

Rochester School District Newsletter

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- Student Engagement
- Reading for Success
- Transition to Adulthood
- Title I & McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
- Rochester School Department FY2010 Budget
- Numeracy and Its Meaning for Young Students
- Questions & Comments:

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S T U D E N T E N G A G E M E N T

~Mike Hopkins

Increasing student engagement is one of the District's major goals and an important step in improving education nationwide. It seems pretty simple, just expect students to always pay attention and become engaged. We know that as adults, we aren't always paying attention, and we don't remember everything we learn. Students are the same. With recent brain research and student motivation studies, we know some methods to increase student engagement. Ensuring student engagement is the same as ensuring a certain project is completed in your work environment.

We need to design lessons that require at least one of eight basic qualities of work. We don't need to design every lesson to include all of these qualities. If a 90 minutes lesson has one of these qualities, students will be engaged, and student achievement will increase. The eight qualities are: personal response, clear modeled expectations, emotional/intellectual safety, learning with others, sense of audience, choice, novelty and variety, and authenticity.

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**T R A N S I T I O N
T O
A D U L T H O O D**

~Sharon Pray

Many exciting things have been happening throughout the school district in the area of Special Education. The goal for all students is to become productive and independent members of society with gainful employment opportunities. Since the re-authorization of IDEA, the New Hampshire Department of Education has amended its Rules for the Education of Children with Disabilities. IDEA 2004 requires that school district IEP Teams include Transition Plans for students ages 16 (or younger if the Team believes it to be appropriate) to 21.

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R E A D I N G F O R S U C C E S S

~Sally Riley

Reading aloud is a gift you can freely give your child to help them succeed in school. Research indicates that reading aloud offers the easiest and most effective way to develop an interest in reading. Plus it can be as much fun for you as it is for your child.

Children of all ages, even teenagers, will consider it important what their parents consider important. If you approach reading with enthusiasm and interest, chances are your child will too. Learning to read is hard work for children. It is not something that children automatically know how to do. Every time you read to

your child, you are building an appreciation of books and positive reading attitudes that will last a lifetime.



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READING FOR SUCCESS, CONT.

The National Institute for Literacy suggests that parents make reading a part of every day by:

- Sharing conversations with your child over mealtimes and other times that you are together. Children learn words more easily when they hear them spoken often. Introduce new and interesting words at every opportunity.
- Read together every day. Spend time talking about stories, pictures, and words.
- Be your child's best advocate. Keep informed about your child's progress in reading and ask the teacher about ways you can help.
- Be a reader and a writer. Children learn habits from the people around them.
- Visit the library often. Story times, computers, homework help, and other exciting activities await the entire family.

Remember, every time you read to your child, you are building an appreciation of books and knowledge that will last a lifetime. A child who is read to is usually more willing to read independently. Enjoy the reading experience with your child today and every day!

TITLE I MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

~ Marty Brennan

Title I, Part A, of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) provides financial assistance through State Educational Agencies (SEAs) to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs or school districts) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of disadvantaged children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.

Title I is designed to support state and local school reform efforts tied to challenging state academic standards in order to reinforce efforts to improve teaching and learning for students struggling to meet state standards. Homeless students are part of Title I, Part A's target population of disadvantaged students. However, the high

mobility, trauma, and deep poverty associated with homelessness create unique educational barriers and challenges. Homelessness is associated with lower standardized test scores and a higher likelihood of missing school and/or experiencing multiple transfers. Thus, homeless students often require additional supports for academic achievement and success on state assessments.

Many challenges faced by homeless students are addressed within the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. However, Title I, Part A, is also in a critical position to play a significant role in the academic achievement of homeless children and youth.

For this reason, Congress included specific provisions related to homelessness within Title I, Part A.

Taken from a brochure produced by the US Department of Education & the National Center for Homeless

ROCHESTER SCHOOL DEPARTMENT FY2010 BUDGET

~ Linda Casey

The School Department's FY 2010 Budget was presented on January 26, 2009 to the School Board. The School Department's Operating Budget for FY09 is \$51,268,435. We have proposed the FY10 Operating Budget at \$54,604,160 which is a \$3,335,725 or 6.5% increase over the current budget. This figure is a current service budget. It reflects what we are doing today.

Revenues, in total, are increasing due to the additional Adequacy Aid we are anticipating to receive. Where as, other revenues are decreasing slightly in certain areas such as Medicaid, Catastrophic Aid, and School Building Aid.

There are a couple of options that are currently being reviewed in order to bring the budget below the Tax Cap, but more importantly below the current tax rate. So, if you take our proposed budget of \$54,604,160 and then compare it to the options:

Option #1 - \$52,361,550 is the \$1,093,115 increase with no additional revenues. This is a 2.1% increase over our current budget or \$2.2 million below our proposed budget. This option falls below the tax cap and would decrease the current tax rate, but with many staff reductions.

Option #2 - \$54,168,435 is increasing the current budget by the \$2,900,000 which is the amount we are expecting to receive in additional aid. This option is a 5.66% increase over our current budget. This would result in reduction of staff, but not as much as the option #1.

This option would decrease the current tax rate.

The individual committees have begun to meet to discuss the details within the budget. According to the City's ordinance, we are required to give a School Board approved budget by March 25, 2009.



TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD, CONT.

The plan includes:

1. Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and where appropriate, independent living skills; and
2. The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. The plan is a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that is designed to be within a "results-oriented" process. It is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a

disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities. It is also based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests.

