2011

Superintendent's Notes

What Do Students Mean When They Say School is “Boring”?

In their article “Challenging Assumptions: Helping Struggling Students Succeed” in *Phi Delta Kappan*, Colorado researchers Lois Brown Easton and Michael Soguero say that educators’ response to students who say they’re bored is often, **“We’re not here to entertain you. We’re here to teach you what you need to know.”** But the most recent results from a High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) show that there are many meanings behind the word “boring”:

- I’m not engaged....I’m not learning....I already know this....This has no meaning to me.
- It’s too hard....It’s too easy....It’s not real world....I don’t like working alone.
- I don’t like working with this group....I have other problems that are more important.
- No one really cares....No one knows me and how I learn.

According to HSSSE, nearly half of Colorado students say they are bored every day, and 17 percent say they are bored in every class.

While the article speaks to results from Colorado, it is clear that numbers of students in nearly all American schools have shown the same reaction to “traditional” instruction. This instruction methodology, developed in the late 1800’s, consists of the teacher standing in the front of the class and lecturing to provide information that students are expected to absorb and regurgitate on some type of assessment at a later date. Additionally, these assessments have traditionally been in the form of written, often short answer, quizzes and tests that allow for only one right answer.

One can easily see how this “traditional” instruction would be less than engaging to students. For starters, if we are to prepare our students for the real world, it should be clear that most questions, challenges, and problems in life do not have one single right or wrong answer. Life requires us to look more deeply into issues, gather information, analyze the situation, and then make an informed choice or decision based on this process of “Higher Order or Critical Thinking.” Likewise, we hope to create lifelong learners, it cannot be done where the learning only occurs when there is an instructor standing in front of the learner. Clearly, our goal must be to create students who can think, learn, and act INDEPENDENTLY.

To be successful in this goal, it will be necessary for us to change how we, as educators, approach our students. There must be a paradigm shift from teaching to present information to facilitating learning that is “student-centered.” We must make the transition from the teacher simply presenting the content, to the teacher leading the students through the discovery process of “Guided Inquiry.” Rather than asking who, what, or when, we must ask the more in-depth how and why questions. Rather than looking for one specific right or wrong answer, we must look for our students to generate informed and reasoned options and conclusions.

One might refer to this as a move from teaching students “stuff,” to helping students “learn to learn” so that they will be able to use these skills and processes throughout their lives to find whatever information they might need, analyze the information, make reasoned, informed decisions, and positively affect their lives and their surroundings.

This is our task if we hope to prepare our students for the 21st Century. It will take some time, major adjustments for all involved, new methods, new technologies, attitudes, and curricula, but it is both possible and necessary. It will also take a “buy-in” and commitment from all of us if we hope to succeed....and ...failure cannot be an option unless we are to allow our students to continue to feel that school is boring and ineffectual.

On Tuesday, February 22, 2011, noted curriculum and instructional expert Dr. Heidi Hayes Jacobs spent the day working with our staff to advance our efforts in this transformational shift. Her presentation and interaction with teachers and administrators has helped energize and give us direction as we strive to better engage students in this commitment to student success. This paradigm shift will not happen overnight, but

By working together, we can do it!

Steve Schoonmaker

Educational Quote of the Week

“The most important thing we can do as teachers is to ask rich, powerful questions and then help the students to discover the answers.”

Chris Lehman

READING AROUND THE WORLD -----UPDATE

In their efforts to read their way around the world, our Intermediate School students continue to read at a remarkable rate. **So far**, the students have visited the following cities: Paris, France....Cairo, Egypt....Moscow, Russia....Tokyo, Japan....Istanbul, Turkey....Seoul, South Korea....Athens, Greece....Berlin, Germany.... New Delhi, India....Santiago, Chile, and Tehran, Iran.

At each of 10 cities, they have been or will be sampling native treats from those cultures. Please continue to watch as our students progress as they continue their travels. They still have Kabul, Afghanistan....Sydney, Australia....London, England....Johannesburg, South Africa....Montreal, Canada....Mexico City, Mexico....Rio de Janeiro, Brazil....Bejing, China....Vancouver, Canada....Havana, Cuba, and Manila, Philippines to go before they arrive safely back here in good old America, New York, U.S.A.

