

Good evening. One of the things I missed most when I moved out of the MS/HS building was seeing students as often as I used to. But I've seen many of them lately, thanks to the High School's Capstone project, the culmination of their high school social studies requirement. Seniors in the Participation and Government course have been creating civic action plans on issues they feel strongly about. A key component of their work is engaging with professionals in the community who can provide insight and or guidance as they gather data and construct their plan.

I have had the pleasure of hosting some students who interviewed me about permeable paving stones, wetland recovery, and student policies. I've read their work on school transportation and substance abuse resources, and I recently saw presentations on solar energy and the value of BOCES. Since Participation in Government is a one-semester course, our first semester students are at the stage where they are giving their presentations to a panel of staff members.

These civics projects encourage students to demonstrate their readiness to make a positive difference in our communities and I have been impressed with our students on several levels, including their level of inquiry, their depth of research, and many have a confident and relaxed presentation style that I envy. These Social Studies Department projects are also excellent examples of our Strategic Plan goals in action, particularly the dynamic problem solving from Goal 1, the sense of purpose outside the classroom of Goal 2, and certainly the teacher's role in developing student expertise and transformative experiences from Goal 3.

In other Strategic Plan news, Goal Team 1 and our teachers are initiating "dream projects", some a direct outgrowth of QFT activities, while others are in mid-stream. Staff will be using time in the next early release days to share their experiences and work on strengthening their projects, as well as mapping where project or "authentic" work may fit in. We are also exploring further work with the Harvard Graduate School of Education on *Extending the Question Formulation Technique to Sustain an Inquiry-based Culture in Schools*.

Team 2 set a new, advanced date for the Student Mental Wellness Survey, February 11th, with direction and communication to faculty and families going out next week. Building level Student Wellness Teams will be formed and the staff will continue planning building level Wellness Day activities and lessons for the 2025-26 school year.

During our December early dismissal professional learning day, Team 3 arranged for K-12 faculty to be introduced to "Professional Learning Communities". The faculty were invited to submit proposals to facilitate a PLC group and we received 24 proposals to launch on our next date, February 26th. We look forward to learning from this pilot program to become part of the ongoing menu of professional learning opportunities the district offers while also building teacher leadership. In addition to the PLCs, we have also formalized a structure for intervisitations where teachers can visit each others' classrooms to observe instruction and see teaching in action.