



The Brookfield Broadcast Brookfield Public Schools



“Create Your Tomorrow”

DECEMBER, 2016

The sole reason for the existence of our profession is the student

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- District Strategic Coherence
- Budget Planning
- Financial & Regulatory Control
- Update from Schools
- Special Services
- Assessment, Instruction & Professional Learning
- Ad Hoc Committee

District Strategic Coherence

Dear Brookfield Friends and Families,
Recently, I attended the Connecticut Board of Education Annual Conference. Discussion included *Leading for Capacity and Coherence: The LEAD Connecticut District Leadership and Coherence Framework* focuses on the research and district practice of developing and sustaining coherent, instructionally focused efforts to successfully improve teaching, learning, and social outcomes for students.

Specifically emphasized was the need to have a clear vision, implement research/evidence based strategies that match the needs of students, foster a results-oriented culture, and build internal capacity for continuous improvement.

The key points addressed to establish District Coherence were as follows:

- 1) Develop and Communicate a shared vision for improving student outcomes
- 2) Focus on Culture i.e. “how we do things around here”
- 3) Connect the Dots/Deep Learning – have aligned systems and structures
- 4) Build Leadership Capacity by creating conditions for ongoing development of leadership talent, and setting the conditions for empowerment.

Furthermore, **seven system structures critical to organizational success must be aligned with the vision and connected to each other:**

- 1) Instructional/Assessment System
- 2) Professional Learning System
- 3) Talent Management System
- 4) Student Support System
- 5) Resource and Operations Management System
- 6) Stakeholder Engagement and Communication System
- 7) Continuous Improvement System



Superintendent Barile

I am pleased to report that the Brookfield Public Schools Strategic Coherence Plan is being validated at the state and national level. Faculty, administration and staff efforts, alongside the support of our parents and the community are propelling our students to “*Create Their Tomorrow*”. Seasons Greetings! John W. Barile, Superintendent



2016 Teachers of the Year

2017-2018 Budget Preparation

The Superintendent’s 2017-2018 budget proposal will be presented to the Board of Education at its regular meeting on December 21, 2016.

The proposal will represent our district commitment to maintain an excellent educational program and continue to advance the Brookfield Public Schools to continually improve and remain among the finest in Connecticut.

Intentionally, with the Board of Education Strategic Coherence Plan Goals as our guide; we will stay the course, enhancing several key areas by addressing curriculum development, professional learning, assessment literacy, reading instruction, and organizational structures.

Financial & Regulatory Control

After over a year of examining and then pursuing enhanced financial and regulatory controls, we are thrilled to report that we addressed almost all of the BlumShapiro recommendations as a conclusion to Phase I (Policy & Procedure Audit Recommendations) and Phase II (implementation Uniform Chart of Accounts) of this town wide project.

This is an exciting time for Brookfield in that these fundamental procedures will impact our trajectory for the future. Through collaboration with the Town, we will now transition to Phase III (Munis Conversion) of this important process, propelling Brookfield to a model of financial and regulatory controls.

The Budget is a Financial Statement of our Values & Beliefs about Educating our Students

Assessment, Instruction, and Professional Learning: Looking Through the Lens of Literacy



Dr. Maureen Ruby
Assistant Superintendent

In 2004, Louisa Moats, a prominent author and literacy researcher wrote a seminal piece, *Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science* (http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/reading_rocketscience_2004.pdf). The preface begins, “Reading is the fundamental skill upon which all formal education depends. Research now shows that a child who doesn’t learn the reading basics early is unlikely to learn them at all. Any child who doesn’t learn to read early and well will not easily master other skills and knowledge, and is unlikely to ever flourish in school or in life.” Later, the article states that the “most fundamental responsibility of schools is teaching students to read” and “convergent findings of high-quality research have clarified how children learn to read and what must be done to ensure that they do.”

It has been over thirteen years since the publication of Moats’ article. In that time, much has been learned in education through ongoing research. The world that our students will live and work in during their adult lives is dependent, more than ever, on our students having high levels of literacy skills. The **Connecticut Core Standards** reflect what students must know and be able to do in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in all subject areas including science, math, history, social studies and technology (See Connecticut Core Standards at <https://ctcorestandards.org/> and Parent Guides at https://ctcorestandards.org/?page_id=10249).

