



# Harwood Unified Union School District

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**TO:** HUUSD Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Brigid Nease, Superintendent  
**DATE:** November 29, 2017  
**RE:** Board Report

I hope you all had a most wonderful Thanksgiving holiday finding time for yourself and enjoying family and friends. Our overall transition back from Thanksgiving break has been very smooth, with students and staff all returning safely. My board report will focus on a variety of updates and new information to help keep you informed. If you have any questions or just want to chat further, please feel free to call or make an appointment to come in anytime. Board meetings don't always allow for more informal or detailed conversations given the amount of material we always need to cover.

Earlier in the fall, I anticipated and then announced that I would be presenting my HUUSD Redesign Position Paper to you at this second November meeting, but I just could not meet that timeline given my work load and the number of unexpected matters that have come forward. I am trying to have it completed for the Dec. 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. This should still work fine since we will be busy with budget until January, when we will likely then shift into deep dialog about our future plans for Redesign.

**Budget:** This is one of the busiest times of year for administrators with all the work that goes into building next year's budget. We continue to meet regularly as a full admin team to work out the remaining non-staff related areas and other details as we await the numbers from the state. It really is a building block approach. You can expect more detailed budget information to be presented at each future board meeting. I must confess that it is taking far more time than we anticipated to develop well this first truly integrated and more equitable budget.

**Negotiations:** Now that both the support staff and teachers have settled agreements, we are engaged in the implementation process of the new contracts. This requires all the annual letters of employment to be revised and reissued with the finalized terms to all 370+ employees. W-2's need to be processed twice, and two separate insurance coverage plans within the fiscal year need to be administered.

One of the hardest and most time consuming aspects continues to be placing all the staff on the grid **integrated** together. We have needed to have lengthy correspondence and meetings to come to agreement with the union, especially the support staff, as we bring into the unit three schools from the valley previously not unionized into the hourly wage structure. I believe we finally have this settled but won't be certain until they meet on Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Legal:** The VT-NEA has brought a legal dispute to the HUUSD regarding which employees are confidential and not required to be brought into the bargaining unit. Michelle and I were at the Labor Relations Board with our attorney in a hearing the better part of Monday. The VT-NEA's position is that the Directors of Maintenance and Food Service in the valley schools do not need confidential status. We will likely agree. However, they believe none of the administrative assistants to the principals are confidential, and we strongly disagree.

Last Monday, I represented Crossett Brook, along with our attorney, at a mediation hearing of the Human Rights Commission. The case surrounds bullying and harassment as it relates to our reporting, investigating, training, and curricular components. The parties reached resolution without cost beyond our legal representation to the district.

The scheduling of these hearings, which was out of my control, and the necessary preparation needed, along with the negotiations implementation work, interfered with my meeting my self-imposed 11/29 Redesign Position Paper completion.

**ESSA:** On 12/4, Tom Drake, CBMS Co-Principal, Lisa Atwood, HUHS Principal, Sheila Soule, Director of Curriculum, and I will be attending a full day Agency of Education training on the federal legislation ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) which replaces NCLB (No Child Left Behind).

**Busing:** Jessica Jarvis is our new bus coordinator at the Bus Barn. Whenever this position turns over, we have a few kinks to work out in order to keep the entire operation running smoothly. The first few months take a lot of follow-up so that procedures are consistently implemented.

**Warren Waiver:** In January, I will be preparing a waiver request to have 3 school days “forgiven” for the Warren School due to the flooding and building construction issues, so that Warren students end the year in June with all our other schools. We have 178 scheduled student days in HUUSD and the law only requires a minimum of 175. Warren will still need an approved waiver as they currently are only scheduled for 172. I will present the matter to the State Board of Education.

