

MONSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Monson Public Schools Annual Report 2009

Quarry Hill Community School – Grades K-4

(Mr. Neil Gile, Principal)

We kicked off this year by celebrating last year's accomplishments with a school-wide assembly. The students performed songs and chants that captured the importance of being respectful, responsible, and courteous. The lyrics to the closing song summarized the assembly perfectly, "...*We have power in choices. Listen up to hear our voices. We are part of the solution. We have made our resolution...*"

Quarry Hill Community School continues to build upon last year's success. We are in our second year of implementing a new school wide positive discipline plan that incorporates the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Three Bs: Being Respectful, Responsible and Courteous. This year we were fortunate enough to hire a school counselor, Mrs. Colleen Lukasik. With this addition, we are able to hold weekly meetings that are run by Mrs. Lukasik. During the meeting time(s), students are discussing the particular theme for that period. For example, we began the year talking about FRIENDSHIP and what it means to be a friend; we just wrapped up our second theme, which was ACCEPTANCE. The students meet weekly, as a class, to discuss the theme and to do an activity that is developmentally appropriate for them. At the end of each theme, an assembly is held to recognize the students' hard work. Awards are given to students who have been selected by their peers as being positive role models.

Mrs. Nicole Heroux, after spending a year as the assistant principal, accepted the position as Director of Pupil Personnel Services here in Monson. With that transition, Quarry Hill Community School was fortunate to welcome Mrs. Jennifer Beaudry as the new assistant principal. Mrs. Beaudry is an experienced member of our school staff. Prior to assuming the role in administration, Mrs. Beaudry worked in the building as a behavioral specialist. During this time, she worked closely with all staff, which gave her a respect for the finer nuances of the building. This has been instrumental to this year's success.

Quarry Hill Community School made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Based on the scores and having identified areas of strength and weakness, the teachers and students continue to focus their attention on improving the scores in both areas. The teachers have reflected, revised and updated last year's Instructional Change Objectives (ICOs). These objectives focused on improving mathematics by doing more writing in math. As a result, we implemented math journals throughout the grades. This is a continuation of last year's plan.

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In this age of high-stakes testing and differentiated instruction, it is paramount that we assess students' progress frequently and analyze the data. This provides us with information that allows us to tweak instruction to better meet the needs of all learners. We continue to monitor student progress, specifically, in the areas of ELA and Mathematics. The students are given a pre-, mid-, and post-assessment, which assists with determining student progress. At the close of the second marking period, we conducted our mid-year assessment and analyzed the data. From this mid-year assessment, we were able to take a critical look at student progress.

Our English Language Arts program changed considerably compared to last year. We were fortunate enough to adopt the *Houghton Mifflin Literature Series*. This is a systematic and explicit reading program that is preschool through 4th grade. After many years of looking and determining which program would compliment our current practices the best, we decided on Houghton Mifflin. They utilize the *Fountas and Pinnell* approach to reading, which is what we have been using for years. Staff have been supported through three days of Houghton Mifflin training and common planning time.

Considering our Needs of Improvement status in the area Mathematics, we continue to emphasize the importance of writing in mathematics. We have seen significant improvement in our MCAS scores because of the implementation of mathematics journals. When students spend time thinking and writing about the process by which they solve problems, they are developing the higher order thinking skills necessary to be successful in mathematics.

Granite Valley Middle School – Grades 5-8

(Mrs. Cheryl A. Clarke, Principal)

Granite Valley Middle School continues to provide successful, appropriate middle level programs and practices to the young adolescents of Monson. I am very fortunate to be working with a staff of dedicated, dynamic educators, committed to all students.

Our interdisciplinary teaching teams offer a variety of opportunities for students to extend their learning outside of our classroom walls with curriculum-related field trips. Fifth grade students visit the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Norcross Sanctuary. Our sixth-graders participate in Adventure In/Adventure Out, a day of team building and problem solving. This year our seventh grade students returned to Beckett Chimney Corners, a YMCA camp located in the Berkshires, for an overnight trip. Its mission is to inspire and evoke interpersonal and intrapersonal change through experiential education. Respect, responsibility and caring are emphasized in all activities. Grade 7 also visited a Salmon Hatchery and traveled to Springfield's Symphony Hall for the Mad Science Presents CSI: Live show. Our grade 8 students are headed to New York City and Ellis Island for a two-day adventure.

