

***REGIONAL SCHOOL
DISTRICT 17***

2006 – 2007 School Year

**“SUCCESS IS OUR
ONLY OPTION”**

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Professional communities take time to recognize individuals who contribute their skills and talents so that mission of the organization is achieved . These individuals do so without any expectation of ever being recognized publicly.

As we have done in the past together, I would ask you to join me in saying thank you to a group of dedicated professionals without whom we simply could not operate. They are not just bus and van drivers, they are the people who begin and end the day for the many children for which we are all responsible. Many of our drivers begin their day well before some of us get up and end their day well after we are home for the evening. They are humble, conscientious, well trained and committed to the safe transportation for all of our children

Thank you for all that you do!!!!

WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED?

1. COMPLETED SCHOOL DISTRICT OPENING ACTIVITIES

Meeting with Emergency Services: August 22, 2006

New Employee Orientation: August 23, 24 & 25, 2006

Substitute Staff Training: August 22, 2006

Meeting with Local Elected Officials: August 29, 2005

2. IMPLEMENTING RESTRUCTURING PLAN AT CENTRAL OFFICE

3. CONTINUED COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

4. SECURED INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY FOR HKHS

5. SECURED A VARIETY OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY, FIXTURES AND FURNITURE FOR NEW HKMS

WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED?

6. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH CURRICULUM REVISION SCHEDULE
7. NEARING COMPLETION OF CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW HKMS
8. PURSUED AND IMPLEMENTED A VARIETY OF ECONOMIC AND PROGRAMATIC EFFICIENCIES
9. WELCOMED APPROXIMATELY 33 NEW SATFF MEMBERS IN RESPONSE TO THE VOLUNTARY RETIREMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM
10. MET THE DEMANDS OF NCLB; WE ARE ALL "HIGHLY QUALIFIED"

WHAT HAVE WE ACCOMPLISHED?

11. CREATED AND INCREASED COMMON PLANNING TIME AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL
12. IMPLEMENTED NEW SCIENCE CURRICULM AND MATERIALS IN GRADES K-6, SENIOR PROJECTS AT HKHS AND DATA TEAMS AT HKMS
13. MET AND EXCEEDED THE EXPECTATIONS WE HAD FOR EACHOTHER
14. NEGOATIATED AND SETTLED ALL LABOR AGREEMEENTS WITHOUT ENTERING THE BINDING ARTIBRATION PROCESS
15. MOVED FROM BEING GOOD TO BEING GREAT

The Vision for Region 17

(As seen through the eyes of its Superintendent of Schools)

As we, Region 17, measure our self against the world's best, we are a place where all students grow to be knowledgeable, self-directed, lifelong learners and ethical, responsible citizens.

Region 17 is a place where serving and caring for all children are at the heart of the organization; where compassion and respect for everyone is embedded in our culture. Social greetings, smiles and exchanges of courtesy and good will are commonplace.

Region 17 is a place of high expectation that demands participation in academics, the arts, sports, competitions, community service projects and more; where obstacles are removed, enabling all to excel to their fullest potential; where strengths and responsible risk taking are valued and used to increase student learning.

Region 17 is a place where information on student achievement and social emotional growth is routinely collected, analyzed and used to improve instructional programs and services.

Region 17 is a place where teaching and learning occurs anywhere at any time and involves everyone. Teaching and learning experiences occur well beyond the school walls and school day. Individual talents are nurtured, developed and celebrated.

Region 17 is a place where technology is integrated into teaching and learning and aids in developing efficiencies.

Region 17 is a place where buildings and grounds are always safe, clean, well cared for and regularly used by the school and the communities we serve.

Region 17 is a place where stakeholders - students, parents, community and staff - collaborate to make contributions that strengthen the community; where students benefit from the commitment of parents and the wider community.

Region 17 is a place that operates with the highest degree of ethics, values and morals and is committed to maintaining the trust of the communities that we serve.

Region 17 is a place that invites rigorous review and accepts high levels of accountability so that growth and the drive for excellence may continue and the district is not only measured against the world's best but becomes a standard against which others can measure themselves.

Region 17 believes that "Success Is Our Only Option" and failure to achieve our vision is not acceptable.

Gary S. Mala, Superintendent of Schools, August 29, 2006

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 17

FUNDEMENTAL ELEMENTS TO OUR SUCCESS

Maintain Focus on All Children

Curriculum Aligned with Content Standards

Working Knowledge of Content Standards

High Quality Instruction

Focus on Reading, Writing and Mathematics
in All Content Areas

Engrained Reflective Practices

Strength in Relationships

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 17 PRIORITIES 2006-2007

GOAL AREA I: *To Improve the Culture and Climate of the District*

- Objective 1.1: Improve district operations to improve and ensure efficiency
- 1.1a Implement Use of Automated Purchasing Order System
 - 1.1b Implement Use New Student Management Software
 - 1.1c Implement Use of Automated Individualized Education Plan Software
 - 1.1d Implement Specific Efficiency Strategies in the Areas of 1. Copiers, Printing, & Use of Technology, 2. Management of Student and School Data Using Software, 3. Access and Submission of District Forms Using Web-Based System
- Objective 1.2: Expanded System to Recognize Achievements and Successes of All Students and Staff
- Objective 1.3: Implement Anti-Bullying Procedures in All Buildings
- Objective 1.4: Implement Comprehensive Induction Program for All New Staff
- Objective 1.5: Create Opportunities for Cross-School & Cross-Building Grade Level Meetings
- Objective 1.6: Complete Strategic Plan for District
- Objective 1.7: Create Identity for New Haddam-Killingworth Middle School