As always, we invite you to follow the travelers with us on the Peter’s Projection World Map mounted outside of our high school library as they traverse the globe. Also, watch for our second map....the Mercator World Map, which should be mounted in the next couple of weeks. See if you can determine all of the distortions between this commonly used map and the more accurate Peter’s Projection World Map. Both maps will be in the hall outside of the high school library.

Bon Voyage!

HIGH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

**Kenneth H. Sauer, Principal
Webutuck Jr./Sr. High School**

With the snow melting away and the early flocks of Canada Geese returning, spring cannot be far away. There are crocuses that are poking their heads out from underneath the snow as they appear to be checking to see if it's time yet to wake up and usher out winter. I for one, have seen enough of that season for another year. The days are noticeably longer now and even with a good amount of snow on the ground still, there is hope that we'll have an early spring.

With the promise of spring just around the corner we look to several major events here at the High School that helps to signify the arrival of that season. Pitchers and catchers, and the rest of the spring sports teams begin practices on Monday March 7th. I am sure the coaches and athletes of baseball, softball, and track are excited about this year and looking forward to focusing on their respective activities.

Another annual event that signifies the arrival of spring is the spring musical. This year the drama department is performing the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. Lucas Keasbey stars as Tevye, Cobi Adrian as Motel Kamzoil, Gabby Johnson as Golde, and Ashley Choe as Yente, the matchmaker, and features a cast of 55 students in grades 5 to 12. This is a true community production, with many individuals helping out with set construction, costumes, lighting, and rehearsals. Webutuck has a long tradition of great performances, but the Drama Society is not funded directly by the school. All of the material for the sets, the sound system, costumes, lights, printing, etc. must be raised by ticket sales and advertising in the program.

This is an opportunity to see something magical, young entertainers giving it their all in a highly energetic, joyful performance. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors and students. They may be purchased at the door, in advance from any cast member, or reserved at the box office by calling 845-373-4108.

Another noteworthy event that is quickly approaching is **Report Card Pick up night** on Thursday March 10th. Teachers will be available to parents between 6:00 and 8:00 that evening if you have any questions or concerns. The progress reports that will be handed out that night may be "flagged" as a way for teachers to convey to the parents that the teacher would like to meet with the parent. Please know that parents can pick up their child's progress report at any time during that day. There will be someone in the office as early as 6:00 a.m. so if you are not able to stop by and meet with the teachers parents can pick up their child's report card at any time during the day.

"Whatever you are, be a good one."

— [Abraham Lincoln](#)

Elementary & Intermediate Schools

Kathleen A. McEnroe
WES & EBIS Principal

Outer Space Adventure

Parents as Reading Partners (PARP)

PARP begins on Friday, March 4. To kick start PARP, we will host Theme Day as we have always done in the past. This year our students will spend the day immersing themselves in activities connected to Outer Space. The students at Webutuck Elementary School are divided into groups including individuals from all grade levels. Each group is guided, or led, by a member of our support staff or parent volunteers. The guide's job is to assist the teacher as each group progresses through six different stations throughout the day. Each classroom teacher is presenting a piece of literature that supports Outer Space. A project is constructed by the student which correlates with the story. At the end of the day, each child will receive a packet of information for PARP.

PARP encourages parents to spend at least 15 minutes a day reading with their children. The students are provided a log to record the time they have spent each day reading with someone. The children are asked to read at least five days a week. Every Friday, the log is returned to the library for a **Special Prize**. At the end of the four week program, each child will receive a certificate acknowledging their participation.

To support PARP the school participates in the One School, One Book program. Every child and adult in our school is given a chapter book to read. The book is our gift to the students and correlates with the focus of Theme Day. The children are provided with a weekly outline of the chapters they will read, as well as, suggested activities and questions to discuss.

The goal of this program is to engage the entire school, home and community in a shared reading experience. Research tells us that children, who see parents read, learn to read more successfully. This program promotes the habit of reading with guidance from the educators to the family of students.

The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet by Eleanor Cameron will be distributed to each student during the month of March. This book will introduce students to the genre of science fiction which coordinates with our PARP theme of Outer Space. We are looking forward to our journey into space and beyond.

All are invited to visit Webutuck Elementary on **March 4**, to take a leap into the galaxies beyond our doors. We promise it will be an experience from Outer Space!