Many enrichment activities occur within the school day. One of which we are especially proud is our Peer Mentoring program. This program initially began pairing grade 8 students with grade 5 students each morning during a special homeroom block. The fifth-graders receive help in areas such as organization, math fluency, reading or writing. Additionally, wonderful friendships are formed. However, since its inception, the program has greatly expanded. Mentors can now be seen in math classrooms, spending time in grade 6 homerooms working with students on a range of activities from social skills to keyboarding, and are role models for

the students in our SOAR program. We are so proud of everyone involved – both the mentors and their partners!

We have expanded our after-school activities as well this year. Our Grades 5/6 Fun Night was held in December and over 100 students attended. There was a disc jockey, organized games and lots of refreshments. We are no longer able to offer Chorus during the school day, but grade 7 and 8 students can now join the Chorus Club after school. Their first performance was at the Holiday Concert and was extremely well received. Grade 5 and 6 students have auditioned for the One Act Plays – new this year -- and are now honing their theatrical skills. A performance is scheduled for April 9. The Student Council has been resurrected and reorganized.

Representatives are planning many activities to enrich the Granite Valley Middle School community. Our Art teacher, Mrs. Scannell, has formed the Young Artists Committee, a group comprised of gifted art students who reproduce a famous painting that will be hung in our lobby. The YMCA runs two programs – an after-school child care session and the “Afternoon Mixer” program -- where students may participate in activities such as cooking or intramural sports. All of these endeavors help to make Granite Valley an integral part of our students’ lives.

I am especially pleased to report on the kindness and giving nature of our students. We have been involved in several fundraising activities this past year, all with overwhelming participation. In June, over \$1,200 was raised for Heifer International. Heifer International is an organization that works with families and communities in the United States and countries around the globe to end hunger and poverty. In December, grade 7 students organized a Toy Drive for the children at Baystate Medical Center. Again, the response on the part of all our students was great, and approximately 400 toys were donated! Students also made ribbons to sell to help the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. The proceeds from that sale, combined with a “Hats for Haiti” day, totaled \$582 collected in just one week!

At Granite Valley, our students excel in many areas. The monthly Principal’s Luncheon and Student of the Month ceremony take time to honor not just academics, but the whole student. Events such as the National Geographic Bee and the American Mathematics Competition challenge our students to compete on the national level. Choral students have been accepted into the Western Districts Chorus, and our art students have received recognition from the Boston Globe for their work. Our Kindness Counts program continues to acknowledge random acts of kindness on a daily basis.

We continue to implement the Olweus Bullying Program at Granite Valley. Guided by our Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee, bi-weekly meetings are held across all grade levels. These meetings are a place where students can share concerns and learn strategies to deal with bullies. The subject of two upcoming assemblies will be bullying in school and cyber bullying. We also have a system in place so that students can report bullies to any adult in the school and feel heard and supported.

Our school has been designated as in “Corrective Action” status by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with respect to our MCAS scores. Now a Title I school, Title I funds enable us to offer additional remediation for our students. We have designed an after-school Math program to help those students in the subgroups who did not attain proficiency. For grades 5 through 8, six faculty members hold small group instruction twice weekly for 90 minutes after school. Currently, 35 students are enrolled. Math has been a main

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focus for our school this year. Aside from the after-school sessions, math instruction is woven throughout the day. Students in grades 5 and 6 start their day with critical thinking math problems. MCAS practice in math is taught on a weekly basis on all levels. Technology is integrated as well. Students work in our new computer lab each week using programs that help build math fluency. Our flexible groupings this year allow teachers to offer enrichment to some students and remediation to others. A nationally recognized math consultant has worked with both math and special education teachers. She has analyzed the MCAS data and helped teachers target areas of student weakness. We are confident that all of these strategies will help ensure improvement in our MCAS scores.