GOAL AREA II: *To Positively Affect Teaching and Learning in the District*

Objective 2.1: Maintain District Commitment to Ensuring Success for All Students

Objective 2.2: Align All Teaching and Assessments with Curricular Standards

Objective 2.3: Create and Implement Opportunities in All School and Departments to Actively Review Teaching & Learning

Objective 2.4: Implement Specific Plans for Improvement to Address Student Performance on Connecticut Mastery Testing, Connecticut Academic Performance Testing and Other Standardized Assessment Measures

Objective 2.5: Revise and Implement the District Assessment Plan

2.5a Implement Use of Standards Based Grade Reporting System in Grades K through 8

Objective 2.6: Collect and Analyze Data on All Students

2.6a Identify Specific Data Points

2.6b Establish Schedule for Data Collection

2.6c Analyze and Use Data to Make Changes with Curriculum and Instruction

Objective 2.7: Implement a Student Intervention Model at All Schools

Objective 2.8: Implement new mathematics curriculum and resources in grades K through 6

GOAL AREA III: *Integrate the Use of Technology in All Functions of the School District*

- Objective 3.1: Purchase, Acquire and Install Technology in All Schools in the District in Accordance with Standardized Technology Acquisition Plan
- Objective 3.2: Maintain Revised District and School Websites
- Objective 3.3: Develop and Implement System to Ensure Staff Proficiency with Use of Technology as Defined in District Technology Plan
- Objective 3.4: Review and Recommend Changes to the Technology Support Model Presently in Place in the District
- Objective 3.5: Maintain and Use Staff E-Mail Accounts
- Objective 3.6: Maintain and Use Student E-Mail Accounts
- Objective 3.7: Implement the Use of Electronic Grading at All Schools in the District
- Objective 3.8: Implement Use of Automated Individualized Education Plan Software
- Objective 3.9: Implement Use of Automated Work Order System in Maintenance and Technology Departments in the District

GOAL AREA IV: To Positively Affect Teaching and Learning

- Objective 4.1: Maintain Use of Honeywell Communication System as Means of Communication
- Objective 4.2: Maintain Revised District and School Websites
- Objective 4.3: Maintain District Calendar of Events Using Outlook Software
- Objective 4.4: Create and Maintain Electronic Bulletin Board for the District
- Objective 4.5: Continue Administrator Dialogue Sessions Dedicated Toward Facilitating In-depth Conversations about Teaching and Learning
- Objective 4.6: Continue To Develop Opportunities for the Public to be More Actively Involved in the School District and Schools

GOAL AREA V: *To Prepare for the Opening of the New HAdam-Killingworth Middle School*

Objective 5.1: Implement Transition Activities Necessary to Open the New Haddam-Killingworth Middle School

5.1a Establish Building Schedules

5.1b Implement Physical Relocation of Grades 7 & 8 Students in January 2007

Objective 5.2: Implement Comprehensive Training Program for All Staff in the Use of Technology

Objective 5.3: Develop a Redistricting Plan to Facilitate the Conversion of the Current Elementary Schools to Grade Kindergarten through 4 Configurations in September 2007

Objective 5.4: Develop Space Utilization Plan for Present Haddam-Killingworth Middle School and All Other District Facilities.

OPENING REMARKS

I feel honored to have this opportunity to welcome you back to another school year. I am also confident that our focus on children and commitment to task will certainly lead to success for all. As we enter a year that is certain to be viewed by many as pivotal in the history of this school district, I ask you to focus on what has brought us through the beginning steps of our change process together. The key ingredient to our success thus far has been our ability to develop and sustain meaningful relationships for the common purpose of meeting the needs of all children. As I am sure you are all aware, success is imminent when all students achieve at expected levels as set by us, and as in the case of adequate yearly progress, is set by the federal and state government.

To stress my point more directly, I will use a quote from Kruse, Luis and Bryk in their 1994 publication on building learning communities. They said, "Human resources such as openness to improvement, trust and respect, teachers having knowledge and skills, supportive leadership, and socialization are more critical to the development of professional communities than structural conditions. The need to improve the culture, climate and interpersonal relationships in schools has received too little attention (p. 8)." Schools reporting strong positive trust levels were three times more likely to be categorized eventually as improving in reading and mathematics than those with very weak trust reports. Schools with weak trust reports had virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading and mathematics (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 111).

