



WEEKLY WARRIOR

Webutuck Central Schools
194 Haight Road, P.O. Box 405
Amenia, New York 12501

September 30, 2010

Superintendent's Notes

Sorry, My Error!

There is always a risk when I make a list of people to thank that I will miss someone. This was the case last week in recognizing staff for their many years of service. Please accept my apologies for omitting Darrin Butland and thanking him for over ten years of service to our school and our children.

Myths that continue to Confound Us.....

Iris C. Rotberg, professor of education at George Washington University states that our educational policies are dominated by a belief that we can cure our educational problems if only we can find a magic bullet—"scientifically proven" teaching methods, school choice, or increased student testing. She asserts that these beliefs are based on a set of loosely coupled myths about U.S. education. The myths form the basis for much of our rhetoric and many of our policies. I have paraphrased her comments below.

The first of these myths: *That we can "fix" our schools without addressing the problems of poverty.....We can't!*

The achievement gap based on family socioeconomic status is the most significant problem in all countries, and accounts for about three-quarters of the variation in student performance among our schools. Compounding the problem in this country are large inequalities in resources, largely to the disadvantage of poor communities. We have one of the largest income and wealth gaps between rich and poor when compared with other industrialized countries, and, at the same time, our system of school finance is also one of the most unequal. Both have major consequences for the educational achievement of students from low-income families.

A second myth: *That test-score comparisons are valid measures of the quality of education.....They're not!*

Test-score comparisons tell us little about the quality of education. The first problem is sampling. For example, which schools and students are selected to participate? To what extent have children from low-income families dropped out of school before the test is administered? Are children with disabilities tested? Are second language or minority children? The point is that the more selective the sample, the higher the average score. The second problem in interpreting comparisons is poverty. We know that poverty plays a major role in educational achievement, and that regions vary enormously in the level of poverty and the extent to which low-income children are even in regular attendance to be tested. A community that has a relatively high level of child poverty but also actually works to have low-income students to stay in school will be at a disadvantage in the test-score comparisons. The difficulty of interpreting test-score comparisons is also repeated in comparisons of test scores between districts and schools within districts under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

I would suggest a third myth: *That we can overcome our challenges and be successful without working cooperatively together..... We Can't! -However,*

"TOGETHER WE CAN!"

Have a Great Week!

Steve Schoonmaker

Educational Quote of the Week

It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.
Aristotle

HIGH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

Thanks to all the parents and grandparents who attended Curriculum Night last Wednesday, September 22nd. The turnout was excellent, a bit larger than in the recent past. As I mentioned that night, one of the most important characteristics of an effective school is a high degree of parent involvement and support. I hope the collaboration of Webutuck parents and school personnel will continue to be strengthened in the days ahead.

We received our school's report card from the State Education Department, which includes various student assessments from the 2009 – 2010 school year. In each grade where the assessments are administered, our scores for each grade and subgroup met "adequate yearly progress." This is a benchmark established by the New York State for school performance. While that's good news, there's much good work to be done to insure that our curriculum and instruction here at Webutuck meet and surpass State standards.

Since the student assessments are measure student performance against the state standards we need to make sure that our local curriculum and assessments are aligned with these evaluations. Simply put, we need to make sure that our students know and are able to demonstrate that they have achieved full competency in the state required content and skills. The assessments will determine the extent to which we are being successful in achieving this goal. If it seems like my thinking here is circular, it is. The student assessments results should be used to strengthen the curriculum so that we better meet state standards as determined by student performance. However, the goal is not only to have as many students scoring at or above the proficiency level as possible, but to maximize the learning and mastery of each individual student. While meeting the New York State standards is certainly good, we believe we can and should do even better.

Late Bus Procedures

There have been a number of questions about procedures for afterschool transportation. The Board of Education has reinstated the 5:00 pm bus to bring students home from late afternoon activities. Students are required to sign up in the Main Office by 2:00 p.m. on any day they wish to ride the bus. This is very important so that our Transportation Supervisor, Mr. Heiser, will know in advance how many drivers and what size busses are needed. Drivers will transport all students who wish to ride the 5:00 p.m. bus, but will inform administration, the next day, of students who fail to sign up. Students who continually fail to sign up for the late bus may lose the privilege.

Thank you,

John T. Oates

Interim Jr./Sr. High Principal

Elementary & Intermediate Schools

The school year is off to a great start! The children are smiling and having fun. Picture Day has been completed in both buildings and make-ups will occur next week.

A Healthy Child

Did you know that breakfast is the most important meal of your child's day? It provides the nutrients and energy she/he needs to concentrate in school. Research even shows that kids who eat breakfast get better grades, pay more attention in class, and behave better. Help your youngsters begin their day on the right foot.

Smart Ways to Make Breakfast Successful

Eat breakfast yourself. "Showing" teaches more than simply "telling". Your child will follow what you do.

Consider your child's needs.

- Offer two or three food choices. This will help your child feel in control of breakfast eating.
- Give your child time to wake up. Many children are not hungry right away. Rushing puts pressure on breakfast eating.
- Ask your child to help with breakfast on a morning when you are not rushing. It can be a nice way to start the day.

For those who do not eat breakfast at home, it is offered at school each morning.

Fitness Fun

Exercise doesn't have to be done all at once. Encourage your youngster to be active throughout the day – small amounts of time will add up! In general, school age children should get at least an hour of physical activity each day. Here are some ways to put more exercise into your child's routine:

- Jump rope for 10 minutes
- Listen to music and dance
- Take a walk
- Take the steps instead of the escalator or elevator when shopping

Regular exercise will not only make your child healthier – it will help them sleep better at night and be in better shape to learn and play all day.

**It is exercise alone that supports the spirits, and keeps the mind in vigor.
Marcus Tullius Cicero**

Kathleen A. McEnroe, Principal