



Dear valued Region-14 members,

Please enjoy this second edition of what we hope will be a regularly-published newsletter from the Board:

1. March 5th Special Elections Results:

- A total of 458 votes were cast:

Bethlehem candidates:

David Butkus - 366 votes

Melissa Wesaw - 76 votes

Woodbury candidates:

Chris Matta - 336 votes

Edward de Cortin - 73 votes

Casey Rushin - 46 votes

- We thank those who gave their energy and time to run for the BOE seats. Congratulations to new members Chris Matta and David Butkus. The following statement was offered by new BOE member, Chris Matta:

“I am thankful and honored that the people of Woodbury and Bethlehem elected me as a member of this BOE. I will work hard with board members for the children of Region 14”.

2. Return to full-day School:

The principals and staff of all four schools hailed the transition back to a full school-day as a great success. School lunches are still free and federally-funded, as cold, bagged lunches.

Wendy Nelson Kaufman, director of teaching and learning, summarizes the benefits of transitioning back to school, as well as current educational needs and remediation plans:

Benefits:

- Emotional wellbeing: Students are excited to see one another and connect in-person. They are sharing lunch and recess with each other, collaborating in person and are able to strengthen friendships and learn from each other. Teachers also build better relationships with students when physically in front of them.
- Instructional time: More teaching time provides more effective education, as students have longer class times to explore lessons and construct meaning.
- Communication: Communicating ideas is more natural, spontaneous, and effective with in-person instruction and longer class periods.
- Effective intervention: Teachers can provide immediate intervention and more meaningful feedback as they scan the room and observe student's work in progress.

Needs:

- Differentiation: We are exploring logistical options for better small grouping of students. Effective teaching requires small groups for more differentiated intervention, and "hands-on" exploratory work with students collaborating and communicating with one another. This is difficult in our current arrangement of desks spaced in rows facing forward with six-foot distancing and assigned seating for COVID-19 tracing. Differentiation is also difficult in an environment containing reduced furniture or removed furniture, such as tables for small-group intervention or pull-out instruction.
- Social and emotional learning: Students still need to adjust to a year of distancing and other difficulties associated with the pandemic. As parents noted in last-year's survey, there is increasing concern about students' emotional wellbeing and the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic. Many children are relearning to communicate their feelings and articulate problems.
- Re-engagement: Re-engaging some of our students is still necessary as many struggled last year to learn in a remote environment and became discouraged. Engaging students while wearing face coverings remains a challenge.

Remediation:

- Computer programs: Computer programs such as IXL can be used at the high-school level for math remediation. Teachers are using a trial version and have expressed an interest in continuing with it.

- Human intervention: More interventionists in the areas of math and literacy are necessary as research shows that intensive tutoring (one-on-one, or small groups) is an effective method of remediation.
- Intervention time: Working with students after school hours, and possibly during the summer break, could provide assistance that does not pull students from class time activities during the school day.

3. Superintendent Investigation:

The law firm of Rose Kallor has begun the investigation requested by the Region 14 Board of Education. The district's attorney has engaged this firm to perform this investigation independently of the Board and the Administration. The district's attorney has full faith in the investigators to perform a fair assessment of the matters prescribed by the approved action. The investigation is expected to be completed in early April. This firm replaces the previous investigator who resigned from the assignment.

4. Sports-related news:

All sports are expected to have a full pre-season and regular season for the spring of 2021.

Sector Rules, including social distancing, must be observed by all those attending an event. Based on DPH and CIAC guidelines, all student-athletes will be required to wear a mask when they are not actively engaged in rigorous activities. Masks will not be required when they are fully participating during their sport.

5. Region-14 COVID vaccination:

Region 14 Staff members have attended four vaccination clinics. Two clinics were sponsored by the Pomperaug Health District and two clinics were sponsored by the Torrington Area Health District. The final two Pomperaug Health District vaccination clinics are scheduled for this week. More than 120 staff members have been vaccinated to date.