**Harwood Co-Principal Vacancy:** I will be beginning the formal search process for the hiring of a Co - Principal at HUHS/HUMS in January. The board will need to select two representatives for participation on the hiring committee. The hiring committee will consist of 2 board members, Sheila and I, 2 teachers and 1 support staff from Harwood elected by the union, 2 parents, 2 students (upper class members) and 1 elementary/middle school principal for a team of 12 members. A thorough, confidential process will be conducted by the committee following 3-4 weeks of broad advertising. All eligible, licensed applications will be brought before the committee for interview selection. The process will hopefully yield two finalists that will then meet the community in an evening event where feedback forms can be filled out with impressions for the committee’s further consideration. After weighing all the information, the committee will select one finalist candidate to bring before the board for interview and consideration. The board will vote to hire after interviewing the candidate. If, for some reason, the board voted not to hire the candidate, the committee would need to reconvene and decide if they have a second candidate to bring forward. The law requires the Superintendent of Schools to make a recommendation for hire to the board.

**WWSU to HUUSD:** We have been working with Phil Hayes, our Systems Administrator, to develop what we hope is a seamless implementation cross-over plan to changing our wwsu.org domain to our huusd.org domain. This is a very complicated process because of the large number of 1-1 Chromebook devices we have in our schools that will need to be completely scrubbed and reconfigured. Our plan is to complete this process over February break.

We also have nearly completed signage and are in the process of changing all of our forms. Our new website is under construction, and we hope to transition that after January 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Proficiency Based Learning (PBL)** I will be sending out a letter to parents in January after the break letting them know that I will be evaluating the HUUSD implementation of PBL the second half of the year and asking them to contact me directly with any questions or concerns they may have. Also, some concerns that have been raised have turned out to be matters of personnel, not the actual implementation plan. We feel it is essential to

have a single point of contact involved with the total implementation across all schools. The HU Leadership Team will also be developing a survey to go out in February. Here are some ways we are offering parents opportunities to become more informed and to have their questions answered:

#### Opportunities to learn more about Grading and Reporting at the Middle and High School Level

##### Past Opportunities so far this school year:

- Open House(s) at both CBMS and HUMS/HS
- Parent/Community Forum on Grading and Reporting Oct. 12 -- about 75-100 people attended.
- Drop in "Coffee Hour" November 8 about 15-20 people attended
- Student-Led Conferences -- November 2017

##### Future Planned Opportunities:

- Drop in "Coffee Hour" Dec 7 at 8:15-9:15 Cafe HUHS (for any parent or community member -- not just HU)
- More drop in "Coffee Hours" planned for the remaining months both at Harwood and in the community
- Survey- after report cards are issued in January
- Parent/Community Forum on the Proficiency-based Transcript Jan. 11 (snow date of Jan 18) 6:00-7:30 p.m.
- College Presentation Panel - Spring 2018 date TBA

We continue to strive to make improvements to our practices and the tools we are using to successfully implement PBL, personalized learning and Act 77.

#### **Board**

We will need to schedule a WWSU Executive Committee meeting for 15-20 minutes at our 12/6 board meeting to close out the final business, including accepting the final audit of the Washington West Supervisory Union.

Since our merger, we have received more correspondence from individuals, requests for information, and the like. When these requests come, they are often only sent to a few board members. I am trying to be sure that I pass them all along to Christine, and she is sending (or I am) out to the full board so that each of you is fully informed along the way. Also, Laura is sending all local news articles to all board members from both local papers.

I have heard back from Nicole Mace, Executive Director/Attorney for the VSBA concerning the request for open meeting law training (OML). The soonest she can be available is Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>. I scheduled her at 7:00 that evening, because we will be having the 1<sup>st</sup> of 3 staff presentations to the Board. The Jan. 24<sup>th</sup> presentation will be from Harwood. Kathy Cadwell and a group of students will be presenting from 6:15–7:00. In March, the middle schools will present, followed by the elementary school team in May. We are hoping to present and highlight school initiatives before the board 3 times each year, in addition to our Nov., March and May admin leadership newsletters. Here is the first.