Monson High School – Grades 9-12

(Mr. James Peters, Principal)

Monson High School is again proud to declare 2009 as a year of success in striving to achieve its stated mission to **“prepare its students for living, learning and working in the 21st Century”**. Despite the ongoing difficult economic times, Monson High School can point to countless positive indicators which illustrate a highlight year in school history.

The Class of 2009 commencement ceremony took place on Friday evening, May 29, in the Michael J. Kane Gymnasium. A full house witnessed the graduation of 99 class members, each of whom met all school requirements, as well as those established by the state, through the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams. The ceremony’s program included addresses from class Valedictorian, Laurence Cantwell, Jr.; Salutatorian, Adam Patenaude; and Third Honors, Stephanie Collette. Other class highlights included the naming of twenty-five class members as eligible for John and Abigail Adams Scholarships, resulting from exemplary work on the state-mandated MCAS tests. Once again, over 90% of the graduates were scheduled for matriculation into a combination of two and four year colleges. At the May 27th Graduation Scholarship and Awards Program, graduates were presented with over \$60,000 in local scholarship money, including an all-time high of \$15,050 from the Town of Monson Scholarship Fund.

The recognition and celebration of academic excellence also extended to the school’s underclassmen in numerous ways. The Henry O. Holley Chapter of the National Honor Society inducted twenty-nine new members at their March induction ceremony, and when added to the sixteen returning members, resulted in the largest membership in the chapter’s history. Approximately one-third of the student body was recognized as part of the seventeenth annual Grade 9-11 Awards Program held on, June 15th. These awards included the showcase presentation of college book awards and the 2009 Faculty Award to eight members of the junior class. The Fall Academic Awards Program of September 23rd honored a record ninety returning MHS students for earning honor roll status during each of the four marking terms of the 2008-2009 school year.

Data from a wide variety of sources continues to validate school success. Most notably, school year 2008-2009 saw a school record average of 46% of students earning honor roll on a quarterly basis, a number that indicates ongoing student achievement and satisfaction with the MHS Extended Block Program. In addition, the year’s average daily attendance rate of 95.9% was also the highest in recorded history. MHS is particularly proud to report its highest school scores to date in each of the required MCAS tests. These school scores were all substantially above

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state-wide averages and competitive with the top scoring school districts across Western Massachusetts. A comparison between the MHS and state-wide Comprehensive Performance Index scores are as follows- Grade 10 English Language Arts (MHS= 97.3, State= 92.2); Grade 10 Mathematics (MHS= 94.7, State= 88.1); and Grade 9 Introductory to Physics (MHS= 88.3, State= 83.1). Based on this success, MHS once again met all the Adequate Yearly Progress requirement standards as established by the state.

Finding the balance between meeting the varied needs of all learners while also maintaining high standards and expectations for excellence was addressed at MHS in various ways. The Student Advisory Program, designed to provide a volunteer faculty advisor for small groups of students, has now been expanded to grades 9-11. The OLWEUS anti-bullying program was instituted school-wide along with a myriad of activities to build a more positive school climate. In the area of curriculum review and revision, the Academic Advisory Committee approved the implementation of two new courses for the 2009- 2010 school year- Algebra III and Advanced Placement English Literature. MHS students took advantage of opportunities within the national advanced placement program (AP) by taking a combined total of thirty-three exams in AP Government, AP English Language, AP English Literature, and AP Calculus.

In the “other half of secondary school life”, a large percentage of MHS students participated in a wide variety of opportunities inside the word of co-curricular competitions. MHS was recognized by the Springfield Republican Newspaper as the top overall Western Massachusetts small school athletic program for the 2008-2009 school year. Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Conference league championships were won in 2009 in the sports of girls’ basketball, girls’ soccer, and boys’ soccer. The girls’ basketball team also advanced to their first state sectional championship game in thirty-five years before losing to Lee High School. Both the girls’ and boys’ cross country teams finished a strong second place at the 2009 Western Mass. Championships and earned a spot at the state meet. A most noteworthy individual accomplishment was achieved by Kellie Pennington (class of 2010) in winning the division 2 state swimming championship in the 50 yard freestyle. In the domain of academic competitions, MHS again fielded strong contingents in numerous areas, with the Debate Society, Math Team, Schools-Match-Wits Team and Envirothon Action Team all making strong showings at their respective contests.