6. Nonnewaug Agriscience Program News:

- As of March 17, the Agriscience Program has accepted 78 out-of-district freshmen as well as 23 in-district students who are already enrolled. The projection for the 2021-2022 school year is a total of 237 out-of-town students and 88 in-district students.
- Agriscience Program enrollment benefits include study in a hands-on environment while utilizing the elaborate, on-site facilities and equipment. Students can choose from classes such as Agricultural Engineering and Mechanics, Floriculture, Nursery Landscaping, Natural Resource Management, Veterinary Science, Agricultural Production, Aquaculture, and Horse Management.
- Over the past 34 years, George Lyman has developed and taught the Natural-Resource Management class. This extensive curriculum teaches students to conserve, protect and sustainably harvest numerous natural resources. It focuses on forestry, wildlife management, stream and water quality, soil sustainability, and harvesting of native products. Over the last few decades Mr. Lyman has grown this program to include a portable sawmill, chainsaw training, honey beehives, a maple syrup evaporator, a taxidermy collection and much more. In December 2020, George Lyman announced his plan to retire at the end of the current school year.
- The Animal -Science Department has welcomed six chicks to the egg laying chicken flock, twin lambs on March 15th, a litter of six piglets in the beginning of March, and are awaiting two more sheep, two goats, and two cows to have babies over the spring/summer. Students are able to watch the veterinary visits and observe live ultrasound tests. In the absence of field trips (due to COVID), virtual guest speakers from various industries have been visiting all of the classes. Physical field trips are expected to be resumed shortly.
- The Agriscience Program is the first school in the country to participate in the Valais Blacknose National Breed-up Program- which means students learn about genetics and the process to develop a breed that is new to the country. Students are working on grooming and training livestock to show at local fairs over the summer. We have a new turtle enclosure built in order to expand endangered species breeding in an exciting research project for students. We also look forward

to the completion of our small animal lab expansion and hope to create a dog-grooming program in the school. Over the winter we got a new horse for our equine program.

- The Agriscience Program is currently in the process of constructing a 120'x60' indoor horse arena, a 40'x60' storage building and a new sugar house. These are funded by a cost-share grant received from the State of CT about six years ago. This \$1.6 million dollar facility upgrade will expand our existing horse-management classes to include training, riding, driving and horse wellness in a controlled, safe, year-round facility.
- According to Ed Belinsky, agriscience-program director: "The community of Region 14 and the BOE has been extremely supportive of our program since 1920 when it was founded. We are honored to continue to teach the area's youth in agricultural sciences and deliver quality instruction in an ever-changing industry."
- Students joining the Agriscience Program are automatically enrolled in the FFA ("For the Future of Agriculture", previously known as "Future Farmers of America"). This is the largest student organization in the country, teaching leadership, public speaking and career development. In addition, students participate in an SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience), where students gain on-the-job training and learn directly from industry leaders in a field of agriculture.

To support our Agriscience Program please follow:

www.WoodburyFFA.org

Facebook: Woodbury FFA chapter

Twitter: Woodbury_ffa

Instagram: Woodbury_ffa

7. Student-of-the-Year Competition:

Senior Meghan Kostka and junior Hannah Kostka led their team, "The Kostkas Continue Katie's Quest for a Cure" in a 7-week campaign, raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. This campaign raised \$21,237 dollars which will help fund cancer research and offer financial assistance to blood-cancer patients.

8. Budget season:

Proposed-Budget highlights:

- The 2021-2022 proposed school budget includes a 2.241% increase from the current budget.
- Salary and benefits increase by \$591,152
- Purchase services (i.e. special-education services, transportation, etc.) decrease by \$51,315. This decrease is due to a new in-district transition program (ages 18-22)
- Supplies and materials increase by \$45,062
- Capital expense (i.e. building improvement, MES asbestos abatement, MES boiler-tubing repair, BES roof repair, etc.) rise by \$259,861
- Debt service/insurance (i.e. loan payments for high-school building project) is down by \$17,793
- The above-listed adjustments to the current budget result in a proposed increase of \$826,967, or 2.241%, to take effect in the 2021-2022 budget.

As always, we welcome your input, your questions and your suggestions.

Members, Region-14 Board of Education

Chair George Bauer, Vice-chair James Crocker, members (in alphabetical order) Carol Ann Brown, David Butkus, Michael Devine, Jonathan Kapstein, Chris Matta and Tikva Rose.