### **HUUSD Leadership Report (Nov, Feb, May) November 2017-18**

#### **Curriculum:**

Every other year, TBPS K-4 students attend a performance at the Flynn Theater in Burlington which is funded by our PTO. This year they attended a performance of My Father's Dragon, where they were joined by students from Waitsfield School. With talking animals, a daring rescue, a flying dragon, buried treasure, and lots of

humor throughout, this fabulous adventure was brought to the stage using puppets, masks, inventive scenic effects and original music. Enchantment Theatre Company presented the story of a compassionate and courageous young boy and his unlikely friendship with a splendid yellow and blue striped dragon.

The HUUSD grades 5/6 Spelling Bee occurred on Oct 11th at the Fayston School. CBMS won that bee, and represented the HUUSD in the regional bee in late October where the team placed a close 2nd (by one word!) to the Rumney School.

On October 26th, three Harwood Union Rowland Fellows, and a team of 8 teachers, 9 students and 2 administrators attended the Rowland Foundation annual conference hosted by the University of Vermont. The conference highlighted keynote speaker Ruha Benjamin and focused on “Schools as Laboratories for Social Change: Regenerating Empathy at the Heart of Education”. Kathy Cadwell, 2016 Rowland fellow, and 4 students presented a workshop, “Teaching for Transformation: Socratic Dialogue and Harkness Pedagogy in the High School Classroom”. How can we transform teaching and learning from traditional teacher-directed instruction to classrooms where students actively drive their own learning? In this interactive workshop, Katherine Cadwell and students from Harwood Union High School introduced participants to the pedagogy of Socratic Dialogue and “Harkness Table” discussions, where students utilize deeply probing questions to examine text-based material, fiction, poetry, historical documents or scientific investigations. Students will share how this pedagogy, grounded in the belief that “none of us is as smart as all of us,” promotes critical thinking, civil discourse, tolerance and empathy.

Twenty-six high school students participated in a three-day training for A World of Difference programming on October 24th, 25th and November 9th. A World of Difference is a program created by the Anti-Defamation League that uses students as peer leaders to engage the school community in dialogue about cultural, racial, socio-economic, and other human differences. Students lead conversations and activities on how these differences can divide communities and focus on developing ways where we can celebrate our diversity and come together as a community. Once they have completed the training, they will be working with the middle school facilitating these conversations and activities in small groups.

Fiddlesticks, a trio working within the Vermont SymphonyKids music education program, recently performed for students at Waitsfield and Warren Elementary Schools, inviting students to think not only about string instruments, but about music composition and creation.

On November 13, a community Socrates Café, sponsored by Harwood Union HS, the Joslin Memorial Library and the Waterbury Public Library was held at Harwood Union. Harwood hosted Christopher Phillips, a world renowned philosopher and author of “Socrates Café”: A fresh Taste of Philosophy. There were 140 students, staff and community members that participated in this dialogue responding to the question: “How do we balance freedom and security in our Democracy?” Students from Kathy Cadwell’s philosophy class served as facilitators for the evening.

The HU Leadership Team continued to roll out its communication outreach program with hour long coffee hours in the Common Ground café, centered around small group questions & answer sessions specific to proficiency based learning assessment and learning. We had a great turnout for the first meeting, and have another December date planned. The Leadership Team is also continuing its PBL support sessions on Wednesday afternoons for all staff members in need of support and individualized coaching. The student team members have been working on supporting new methods to support the school’s H1 change process, and are also presenting their reflective insights on last year’s first 9th grade Passage Presentations to our District Leadership Team.

Waitsfield School recently implemented an “Inspiration Project”, a concept loosely based around the Google business idea of the “inspiration hour.” Within the pilot at WES, students had an opportunity to explore topics

of interest that might not normally be part of the school day, from fencing to cake decorating. These K-6 workshops, occurring one afternoon a week throughout the month of October, were staffed by faculty and community members. Ideas for the pilot came also from work done in sister HUUSD schools supporting student engagement and personalization in learning. The pilot was met with positive feedback from students, staff and families and will be repeated again in the spring.

