

A Message from the Superintendent...

May 4, 2018

Growth is a by-product of working together. While we are all in an age of both praise and criticism, regardless of the vehicle utilized, either can be detrimental to growth. Praise can bring complacency, while criticism may hurt. Both are humanistic elements that we all need in our lives, if embraced appropriately. This is the difference between us all...how do we accept it, and what can come of it.

In the midst of our 18-19 budget presentation, as well as our district being in the final lap of the 17-18 school year, there has been much praise and criticism. But more so, there has been much growth. After rising quickly from a deficit that did draw much criticism, we can now praise as all students will continue to benefit as we move forward to the 18-19 school year. As the presentation indicated, much occurred in district during the 17-18 school year especially from a Facility, Curriculum, and Technology standpoint. For 18-19, and as indicated in the budget presentation, we will continue our focus in the aforementioned areas, as well as upgrades in other areas such as Safety and Security.

As indicated earlier, working together will promote growth for our district with one bottom line that will always drive our decision making.... our students. Any other bottom line is considered - to me - a personal agenda which will prohibit our growth. Our partnership with the School Board and Mayor/Town Council is vital, and during our budget presentation, we focused on this partnership as our school communities of Memorial and High Mountain will benefit from the safety and security upgrades, beginning this summer. Our Police Department and School Personnel have worked together to bring real life issues to our students from an educational perspective. Along with our teachers and administration, the PTO and NHEF will continue to be at the forefront of student achievement. These harmonious relationships will, again, be evident during the 18-19 school year.

With 17-18 bringing an alignment of curriculum frameworks with the new NJ SLS (New Jersey Student Learning Standards) in the areas of Math, Language Arts, and Science, we did shift focus on other content areas such as Math-Literacy and Enrichment as both curriculums were revised and updated. Curriculum, like the school budget, is a working "document." This continuum entails much depth and can truly occupy our time daily (and it has), but we do need to find the healthy balance as our entire staff works diligently and timely to revise, update, repair, and guide as to the many factors a school day may bring. For programming and our continued focus on 21st Century preparation, here is our "Vision Quest (for you 80's movie buffs)..."

1. Joining Advanced Math, we will now provide Advanced Language Arts to our students at HMS in 18-19, Discovery Education (tech instructional component) for Social Studies, and the preparation of World Language to the elementary level;

2. *We are working with MRHS as to World Language (French) and (possibly) Music for our Grade 8 students in the coming school year;*

3. *Creation of Student Ambassador Programs at both schools;*

4. *STEM/Discovery Room planning, meaning from a structural standpoint. While we have embedded STEM work into our Science Classes, we will now plan for a true classroom environment since we now have the work space. Part of our plan is to tour Elementary and Middle Schools as to their STEM Labs and Discovery Rooms so that we can grab some ideas. Obviously, financially speaking, this will cost but well worth the price; and*

5. *With the ever changing technological world, we will continue to upgrade, repair, replace, and maintain in 18-19. While 17-18 brought the completion of the 1:1 initiative to Grades 5-7, we will bring additional tech services and resources to our elementary grade level students (additional Chromebooks and carts, phasing out old devices and replacing with new).*

Moving aside budget "talk," as you can see we are moving at a pace unlike in the years past. Yes, QSAC has provided us with a waiver identifying us as a High Performing District, but as indicated at the beginning of this message, this praise can give an image of complacency. While this identification by the DOE is appreciated, we are not satisfied. Mediocrity breeds mediocrity... which we will never emulate as our commitment is to excellence. Even during some troubled times - fiscally speaking - we have stayed the course trying to figure ways to provide our students with more opportunities for learning and growth. We continue our vision and as you can see (no pun intended), the 17-18 and 18-19 school years, we will maintain our commitment to excellence.

The new positions for our district (SAC, Library-Media Specialist, additional full time teachers, maintenance) will provide added staff to an already strong list of school personnel and, thus assist, guide, and lead all students. The hiring process will provide opportunities for us to explore and investigate who will be an effective FIT in our district and on many levels. With ten (10) postings for the 18-19 school year, this is a credit to our wise spending in recent years, as well as planning appropriately as to district needs. Our checks and balances will continue, along with our partnerships, as together the North Haledon School District will exhibit more growth and prosperity.

I thank you all for your support, assistance, and dedication. And, I thank you for both your praise and criticism. Both do work to our advantage, as indicated earlier, as we continue to bring the most effective and appropriate resources to the students of North Haledon.

Respectively,

Nicholas S. Coffaro, Superintendent of Schools