



Hopatcong Borough Schools

Providing Excellence in Education

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“Every Child Succeeds When We Join Hands”

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Dear Parents and Community Members:

Upon my appointment as Superintendent in July 2013, I was charged by the Board with building the concept of the New Hopatcong. I'm providing you with my Superintendent's State of the District Report, including the current status of the educational initiatives of the Hopatcong School District, designed to support the improvement of student performance. In order to create the vision, we had to determine the underlying factors that led to lagging student performance, resulting in a negative perception of the Hopatcong School District on the part of the community. We conducted a comprehensive inquiry which revealed contributing factors to performance scores as indicated on the 2012-2013 District Report Card. One of the factors is School Choice, wherein the top performing students were leaving Hopatcong due to perceived opportunities for participation in specialized programs in other districts. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were adopted by The New Jersey Department of Education in 2010. We reviewed District priorities, instructional practice in English Language Arts and Mathematics, the curriculum materials, as well as professional development, and revealed that the District required more work in the implementation of CCSS. The District was in need of a normed standardized measurement tool to monitor individual student progress throughout the year. Also, there was a need to provide more support to teachers by qualified content area administrators and supervisors in regards to CCSS implementation. Furthermore, the parents and the school community weren't aware of the instructional shifts in the Common Core State Standards. Assessment results indicated on the State Report were directly linked to the implementation of the CCSS.

As a result, our mission has been to change this perception, and to increase the academic performance of our students. To accomplish this work a Strategic Plan was developed during the 2013-2014 school year by members of the Board, administration, the parents, and the community, in collaboration with the New Jersey School Boards Association. The plan was implemented during the 2014-15 school year. This is the beginning of the second year of the implementation of the District Strategic Plan, combined with rigorous Board and District Goals.

Some of the highlights of our efforts to improve student performance are as follows:

- Developed and implemented a new K-12 ELA and Math Curricula, aligned to CCSS and PARCC Model Framework;
- Provided additional academic support for struggling students through afterschool and summer school programs
- Implemented ACHIEVE 3000 web-based program to support interdisciplinary informational reading
- Incorporated K-12 Arts Infusion Initiative through a Dodge Foundation grant to promote student engagement and established a Creative Arts Leadership Team in each school
- Added 5 new AP courses and 14 new High School career-oriented electives based on student interest

- Created a High School Future Teachers Academy and STEAM Academy;
- Reinstated the HS Child Development course and created a “Little Chiefs” Preschool Program
- Instituted the Naviance software to support college and career planning
- Offered free SAT prep courses for juniors and seniors
- Administered PSAT to all juniors
- Adopted new CCSS aligned instructional programs and textbooks in many content areas and multiple grades
- Piloted and implemented a Full-day Kindergarten Program
- Formed the “High Flyers” accelerated classes in grades 2 – 5, and honors classes 6 - 8
- Created small class sizes for elementary students requiring additional support
- Implemented the Daily Five reading methodology in HMX and TT Schools
- Instituted double periods of ELA (English Language Arts) and Mathematics in grades 3 – 8
- Adopted District curriculum / programs for Special Education students, with modifications
- Hired consultants to provide additional academic and social emotional support for Special Education students
- Developed District Equity Goal through the New Jersey Network to Close the Achievement GAP, and the Panasonic Superintendent Study Council (\$10,000 Grant), to provide additional socio-emotional and academic support for economically disadvantaged/at-risk students (approximately 25% of the students)
- Implemented the STAR Renaissance Assessment tool to measure student progress throughout the year in ELA and Mathematics, in grades K – 11
- Piloting one-to-one technology through the Google Chromebooks Technology Initiative
- Provided on-going Professional Development focused on CCSS, PARCC, student engagement, brain-based learning strategies, arts infusion, technology integration, writers workshop, etc., for teachers and administrators through in-services, common planning time, faculty, and team meetings;
- Formed university partnerships to enhance teacher practice with William Paterson University the Professor-in-Residence Program, Ramapo College Literacy Alliance Consortium, Ramapo College Professional Development Network, Early Childhood Academy for Pre-K through Grade 3 teachers (NJDOE, Rutgers and NIEER (National Institute for Early Education Research), New Jersey City University Writing Initiative
- Hired K-5 Reading Specialists, Elementary ELA and Math Facilitators, Secondary ELA and STEAM Facilitators, and a HS Humanities Department Chair (Facilitators support teachers during non-teaching time)
- Implemented new research-based teacher and administrator “Stronge Evaluation Model” to incorporate best instructional practices into the classroom
- Hired Humanities and STEAM Directors to provide support and supervision of K-12 content area teachers
- Designed and conducted on-going Parent Academy presentations in collaboration with N.J. Department of Education
- Created outreach opportunities for parents and community to engage and inform all stakeholders: Parent Advisory Committee, Breakfast with the Superintendent, Community Forums, Coffee with Principals, academic workshops for parents, etc.;
- Developed parent and community outreach tools using social media accounts - Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, etc.
- Pursued and received prestigious NJDOE Blended Learning Grant (\$75,000+ awarded to 3 out of 600 NJ school districts) and Achievement Coaches Grant (\$36,000+).

This is a brief overview of the numerous initiatives within the District that have been implemented in order to improve student learning experiences, student performance, keep our students in Hopatcong, and build a positive perception of our school community.

We recently had a Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) District Improvement Plan review meeting, wherein the NJDOE reviewers commended us for implementing good solid educational practices that should demonstrate improved student performance results. Within the last academic year, our students had a 15.1% overall increase in their ELA scores and 7.6% increase in their Math scores, based on the STAR Renaissance Learning Assessment, a nationally normed tool. In New Jersey, the Hopatcong Borough Schools have been recognized as an up and coming school district making notable improvement efforts on behalf of our students. For instance, we have been recognized by the DOE and Dodge Foundation as a state-wide model district for infusing the Arts into the curriculum. Shortly, the PARCC results will be released. To that end, we are planning to analyze baseline student data in order to further support the improvement of individual student performance. We are aware that we still have a lot of work ahead of us but realize that we need to continue to hold the course and steer the District towards success.

Please join me in celebrating the hard work of the Hopatcong School Community. I urge you to communicate positively about how together we are improving the lives of our students and families.

With Warmest Regards,

Cynthia M. Randina
Superintendent of Schools