On November 16th & 17th, 5th graders at Fayston, Warren, Waitsfield, and Moretown Schools had a wonderful tradition of spending a night and day at the Boston Museum of Science. The Overnight Program allows students and their adult chaperones to discover science in an entertaining, educational, and interactive way through hands-on science activities, a Theater of Electricity Lightning! Show, science demonstrations, an Omni film, time to explore the Museum, and much more. We have been doing this trip for over 20 years, and the kids always love it. Students sleep as a group in one of the exhibit rooms.

### **Communication:**

TBPS received a Recreational Facility Grant from the VT Department of Buildings & General Services in the amount of \$23,984.30. The money will be used for some long overdue repairs and upgrades to our playground including addressing a long standing drainage issue.

October 29-31, a team of teachers and an administrator visited Nobel Academy in Chicago, IL. This visit supported the instructional practice of “Harkness” dialogue that is being implemented in the Humanities classes in grades 9-12.

Harwood Union student led conferences were well attended on both November 2 and November 9.

The Harwood Union School Counseling Department held their second College Fair on November 7th with 30 colleges in attendance. Students in grades 9-12 participated in this event during Teacher Advisory and ELO. As of November 1<sup>st</sup>, the class of 2018 has applied to 179 different colleges and continue to research college and post-secondary options.

The National Honor Society has 22 new members who will be inducted into the Harwood Union National Honor Society on Sunday, December 10th at 4:30pm.

### **Climate:**

Jared Campbell came to CBMS in October for an all-school assembly, and carried with him a message of resiliency, staying positive, and building community.

Chris Waddell brought his Nametags presentation to all CBMS students recently, with the message “It’s not what happens to you. It’s what you do with what happens to you.”

October was National Bullying Prevention Month. At CBMS we have been engaging our students in conversations and learning about this topic during our Advisory Groups each morning with the goal of working together as a community to encourage kindness and tolerance. CBMS staff participated in Unity Day on October 25th, with the motto “Together against bullying — united for kindness, acceptance and inclusion.”

Everybody Wins! is in its 8th year at TBPS. Adult volunteer mentors are carefully matched with students to read together, have conversations, and make enduring connections weekly over lunch. There are currently 37 mentor pairs at TBPS. GMCR, Blue Stone, The Reservoir, Ben & Jerry’s, Shaw’s, and Village Market are just a few of the businesses that support Everybody Wins! It supports TBPS by connecting community members to our school. HUUSD Board secretary Freya Chaffee is the amazing site coordinator. Everybody Wins! also has a chapter in its 8th year of existence at Waitsfield School, where 25 mentor/mentee pairs currently meet weekly.

Laura Brines serves as the WES site coordinator, supporting these positive relationships that foster love of reading and community connections.

On November 3, the Harwood Middle School hosted the first Fun Night of the year. Seventy-five students from Crossett Brook and Harwood Middle School attended. It was a great night where students participated in a variety of activities, including three-on-three basketball, bingo, a movie, a dance contest, a costume contest, and limbo. The night was organized and run by the Harwood Middle School student council.

Fayston and Waitsfield schools hosted a community Thanksgiving luncheon on Nov. 22. Over 150 community guests joined students in a meal showcasing the cooking prowess of Chefs Joslin and Bray and the quality found in our local food service programs every day.

The Valley schools have a guest speaker joining us next Monday, December 4th. Sam Drazin is a former teacher and creator of the disability awareness curriculum, Changing Perspectives. Sam was born with Treacher Collins Syndrome, a condition that affects the development of bones and other tissues of the face. This is the same condition Auggie has in the book and movie, Wonder. Through his workshop-style presentation, Sam will share his early experiences with facial differences, making connections with his own life and that of Auggie. A special thanks to Jason Stevenson for organizing this learning opportunity.

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## **October 2017-18**

### **Curriculum:**

'Community Introduction to Communicating Student Learning and Growth in our Proficiency Model' - well attended by parents. Over 100 present. Information shared about Jumprope and Proficiency Education. Students, teachers and administrators of the HU Leadership team presented.

