



WEEKLY WARRIOR

Webutuck Central Schools

194 Haight Road, P.O. Box 405

Amenia, New York 12501

April 29, 2011

Superintendent's Notes

The Payoff of Talking to Students

Grace Blomberg in her article in *The Reading Teacher*, described how reading a professional article made her ask, “Do I really talk to my students?” She realized that the pressures of her job were often preventing her from low-key human contact with kids.

“This realization led me to take action,” she says, “action that required no professional development, extra planning, or extra paperwork. I just talked to my students!” By chatting about students’ dogs, friends, vacations, family members, and their lives, **something magical happened**. One student told her how she felt sad watching a sanitation worker picking up garbage on a rainy morning. Another student talked about a fight he’d had with his brother. Another told about her grandmother’s death. Another told about her brother’s shoe somehow getting caught in a tree; it needed to be retrieved with his father’s cane.

“Just talking to my students took only a few minutes each day,” says Blomberg, “but the results were profound. They felt cared for and enthused that their life stories had meaning in our classroom and in their reading and writing notebooks. I didn’t plan on making curriculum connections – that happened naturally. Just talking to kids reinvigorated my classroom practice, enriched my curriculum, and reminded me why I became a teacher in the first place.”

As educators, we can often find ourselves all wrapped up in the curriculum, the New York State standards, the New York State assessments, and grades while losing track of the most important part of our activities, the unique person sitting in the classroom. The focus can become on the learner rather than the human being.

In a survey done a couple of years ago, over three-quarters of academically successful students indicated that the main reason they believed they were successful is that they felt attached and cared about by some member of the school staff. This feeling of connectedness is a primary need for all individuals and should be a critical component of our educational activities.

When students feel that staff really cares about them as people and not just students, there is a **magical** connection that occurs. Students feel that school is, in some ways, another home to which they can go for support and comfort, not just learning. It is this connection that generates much of the

motivation for attendance and attention for our students. Maybe this is why the law provides the term, "In loco parentis" to describe our role as educators; to act in a parental role here in the school locale.

Certainly, we would never wish to replace parents or guardians, but should try to emulate the caring and concern that students expect to get at home. They should have the true feeling that we really do care about them as individuals beyond just instructional pupils. This caring should not rest only with the instructional staff, but should include everyone involved in interactions with the students.

If we hope to have a positive school environment, it takes everyone. The way we interact, respect, and help nurture each other serves as a window into our motives as perceived by students. As Grace Bloomberg tells us **by simply chatting with students about their individual activities, interests, and lives, something magical happens.** Let's all work to try and create our own "*Magical Kingdom*" here at Webutuck Central.

By working together, we can make it happen!

Steve Schoonmaker

Educational Quote of the Week

"We learn at our best when we have something we care about
and can get pleasure in being engaged in."

Howard Gardner

READING AROUND THE WORLD -----UPDATE

Nearly **300,000** Pages read by grades 4, 5, & 6
from January 3, 2011
through Friday, April 15, 2011

Bon Voyage!

HIGH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

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

There are some important events coming up in the early weeks of May. Students in grades 4-8 will be taking the New York State Assessments in ELA during the first week in May. We will also be hosting a college fair on May 5th between 12:00 and 2:00. Over 50 colleges and universities will be here to share information, answer questions, and talk with our students as they try to spark interest in students. Also scheduled during the first week in May are two Advanced Placement exams (AP English and AP U.S. History). Parents, you can help ensure success for your children on these high stakes tests by helping your child(ren) get a good night's sleep and by helping them to start the day off right with a healthy breakfast that includes fresh fruit and protein.

Cyber bullying continues to be a problem in our schools, causing psychological harm to our nation's youth and interfering with the educational process. Now students have a safe and effective tool for reporting abuse and improving safety for themselves and their classmates. The website; AnonymousTips.com provides a hassle free anonymous way for students to notify school administrators about inappropriate behaviors that could affect students, faculty, and the school environment. It is our hope that parents and students will take some time to visit this site to become more familiar with it so that if the need ever arises, students of all ages as well as parents will know how to report any concerns.