An important step in Monson High School’s continued accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) was completed with the October, 2009 submission of the Two-Year Progress Report. This report provided an update on the status of each of the forty-four recommendations outlined in the original 2007 NEASC Report of the Visiting Team. At the time of this writing, the school was awaiting a formal response from NEASC Commission on Public Secondary Schools. Monson High School will now continue its work in completing each remaining recommendation in anticipation of the Five-Year Report, due in the fall of 2012.

Pupil & Personnel Services

(Mrs. Nicole Heroux, Director)

As new Director of Pupil Personnel Services, and with the support of our Pupil Services Administrative Assistant, I have been spending this year reviewing the current programs we have in district to support our students. I am also working closely with district leadership on numerous district and school pupil service initiatives which include:

- ✓ Preparation and management of special education grants and budget.
- ✓ Continuing the district summer programming for Individual Education Plan (IEP) extended year services (ESY).
- ✓ Continuing development of the inclusive concurrent enrollment partnership with a community college for our non-college bound students on IEPs.
- ✓ Decreased the amount of contracted services by providing our staff with the training and knowledge they need to support our special education students.
- ✓ Continue to support our autism program to be well recognized in the region; allowing us to attract students from other districts who pay tuition.
- ✓ Continue to support the substantially separate low-incidence classroom at the middle school: SOAR.
- ✓ Monitor all special education out-of-district student placements.
- ✓ Development of a district-wide Reading Interventionist position for the 2010-2011 school year in an effort to support our struggling readers.

As Director of Pupil Personnel Services, I am working closely with our staff to develop programs that will enable us to keep more of our students in district. In order to do this we are offering teachers numerous professional development activities to help develop their skills and increase district resources.

As Director, I typically attend initial and 3 year reevaluation meetings, as well as any of our complicated cases and meetings on our students placed out-of-district. Quarry Hill Community School (QHCS), as our largest school, houses preschool, the PeAk autism program and K - 4th grade classes. By the nature of the population, this school generates the most initial evaluation referrals and initial eligibility for special education services.

Our Child Study Teams/Student Assistant Teams at each of our buildings have been very successful in reducing the number of initial special education referrals. This is an area that schools have struggled to implement in the past. Pupil Services has made a school psychologist available to staff at these meetings. These teams meet regularly in order to problem-solve any learning and/or social issues students may be experiencing in the school setting. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend.

Our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) has continued to be an active force under the leadership of our PAC President. From the district website the public is able to access a link to PAC along with a list serve group, a newsletter, and dates for several informative workshops for parents.

This year Pupil Personnel Services Office is in the process of complying with mandatory Pre-school Data Collection (Indicator 7) of State Performance Plan and Coordinated DESE Review of Federal Programs.

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Highlights of additional 2010 district Pupil Service initiatives include:

- Continued development of a substantially separate low-incidence classroom at the high school: MHS PRIDE.
- UMASS School Psychologist intern (FY10) supervised by District School Psychologist; piloting grade-specific progress monitoring model at GVMS.
- Hired School Social Worker (to replace retiree) to work closely with our Special Education and General Education students throughout the district.
- Continue to implement Response to Intervention/RTI, Tiered Intervention strategies, progress monitoring, data collection, supported by Special Education in both the Middle and High Schools.

In addition, as Director of Pupil Personnel Services, I participate in Massachusetts Association of Special Education Administrators meetings/functions, Pathfinder Districts Special Education Directors meetings/training, Special Education Legal Seminars on Case Law and 504 Seminars.

Curriculum and Instruction

(Dr. Katherine Scheidler, Director)

We have had many exciting curriculum and instruction programs in the Monson schools this year.

This was an important year for Quarry Hill Community School as we began the school year by launching a new English Language Arts program which is based on the ideas of the foremost literacy guru Irene Fountas. Over the school year all teachers have received no cost professional development, and teachers have met together in grade level groups to discuss how to use the materials most effectively. Teachers made visits to classrooms in Palmer and talked to teachers at their grade level on how they use these materials, which provided a high degree of support for our teachers. This new literacy program now provides a common base of literacy teaching and learning in the important early grades for all students, beginning in Kindergarten.

