



Superintendent's Corner

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November 25, 2015

Next Generation MCAS

As a leadership team, we continue to attend webinars and participate in conversations with the Massachusetts Department of elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) regarding the implementation of the next generation assessment, which has been dubbed MCAS 2.0. As indicated in a previous week in review, this assessment will be controlled by Massachusetts and the intention is to incorporate aspects of MCAS and PARCC. IT is still not clear how much of the test will be 'PARCC-like' and how much will resemble what our students have been exposed to with MCAS testing. This test will not be administered until the spring of 2017. In the meantime, the district will need to make a decision regarding test administration for the spring 2016. We have the option to continue with MCAS for one more year or to administer the PARCC assessment this year. There are certain advantages and disadvantages to each approach. My initial inclination is to remain with the MCAS, which will incorporate a sampling of PARCC questions. However, I want to take some time to explore both options more fully with our administrative leadership team and with the school committee before making a final recommendation to the school committee. Our administrative team will meet on December 10 to discuss the options. I will present the outcome of our discussions and my final recommendation to the school committee at the regular meeting on December 21. Any feedback or input is greatly appreciated as we explore the testing for this spring.

In Our Schools

This week, I had the opportunity to participate in two activities at Cashman Elementary. First, the second grade class invited me to come and speak about community helpers. Carol Bartlett, from the central office, and I spoke about our jobs and our role in the community. We also shared some of our experiences from when we were in second grade. Next, I had the opportunity to attend a field trip with the second grade class – we had a tour of Amesbury and learned about the history and saw some really important sites. My tour guide was none other than Amesbury expert and school committee member Peter Hoyt. As you can imagine, Mr. Hoyt provided me (and the students) with a wonderful representation of our community. His knowledge of dates and the rich history of our community is incredible. Thanks Mr. Hoyt!

After my tour of Amesbury, I got to participate in another student event, this time with our high school students. I attended the Amesbury/Newburyport Rotary Luncheon with our high school football team and cheerleaders. I even had the opportunity to ride the bus with the students. The students were enthusiastic about our chances of winning on Thursday, yet respectful of our Newburyport neighbors at the same time. A big 'thanks' to the Newburyport Rotary Club for sponsoring this year's luncheon.

On Wednesday, I was invited to be a judge for the high school's color day rally. This is a great chance for the students to show their school spirit and their pride in their class... and that they did! The skits were great and all grade levels demonstrated incredible enthusiasm. This year's winner, was... the seniors!

As you can see, it has been somewhat of a quiet and uneventful week. As we enter into this holiday weekend and the start of the holiday 'season', I want to take this opportunity to thank the community for such a warm welcome for me into Amesbury. The pride that everyone has not just for the schools, but for the community as a whole is truly amazing! Happy Thanksgiving to all of you and your families!

Be well and have a great weekend!

Gary