Critical to ensuring students receive the appropriate instruction is understanding the role of assessment in instruction. **Assessment is not separate from instruction, but rather is an intimate component of instruction. You can’t have effective instruction without assessment.** While the Standards tell us what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level, we cannot know what individual students know and what they need to be taught, without assessment data. These data are called “baseline” data and are collected using “**screening**” assessments. Once a teacher uses the baseline data to plan instruction, **progress monitoring** probes (brief 1-3 minute assessments) give information as to how effective the instruction that has been provided is for the students. If students are not responding to instruction, simple classroom **diagnostic assessments** are administered to help identify exactly what the student needs for instruction. At the end of a unit of study (chapter, unit, course, year), an **outcome assessment** is administered. Traditionally, **outcome assessments** were the predominant type of test given. Since outcome assessments come at the end of a unit of study, the data are not useful for improving instruction during the act of teaching.

Think of using a GPS. You need to know where you are going to get the process of using the GPS started. Our Standards tell us where we need to end up, or where we are going. Next you need to enter your starting point, or your current location into the GPS. Our starting point for instruction has to be our baseline data for our students. We need to know where students are, or what they currently know, to begin our instructional “journey.” Once you have your start point and your destination entered into your GPS system and you start to drive, the GPS will progress monitor your trip. It continually “checks” to see where you are, and if you go off course (take a wrong turn, for instance), Siri, or whomever you happen to have on board, will create a new path to help you reach your destination, despite your error! **In instruction, we need progress monitoring data along our instructional journey, so we can make “just-in-time” corrections to support student learning.**

A major thrust of the Brookfield Public School System is currently implementing a literacy assessment system to ensure that our students are receiving appropriate, differentiated, standards-aligned instruction. Students in grades K-6 have been screened using DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills). DIBELS was chosen from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) approved menu of K-3 reading assessments pursuant to Public Act 12-116 (http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/curriculum/language_arts/approved_menu_of_research_based_k_3_universal_reading_assessments.pdf). Students in grades 6-12 will be screened using STAR Reading Assessment. Students who are not at the expected score point for their grade and the time of year will be assessed with diagnostic probes, if necessary, and their progress will be monitored. Screening of students takes place at the beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and the end of the year (EOY). Parents receive reports of their student’s results.

In all of this, teachers, and their knowledge of their students, assessment, content and instruction, are the keys in determining student success. **Knowing how key teachers are in students’ success, we continually strive to provide them with high quality, research and evidence based curricular tools and materials.** Importantly, to provide our students with a high quality education, teachers need and deserve to continually learn and build upon their knowledge, skills, and practices – all aligned with the Standards our students need to successfully master. Brookfield teachers’ ongoing learning is supported through our Professional Learning Communities, Professional Development Days, and a variety of ongoing meetings.

For just a sampling of what our faculty has been studying and learning, please take a moment to review some of our professional development offerings from our [November PD days](#). All of our professional learning is aligned with the four goals of the District Implementation Plan (http://www.brookfield.k12.ct.us/sites/brookfielddps/files/uploads/final_dip_092916.pdf) and is embodied in the District Strategic Coherence Plan (http://www.brookfield.k12.ct.us/sites/brookfielddps/files/uploads/2016-2021_strategic_coherence_plan.pdf).



Principal Balanda serves lunch in the Cafeteria!

Brookfield High School

We have had a busy start to the school year! As a school, and district, we have committed to continuous and accurate assessment of student achievement. The advent of the SAT as the state mandated assessment in 11th grade renewed the need to continue administering the PSAT to 9th, 10th, and 11th graders which we did in October. Results will be arriving in early December. We are thankful that the Board of Education supported our students with the addition of three new positions that expanded our courses and offerings. Adding another Social Studies teacher helped to reduce class sizes in that department, adding another Business teacher allows us to offer more practical electives for our students, and the addition of a College and Career Counselor allows us to provide an increased level of support and guidance for all students as they prepare for life after high school.

We are in the middle of the last phase of the auditorium renovation. New lighting, sound, and video systems are being installed which will result in a more professional and hassle-free experience for performers and audiences. We were fortunate to host an evening program as part of the 9th grade Health curriculum titled, *Conversations, Connections, and Actions*. Speakers shared their professional and personal experiences with drug and alcohol abuse and mental health. Parents and students learned about legal implications, prevention strategies, and resources to support those in need of help. They were powerful presentations and I cannot thank the parents and students enough for attending and leaving more informed about the most prevalent issues affecting our students.

Positive Discipline is a program implemented in Flex A that will continue to support the social and emotional growth of our students. It is hard to believe the first quarter is over and before we know it graduation will be here.

