



Important Date Change
 Presentation on *Adding Prescription Drugs to the District Drug and Alcohol Testing Program* is rescheduled for the February 25, 2009 Board of Education Voting Meeting at 7:30 p.m. in the High School North Library.



Superintendent's Update

February 2009

The District Budget and Discretionary Spending



The school district administration is working intensely on the preparation of the Proposed Budget for the 2009-2010 School Year. We are also reviewing our current spending, as requested by the Commissioner of Education, Lucille Davy, in a January letter written to all public school districts. During these difficult economic times, the entire Middletown District is working hard to insure that all the items in the budget are



essential to the efficient operation of the our district and the implementation of the instructional mission, which is to improve the learning for all of our students. We look to see if an expenditure is being accomplished in the most strategic way possible, in that the spending

will have the broadest benefit. We have started a practice, for example, of hiring dually-certified staff members who can serve multiple instructional functions. This practice has resulted in improved scheduling and decreased staffing needs. Another example is that professional development is provided within our district, whenever possible, where it will reach a large number of staff and be utilized in daily instruction. The quality of our professional development can be seen in the description of our February 9th In-service Day provided in this newsletter. We rarely send staff to costly workshops provided outside the community, or outside the state, as many other districts do.

Reviewing our budget for discretionary spending is a constant process in the school district. A good example is the recent plan to reduce custodial overtime costs by changing the schedule of some staff to Tuesday through Saturday, instead

of Monday through Friday. This change has resulted in a dramatic reduction in custodial costs.

As Superintendent, I am particularly proud that our district has such a strategic focus on a very clear mission that is communicated to all staff, as well as our entire school community. Our Strategic Plan is posted on our website and the focus goals for each school year are posted in every school building. We report quarterly on the progress of our plan to a Citizen's Advisory Committee. The next report is scheduled to be presented to the Advisory Committee on Tuesday, February 10th at 5:30 PM in the High School North Library.

Requests for the 2009-10 Budget have been received from the buildings and various departments. District administrators are reviewing them to insure they align with the district's mission. Our proposed budget will be presented to the Board of Education and the County Office in March.

Mr. Doering, the School Business Administrator, and I are in the process of meeting with a Citizen's Budget Ad Hoc Committee to obtain public input on the budget. We will have a joint meeting of the PIC (Parent Information Council) and the PTA/PFA Presidents' Council during the first week of March to present our proposed budget as well. The school district understands its responsibility to communicate with the public about our mission, our progress and our expenditures in order to obtain the community support we need to maintain the high quality of our schools in the most strategic and cost-efficient manner possible.



Important Dates

- ◆ Thursday, February 12, 2009 Elementary Report Cards Issued
- ◆ Monday, February 16, 2009 District Closed in Observance of Presidents' Day
- ◆ Tuesday, February 17, 2009 Secondary Report Cards Issued
- ◆ Wednesday, February 18, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. Board of Education Workshop Meeting (HSN Library)
- ◆ Wednesday, February 25, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. Board of Education Voting Meeting (HSN Library)
- ◆ *Presentation on Adding Prescription Drugs to District Drug and Alcohol Testing Program*
- ◆ Tuesday, April 21, 2009 Annual School Budget Vote and Board of Education Election



February 9th Staff In-Service Day

Schools were closed for students on February 9th, but our teachers and support staff were hard at work perfecting their craft, attending workshops that were specially designed to meet their needs. Most teacher trainings took place in their home schools instead of sending staff by grade level or subject area to other locations across the district. Extensive work went into the development of the workshops in order to advance district-wide curriculum and other programmatic initiatives.



At the elementary schools, to insure articulation across the district, each building's reading specialist met with curriculum administrators to develop common power points that provided the foundation for the teacher-trainings. Each elementary school had three workshops: one on DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) Benchmarks, showing teachers how to monitor students' progress in reading; one on the Connection of the Writing Workshop to the LEADS/IDEAL Models; and one additional workshop based on the specific needs of the school. Some schools used the third workshop period to share innovative, inter-disciplinary lesson ideas with the grade level, which is called a *Curriculum Share*.

The special subject teachers (Art, Music, Physical Education) had a workshop on integrating their lessons with the thematic units of the elementary curriculum. Some great examples of that integration have been seen throughout the elementary schools this year. For example, when fifth graders were learning the history of and reading stories about Mayan culture, they were also creating art projects and hearing the music and rhythms that represented that civilization.

Computer Teachers had an opportunity to meet the district's new technology consultant who showed them how to focus on Core Curriculum Content Standards when they develop Problem Based Learning (PBL) activities. These PBL's are based on essential questions that students must answer through their own research and application of knowledge and skills. Computer teachers expanded their knowledge about their role in the development of the PBL, helping the students use technology as a tool to research the concept in an authentic, historical event, and to insure that the PBL stretches the students' thinking to the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Elementary Spanish teachers worked with Ms. Linda Pesce, Principal of River Plaza School, to further their training on the TPRS Model, which is *Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling*. Through this method, teachers are learning how to use dramatic, interactive approaches to help children actually speak in Spanish throughout their twice weekly lessons.

The middle school workshops were developed as a collaboration among district curriculum administrators, building-based administrators (the assistant principals took a lead role this round), department coordinators and teachers. Some consultants were brought in, particularly to teach about the writing process in-depth, and many different teaching staff members were involved in the presentations. The focus was on increasing the use of technology in instruction and also on the utilization of the *Progress Monitoring Record System*, a simple method that tracks individual students' progress within the curriculum.



All secondary visual and performing arts teachers went to the Middletown Arts Center (MAC) for specialized workshops in their areas. Mr. Joseph Lawlor, the Bayshore Instrumental Music Teacher, who is the District Representative to the MAC, helped to coordinate these workshops with a focus on utilizing the resources of the MAC to enhance the teaching of the arts in our schools. A special workshop on stagecraft design was held at the Two River Theatre in Red Bank for Theater Production teachers.

Our secondary teachers in the Fashion and Consumer Sciences were treated to highly specialized workshops in their fields. Warren Schueler, well-known to the community as a gourmet chef, provided a workshop on projects that engage students' critical thinking about international cuisine and culture. Fashion teachers went to the Fashion Institute of



Technology to discover new ways to infuse technology in their instruction and to learn about career paths in the field of fashion and design.

The high school focus was on the *High School Re-Design* initiative that was presented in December by Jay Doolan, Asst. Commissioner of Education, when he came to visit the Middletown Schools. Workshops focused on the ways that the re-design will impact each subject area. The purpose of the re-design is to insure that American High Schools provide a world-class education and better prepare our students for college and other post-secondary outcomes. Increasing the rigor of our coursework, increased student engagement and infusing technology were the main themes. A combination of district teachers and outside consultants presented the workshops.



Guidance Counselors, Substance Awareness Coordinators (SAC's) and Child Study Team members experienced a workshop presented by our community-based partner that provides counseling services to students in both our high schools, CPC Behavioral Health. They also had training in *Threat Assessment* procedures. CPC provides many of our *Fitness to Return to School* assessments, which are conducted when students present a threat to themselves or to other students. The workshop centered on the supports and interventions that are needed when students return to school.

Mr. Fred Carrigg, Assistant Superintendent, presented a special workshop to the Child Study Teams on the LEADS and IDEAL models and how those models are to be implemented to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The Child Study Team members also learned which supports are built in to the models and what types of modifications need to be reflected in IEP's.

Paraprofessionals each had two-hour workshops tailored to their needs in order to learn strategies that support instruction and student behavior based on their assignments. Secretaries were surveyed to determine their needs for training and a two hour workshop was developed for them to enhance their skills on a variety of computer programs.