The following is an excerpt from an article entitled, *10 Things for High-School Students to Remember* by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

“Believe it or not, if you're in high school right now, you're at a great point in your life. You have your whole life in front of you. And now is a good time to start thinking about your future, to make some initial plans; just remember that plans can be easily changed. Remember too, that experts predict that the average person will change careers -- not just jobs -- more than five times in his or her lifetime. Now is the time to pursue your dreams! And as you start thinking about one or more potential educational and career paths, here are 10 things to remember in the days ahead.

1. Take time to think about what you like to do; dream and imagine ideal careers. There are so many opportunities, so many different types of jobs and careers in a wide variety of industries - and there are also other career paths that are just emerging. Even if you are fairly sure of a career choice, take the time in high school to explore similar (or even vastly different) careers. Explore all your options. Examine your likes and dislikes and take a few career-assessment tests. Answer the question, if you could have any job right now, what would it be -- and why? Don't let any barriers hold you back from finding the perfect career.

Example: Take the time for some career assessment and career exploration to expand your vision of potential majors and career paths.

2. Challenge yourself in high school, but don't overwhelm yourself. Do get the most out of high school as possible. When you can, take the tough and challenging schedule of classes; you'll learn more -- and it will look good to the college admissions staff. Obviously, you need to stay focused on getting good grades, but don't overload your schedule -- or yourself -- so that it makes you sick or burned out. Be sure to include at least one fun course in your schedule.

Example: If you have a passion for something, such as photography, find a way to schedule a photography course along with your other tougher college-prep courses.” (To be continued next week)

Elementary & Intermediate Schools

Kathleen A. McEnroe
WES & EBIS Principal

News from Mrs. Smith's kindergarten class...

One of my students brought in marbles for show and tell. The class was very interested in the marbles and one child asked if they were made of glass. Another child stated that glass was made out of sand. Most of the class didn't believe him. As the Learning Facilitator, I asked them how they could find out more information on the topic. Interestingly, they didn't immediately come up with computer research. The first answer was "look in the dictionary!" They also came up with going to the library, and eventually someone said look on the computer. The most interesting idea was when one of the students exclaimed "There is a glass factory by my house in Millerton!" Another child said we could ask the people at the factory. Someone asked if we could visit. I listed all their ideas.

This was all happening before center time, and I wanted to keep up their interest, so I spontaneously created a "research center." That first day I decided to use the smart board, and although they couldn't do research independently, I decided to introduce them to Google Maps. We brought up a map of Millerton, and were able to go to street view to find the Gilmor Glass store. (This of course led to an interest in mapping and was able to later bring up Amenia and Wassaic maps as well as find some classmates homes on the street view!)

The next day at the research center we copied down the address and phone number and email of the glass factory. The students decided to send them an email asking questions about their business, centering on what kinds of glass products they manufactured. This led to a discussion about what things are actually made of glass, and categories of such products. (i.e.: windows for cars? churches? trains? houses? skylights?)

The next day I introduced You Tube clips showing how glass is made and what equipment is needed. I found clips showing how glass marbles are made by machine as well as how they are made by hand.

The next day I decided to have the students review what they had learned by "teaching it" to my virtual friend Bobby. I created a movie on xtranormal.com as seen in this link <http://www.xtranormal.com/watch/11321034>. They are so excited about talking to the smart board and teaching him. I am now working on a movie where he tells them what he learned, using their names and thanking them for teaching him.

Thank you for the Professional Development opportunities that give me the inspiration for new and engaging ways to help my students become independent learners with the strategies and resources to find their own knowledge.

During National library week Our Pre-K and kindergarten students visited the Amenia library and listened to stories read by Mrs. Devine. Thank you. It was a wonderful treat and enjoyed by all!

During the month of May, all students in grades 3-6 will be taking the New York State exams in English Language Arts and Math. Please send your child to school on these days unless they are sick. It is important your child has breakfast and is well rested.