Whisconier Middle School

Every four years the Social Studies department at Whisconier Middle School puts together a mock presidential election. The students learned about the overall election process and looked at several resources about each major candidate. Based on what they learned through class discussions and from credible internet resources, students were then given an opportunity to vote for the candidate of their choice. After calculating the total, the students of Whisconier Middle School chose Hillary Clinton as their president over Donald Trump by a vote of 331 to 291. There were also a number of students who voted for third party candidates or chose to abstain. The campaign was a great opportunity to learn more about the election process, the points of view of each candidate, and learn more about this historic race for the White House.

On November 11, 2016, Whisconier Middle School honored our armed services by "Taking a Veteran to School Day." We were very lucky to have 12 veterans of Whisconier family members attend. Leading up to Veterans Day, students at each grade level learned more about the significance of Veterans Day. Class discussions focused around: the history of Armistice Day, Veteran's Day, the difference between Memorial Day and Veteran's Day, and the different military branches. Then on November 11th students were able to hear first hand from veterans about: what it meant to them to be in the armed services and their experiences in the armed services. One veteran said in an email, "The respect that I was shown today by both the faculty and students truly lifted my heart and touched me personally in a way I can not completely describe. As I walked the corridors and was thanked by every single person that passed me, student or teacher, I felt a pride that I honestly have never felt before."

Huckleberry Hill Elementary School

At HHES, we are focused on ensuring that the elements essential to best prepare students for success – cohesive and comprehensive curriculum, effective instruction based upon reliable data, strong relationships among staff/students/families, and opportunities for students to enrich their learning – are in place for all of our young learners as we collaborate with families to prepare students to create their tomorrows. In the classroom, teachers have introduced two new instructional programs (*Open Court* for reading foundational skills in grades 2 and 3, *My Math* in grades 2-4) and a variety of new assessment protocols, all with the focus on better learning and performance outcomes for students, not only during their years at HHES but over the course of their lives. Teachers have worked directly with representatives from the programs as well as with our school-based experts – reading teachers, math coach, and curriculum specialist – to understand and implement the instructional sequence in a systematic and consistent manner based on the gradual release of responsibility model. Simultaneously, we are implementing an assessment system designed to help teachers better understand where students are experiencing difficulty and to provide feedback about the impact of instruction on individual learners.

Beginning in December, under the guidance of our new math coach (Mrs. Cruff) and thanks to the generosity of our PTO, all students will have the opportunity to participate in Continental Math League (CML) practice sessions and "meets" to expand their math problem solving expertise.

We will again be participating in the Trex Recycling Challenge sponsored by Trex and in partnership with the Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority (HRRA). Beginning on November 15 (America Recycles Day) and continuing through April 15 (Earth Day), HHES families and staff will bring in plastic bags and film which will be collected by our H-kids service group and volunteers from Huck's Paw Patch then sent to be recycled and reused in the production of new materials. Last year we recycled 1137.7 pounds of plastic film and won the challenge for Connecticut! We hope to do the same this year!



Our Veterans pay a visit to Whisconier



HHES PAWS Assembly

Center Elementary School



Celebrating Veterans Day at CES

During the fall of the 2016-2017 school year the Center School staff has welcomed 361 students. We continue to grow with many classrooms welcoming new student throughout the fall. The Positive Behavior Intervention (PBIS) Team has been busy supporting staff and students in establishing school-wide and classroom expectations for behavior and social growth. The team is currently reviewing many of our practices to look for areas for future growth. This team has sponsored two Community Meetings to celebrate our CES community and classroom learning.

Center School parents have also been busy this fall working to help our school build a sense of community and contribute to student learning. Late in October the PTO sponsored Fall Social Night and Book Fair. Brookfield High student volunteers supported activities as children enjoyed games, arts and crafts, and building with the Imagination Playground. The PTO Book Fair was successful in providing families with an opportunity to engage in book selection together. Every CES teacher was awarded with books for their classroom through the proceeds of the Book Fair.

PTO also sponsored our annual Veteran's Day Assembly. This year Center School welcomed twenty-six veterans. Students and families enjoyed a reception and assembly dedicated to celebrating their service to our country. Students entertained their honored guests with moving tribute in a gift of song.