### **Communication:**

Student Led Conferences - November 2 (4:20-8:00 p.m.) and November 9 (3:20 -7:00 pm). Parents can schedule meeting time through the Harwood website.

November 7th College fair Harwood Union Library 9:30-11:00am

November 9th College Awareness Day grades 7-12

### **Climate:**

Gazebo Dedication - October 5 - Beautiful event remembering and honoring Eli, Liam, Mary, Cyrus and their friend Janie. Please visit the Gazebo!

Senior Class Spirit of Ethan Allen Lunch Cruise - October 10 - Recovery support for the senior class. One hundred and ten students and staff participated. First Student donated the cost of the buses and driver's time in support of this event.

Tara Carino, school counselor, has developed a Student Wellness team, titled Wellness Warriors, who are planning a series of wellness events for students and staff

## **September 2017-18**

### **Curriculum:**

The first “HUUSD shared staff meeting” happened on September 12th. These will occur monthly at HUHS for K-12 HUUSD staff.

Save the Date: October 12, 2017 at 6pm in the Harwood Union High School Library - Community Introduction to Communicating Student Learning and Growth in our Proficiency Model Featuring: JumpRope

The Moretown schools are exploring and implementing the use of program materials focused on “Talking to Kids about Racism” for all of our kids this school year. Materials from the “Teach Tolerance” and local resources out of Burlington, Vermont will guide our work.

HUHS/MS is working on finalizing the Proficiency Verification Process and Transcript Format  
HUHS/MS - Departments are finalizing course syllabi incorporating Learning Expectations/ Proficiencies

### **Communication:**

Moretown Open House and Pasta Dinner Welcome Back Evening is scheduled for September 28th, 4:30pm. This school dinner/open annual tradition features our 6th grade class as the dinner preparers, hosts and clean-up crew to support our end of the year field trip.

Fayston Open House & Celebration of Renovated Art/Music Room and Maker Space is scheduled for October 4th from 5:30-6:30.

Warren’s Open House, BBQ and Harvest Dinner have been cancelled due to the flooding issues and lack of a kitchen. We will have a special Trick or Trot event on Friday, October 29th. This will be a family event with a mini marathon ending at the school with a costume dinner and dance. Stay tuned for more details about that. We intend to reschedule something to replace the BBQ and Harvest Dinner in the spring.

Harwood Union Middle School Open House was on 9/7/17: Teachers met with parents and dinner was offered. The event was well attended and very successful.

HU High School Open House was held on September 14th. Prior to the start of Open House a presentation featuring: Innovative Practices in Classroom Dialogue and a short film “From Rows to Tables: Using Socratic Dialogue in the Classroom” was shared, highlighting the work of Kathy Cadwell, a 2016 Rowland Foundation Fellow.

School Counseling Department hosted a College Fair on September 18th with 25 different colleges represented. Admissions Officers were impressed with the level of interest and involvement by our students and faculty. The next one is scheduled for November 7th with over 35 colleges planning to attend.

### **Climate:**

Moretown will host a Nicaraguan Dance Troupe on October 13 during our morning assembly time. The Moretown School is in the process of completing all recommended improvement/tasks within our August 2017, VSBIT playground inspection report.

The Warren School classes have been held at the Sugarbush Resort for the past two weeks due to a flood at the school on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend. The students and staff have enjoyed amazing views of foliage and lots of extra walking. We also had our kitchen flood last week due to a hot water heater failure, and our kitchen will be closed while repairs are made. In the meantime, we will work closely with the HUHS kitchen staff,

sharing their kitchen and creating a remote kitchen at school. We will be back in school on Monday, September 25th. We are all looking forward to a regular school day in our new and improved building.

Harwood Union Middle School: Created common expectations and a commitment to developing a strong, supportive community through team building at the middle school level, team level, classroom level and TA level.

Harwood Union Middle School began the year with a focus on team-building activities, and Northern Lights were on campus on September 7th and 8th to work with both the 7th and 8th grade teams.

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Thanks for reading. Please let me hear from you if you need any further information, updates, or just have questions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Brigid