The Rochester School District is a member of the Transition Resource Network. The network personnel provide professional development for our staff members, Futures Planning for our students and other valuable resources in an effort to ensure that our students' transitions are

well planned and thought-out. Heidi Wyman, Transition Resource Network Coordinator will be providing a ***Parent Information Meeting*** to discuss transitions for students with disabilities and the positive changes which came about from IDEA 2004. Parents will be informed regarding place, date and time. Also, the NH Transition Summit III will be taking place on March 30th at the Grappone Center in Concord. For more information regarding the Summit, contact Sharon Pray, Director of Student Services at 332-3678.



STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, CONT.

A **personal response** from a student is not just answering a simple factual question from the teacher. It is written explanations, predictions, or opinions supported with facts. A student should be able to summarize their thoughts, not just answer a knowledge based question.

Clear modeled expectations for students ensures student engagement. Just explaining what is expected isn't enough, examples help the student understand what is expected. Grading is not setting expectations, but using rubrics does set a standard and expectations.

Emotional and intellectual safety ensures increased student engagement and achievement. There are many examples of adults in stressful situations not being able to adjust and learn. If a student is insecure for whatever reason, they have a difficult time learning. Setting the environment in the classroom to make the student feel comfortable, is important for student engagement.

Learning with others and providing a **sense of audience** are both similar. We know that music students are going to perform and they have an audience to please. If students work together, and have to present to an audience, engagement increases. As adults, if we know that we must present our work to our peers, we will do a better job, than if we are just completing the work for our own purposes.

We need to provide some **choice** for students. That does not mean unlimited choice, but it can be as easy as two different projects of equal merit. Let the student choose which project. It is not a choice of doing the work or not, the curriculum is the same, but a small choice increases student engagement. If you go to the ice cream shop, but there is only one flavor, you may choose not to eat ice cream, if you don't like that flavor.

Novelty and variety, mean providing some change in the classroom patterns. A daily routine in the classroom is good, but some change once per week, will increase student engagement.

Authenticity is really about how school work ties into the world of work. You can't make every lesson authentic, but the more lessons that relate to what a student will do later in the life the better.

We will continue as a District to seek better methods to instruct our students. Student engagement is really about how much students learn, not how we teach them. We can design learning experiences to create the most productive environment, and

EMPLOYEE of the MONTH

F E B R U A R Y
2 0 0 9

Wendy Harmon

Paraprofessional

Rochester Middle School

Major Dan Heeter

ROTC

Spaulding High

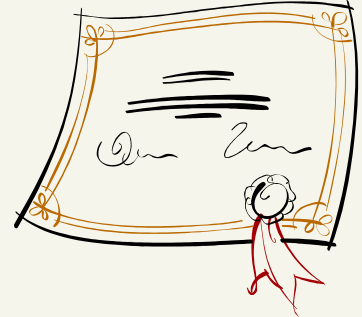
John Marts

Custodian

School Street School

Chris Pike

PC Technician



N U M E R A C Y A N D I T S M E A N I N G F O R Y O U N G S T U D E N T S

~ Susan Deese

The teaching of mathematics has changed over the past twenty years. In 1989, and then updated in 2000, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) published our country's first standards for the teaching of mathematics, *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*. This document provided a framework for states and districts to use when revising their curriculums and choosing programs to teach the mathematical content set forth in those pages. That document informs us that the teaching of elementary mathematics is more than showing students how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. The term "numeracy" is now often used to describe the full spectrum of mathematical knowledge people need to have for the 21st century. Numeracy refers to mathematical knowledge; however it implies a much wider knowledge. It represents a collection of skills, knowledge, habits of mind, communication capabilities, and problem solving abilities. It requires an understanding of the number system, a repertoire of computational skills and an inclination and ability to solve number problems in a variety of contexts. Numeracy also demands practical understanding of the ways in which information is gathered by counting and measuring, and is presented in graphs, diagrams, charts and tables. One of most important concepts taught in

the pre-kindergarten to grade two level is number conceptualization. It is at the root of young students' mathematical understanding. While many students begin early elementary school able to count from one to ten, very few have even a subtle grasp of what those numbers mean or represent. Most simply rattle off the digits in order from rote memorization. Number conceptualization, also referred to as "number sense", is at the core of being able to understand mathematical concepts. "Teachers also recognize that children's ability to handle problems in other areas (e.g., algebra, geometry, measurement, and statistics) and to master the objectives listed for these standards is highly dependent on number sense" (National Research Council, 2005). For grades pre-kindergarten through two, number sense includes a child's ability to grasp the following key concepts: visual representation of numbers, one-to-one correspondence, proper number sequence, ability to compare numbers based on relative magnitude, number conservation, and the properties of numbers. The Rochester School Department has provided a number of opportunities during the past several years to assist teachers in gaining a stronger knowledge of the importance of number con-

ceptualization. These activities were also provided in order to ensure that all young students have access to learning these mathematical skills. To begin with, when the *Everyday Mathematics* program was adopted, all kindergarten to grade 5 teachers were provided with three days of professional development training. During those days, teachers were familiarized with current best practices for teaching mathematics as well as how to plan for successful use of the *Everyday Mathematics* program. In addition, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and substitutes were offered workshops during which they became aware of methods for developing number sense knowledge with their students. During this past year, we were fortunate to have Mahesh Sharma, a nationally known mathematics educator, come to Rochester on ten different occasions to work with administrators, students and teachers. Professor Sharma modeled a variety of teaching techniques during his demonstration lessons. He also offered after school sessions on how to use different mathematical manipulatives (materials) to build number sense knowledge. Teachers had opportunities to ask questions regarding their students' learning as well as about teaching materials and techniques.