Quarry Hill Community School teachers were happy to learn from Principal Mr. Gile in August that the school had attained Adequate Yearly Progress in Math and English Language Arts on the spring, 2009 MCAS tests, after not attaining AYP the previous year in four areas. Quarry Hill Community School's strong emphasis on good teaching and learning shows in these improved state test scores. We're continuing to offer this year an after-school tutoring program for eligible students, meeting twice a week, with Quarry Hill teachers as math tutors for small groups of students. This program, funded by our district Title I funds, has also provided us time for a committee of teachers to review our math program and student math needs. Also, all first and second grade teachers received new computers in the fall, and all new computers were installed in the school computer lab this year for students to use.

This year we extended our Title I funds to Granite Valley Middle School, to provide us with funds for professional development. With these funds, all our math teachers and special education teachers were able to attend the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics regional two-day conference in Boston in October. The math conference was “excellent,” the teachers reported. In addition, the GVMS science teachers attended the state science teachers’ conference, and all the English teachers attended the Massachusetts Reading Association conference in Sturbridge. Our school technology teacher attended the two-day state educational technology conference in Foxboro, to learn of the latest uses of educational technology. We hope to be able to continue to send our teachers to such conferences for their continued professional growth.

At Granite Valley Middle School, to improve in our math area, Principal Mrs. Clarke instituted flexible leveled classes for this year, allowing teachers to be able to provide more support for struggling math students. In addition, we instituted an after school math tutoring program, with six teachers working with small groups of eligible students, meeting twice a week. All math and special education teachers have eight full days of professional development provided by an excellent mathematics consultant. We’ve also purchased new upgrades of a self paced math program installed in our new computer lab, and new materials requested by the Special Education teachers. It’s a lively year with teachers continuing to be engaged in their best work at the middle school.

The high school began the school year learning that 91% of their students had scored Advanced and Proficient in English on the spring, 2009 tenth grade MCAS test, with no student failing the test, and 88% scored Advanced and Proficient in Math, only 2 students Failing and taking a re-test for graduation. At the start of the school year the content area Team Leaders developed excellent professional development plans based on student internet research and differentiating learning. These self-guided teacher professional development groups illustrate the spirit of collaboration and investment in professional development and new learning fostered at the high school and at each of the Monson schools.

Conclusion

The present status of the Monson Public Schools is one of **maintaining** a positive direction as we work on the **reorganization** of what we do and how we do it. Educationally, we want to continue to look at how we administer our programs in order to insure that we deliver services in an equitable manner for all our children and to build capacity in our schools. We look to make a district wide effort to expand instructional, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for students at all grade levels. Financially we, along with local and state government, are confronted with managing the reality that resources have diminished while expectations continue to increase. Professionally, we look to expand our capacity to work on curriculum and instruction so that we can build on what we are currently doing in response to the learning needs of our students and the skills of our teachers.

As we look at our internal capacity we face many challenges. The greatest of these challenges is ensuring that all students are being serviced, to the best of our ability, while being conscious of the way we distribute the resources we have available. We have begun to look at how we deliver

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services and are asking ourselves if there are things we could do differently and/or more efficiently, while still delivering the quality of services. We believe we have found areas where we can reduce our dependence on outside resources. By doing this, we have identified some significant savings, which can be accomplished without jeopardizing the quality and quantity of service to students. In addition, we continue to leverage the dollars we receive from both federal and state grant programs to support our internal programs. We also have increased our efforts to identify and apply for grant dollars that become available through public and private sources.

Finally, we continue to respond to the challenge we face in keeping the Monson Public Schools a viable educational opportunity for the residents of the community, as well as an attractive option for those who live beyond Monson's borders. We must continue to deliver an educational product that takes advantage of the resources we do have and the characteristics that have made Monson a great place to live. We must also dedicate ourselves to finding ways to expand our capacity to give students the opportunities that are found in larger districts. The present work of the schools demonstrates this forward movement at many levels.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrice L. Dardenne".

Patrice L. Dardenne
Superintendent of Schools