In order to cultivate trust leading to the success for all, it is imperative that we maintain a connection with our inner selves as people and professionals. We must understand and be able to discuss with others what we value, what we hold dear and what we will never compromise. Open, honest dialogue will lead to positive, systemic change in our schools and in public education. I challenge you again this year to look beyond the personal to the professional and seek to establish, maintain and cultivate new professional relationships in and among your peers.

As you know, we are about to face a number of challenges which we have never confronted before. One, we welcome thirty-three new professionals as a result of a voluntary retirement incentive program as we are implementing revised curricula in language arts, mathematics, science, applied education, art, music and physical education / health. Two, we have received and examined student performance data on standardized measures and face lower than expected rates of improvement. Three, we are implementing strategies to ensure efficiencies in purchasing and other business practices associated with our work. Four, we will open the new Haddam-Killingworth Middle School in January of 2007. Five, we will implement more rigorous and proactive activities to monitor and support instruction in every classroom and every member in our district. Six, we will continue to implement specific steps to ensure economic efficiencies to further develop the level of trust we have earned from our local elected officials, local boards and commissions and the residents of the communities we serve. Seven, we will continue to implement opportunities to communicate with parents and members of our communities for the purpose of educating them about what we do for their most precious assets. Eight, we will integrate the use of technology to supplement excellent instruction, support grading and manage the wealth of data we have on our students. Please remember that this list is not meant to be inclusive; it simply provides you with an idea of what lies ahead.

Our success with achieving what we have set out to achieve this year will simply not happen if we don't understand and trust each other. It is time for us to forge ahead with the risk-taking that is necessary for us to move our change process forward. There is little time to waste because time, as you know, is the most precious resource influencing our work. Our time to act is now. Our time to discuss what we teach and how we teach it is now. The time to support each other in every aspect of our work is now. The time to self reflect is now for it will lead to maintaining the fire within that is so necessary for our success. The time to do things in a manner that challenges the status quo is now. The time to forgive and forget the past is now. The time to simplify and focus on our vision for success is now. The time to renew our commitment to our children is now.

In our day-to-day actions, it is imperative that we challenge each other for the sake of children. Two short years ago, we embarked on a new beginning. Last year, we agreed that being good was not good enough. That commitment led to us becoming great. This year, we set our sites on raising our standards so that we ensure the success of all of our students. This will lead to our success as dedicated professionals.

In order to successfully navigate all that is yet to come this year, we must stand together as people and professionals placing our trust in the strength of our relationships. Trusting relationships in combination with effective instruction and the deployment of contemporary education practices will most certainly lead to student success and achievement.

As we begin our third full year together, I continue to stand in awe of the work that you do each day. I remain cognizant of the pressures associated with operating public schools during this time of elevated accountability levels at the local, state and national levels. I continue to maintain my unwavering commitment to advocating for our district's needs and assisting people with understanding all that is great in our schools. It is my hope that together we continue to foster and nurture a district culture that allows us to face new challenges without succumbing to blaming others for our misfortunes. More stringent levels of accountability will surely lead to testing our commitment to purpose and our ability to maintain focus on what we know is right.

I am confident we will meet and exceed the challenges we are about to face if we maintain our focus on the common purpose of doing what is best for students, spend time on self reflection, develop our professional relationships and employ the practice of using data to guide instruction. Our instructional practices must be focused on our revised curricula which has been aligned with national and state standards. We must continue to utilize a variety of assessments to determine our students' levels of success. As I have said on numerous occasions, it is not fair to judge the achievement levels of all children by using a single measure.

In closing, I wish to share my own spin on the words of Rossi and Stringfield (1997). They concluded using their work in public schools during the late 1990's that effective programs were those where students felt cared about and respected, teachers shared a vision and sense of purpose, teachers and students maintained free open communication and all parties shared a deep sense of trust.

May we embark on the journey of another school year filled with the realization that we can make dreams come true. May we nurture and sustain each other and may we meet the needs of all of our students by sharing the responsibility for both their successes and failures. Wednesday when we greet approximately 2,500 students, we will have another unique opportunity to shape the future. Trust the process and trust each other because others trust us.

Always remember to look within when faced with a dilemma and let your hearts guide you to doing what is right for children.

Please accept my best wishes for a healthy, productive and meaningful new school year and may we continue to meet our challenges with the passion and determination that has made us the best. May we collectively ensure that *Success is Our Only Option*.

The word "Gary" is written in a white, cursive, handwritten-style font.

Gary S. Mala, Superintendent of Schools

August 31, 2005

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 17

GUIDING QUESTIONS

(Adapted from the work of Doug Reeves as presented by Peg Portschellar, Center for Performance Assessment, August 2005, GSM 08/26/06)

How are we doing?

How am I doing?

How do we know?

How do I know?

How do we feel about how we are doing?

How do I feel about how I are doing?

How can we do better?

How can I do better?

***BEST WISHES FOR A
PRODUCTIVE SCHOOL YEAR
AND MAY WE CONTINUE TO
REALIZE THAT SUCCESS IS
OUR ONLY OPTION !!***

&

***WE WILL ONLY ACHIEVE
SUCCESS TOGETHER !!***