Teachers at Center have been busy implementing two new instructional programs that align with the learning at Huckleberry Elementary. Teachers have been working with the *My Math* program to learn to instruct, differentiate, and assess learning within this program. Our reading instruction is also improving through the implementation of the *Open Court* foundational skills program. Using this program teachers are teaching and assessing the systematic scope and sequence of foundation skills for each grade level. During this time teachers work with students to develop specific phonemic and phonological skills. Both of these programs have online student access which for home support.



Charlie Manos
Director of Special Services

Special Services

In the course of my almost 37 years in public education, I have witnessed, experienced and implemented many educational and mental health initiatives with our children. What is striking is how some of the most fundamental and sound ideas continually are recycled and repackaged to fit modern times and appeal to contemporary ways of thinking. Here are what I consider words of wisdom from a few great thinkers whose ideas are based upon years of solid research and science. Our children only deserve the best that we have to offer!

Our district's **Strategic Plan** with its focus on **Connection, Character and Problem Solving** is our road map, which guides us. Our goal is district alignment using fundamentally sound and evidence based principles of learning to inform everything we do.

Kurt Hahn, founder of Outward Bound, whose ideas sparked a model of teaching in over 150 schools across our country, has emphasized the following gifts we can give to our children to help them thrive and become successful individuals. Our schools have an "obligation to cultivate in students a commitment to justice and fairness, along with a deep concern for the welfare of others".

All adults have an obligation to nurture and foster in our children a sense of duty to look out for and take care of one another. Hahn states, "...This celebrates our interdependence and promotes the idea that we are all invested in each other's success".

We need to teach, foster, and reinforce the voice of our children. As Dr. Taffel writes in his many books, children need to have the ability to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas and have a strong connection with their own emotional experiences. Our students need to be given opportunities to progressively manage responsibility, take risks, have confidence that they can manage disappointment and learn.

Hahn goes on to emphatically state, "all young people possess innate goodness and are capable of doing great things". It is the primary job of the adults to tap into that goodness and help unlock that greatness". Harvard researcher and prolific author, Dr. Ross Greene speaks to **how children will do if they have the skills to be able to do**. The behaviors that we, too frequently, refer to as "avoidance", "manipulation", "attention seeking", etc. are a child's way to tell us that they are struggling. It is our critical and moral obligation to dig deep below these surface behaviors to understand what are children are telling us. Too frequently, we are interested in merely stopping the unwanted behaviors and not understanding what those behaviors are telling us (i.e. rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic).

Dr. Taffel in his groundbreaking book, *Nurturing Our Children*, writes about the critical importance of nurturing 10 Core Attributes that help our children develop into successful and healthy individuals. They include **mood mastery, respect, expressiveness, passion, peer smarts, focus, body comfort, caution, team intelligence, and gratitude**. Is your child progressing in each of these critical areas?

The connection and trusting bond between adults and children allows for us to teach and foster these fundamental truths and help to create future generations of children who are not only successful and thrive but give back to our world.

Ad Hoc Committee

As you may already know, the Board of Education established an Ad Hoc Subcommittee earlier this fall. Chaired by Board Member, Tara Lerner, the Committee is focused on examining enrollment, facilities, and programmatic trends with the intended purpose of taking action regarding renovating the existing elementary middle and/or building a new facility to meet the current and future needs of our students. The Committee welcomes input from community members.

Internal focus group sessions were held in October with input from groups including, administrators, teachers, custodial/maintenance, para-educators, secretaries/clerical, nurses and non-certified staff. At the October BOE Meeting an enrollment report from Superintendent Barile and an enrollment projection report from consultants Milone & MacBroom was presented.

The Ad Hoc Subcommittee held its kick off meeting on October 24th at Brookfield High School where they reviewed work process, enrollment projections, identified external focus groups to meet with, and scheduled tours of the K-8 schools for this Friday, December 2nd. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 8th at Brookfield high School at 6:00 pm.

Ad Hoc Committee Members: Tara Lerner, Christina Zimmerman, Paul Checco, Nadine Russo, Sue Slater, Eve Sturdevant, John Barile, Glenn Rooney and Josh Flowers.

Mission Statement of the Brookfield Public Schools

To inspire, challenge and prepare all students to live meaningful and productive lives.

Every student is empowered to become a critical thinker, problem-solver, effective communicator, global citizen, and life-long learner through rigorous, relevant and comprehensive educational experiences, expansive student opportunities and active community involvement.



Congratulations to Harry Shaker on over 10 years of services to the Board of Education! Thank you for all that you do!

Brookfield Public Schools

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