

**Potsdam Central School Board of Education Update**  
**January 9, 2009**

**Note:** The Regular Meeting of the BOE scheduled for 1/13 will begin at 6:30 pm in the High School Library and move to the District Conference Room for executive session.

**BOE Agenda Items—The following is information regarding several items on the agenda for the BOE Regular Meeting.**

**Capital Project**

At this point in the process, the construction manager is not providing written reports as the project is substantially complete and we are working through the punchlist. Bob Brothers will attend the BOE meeting on Tuesday to discuss some of these outstanding issues. Though there are many items on the punchlist, current priorities are the following:

- The high school science rooms are largely complete but chemical storage and organizing displaced equipment/supplies is a necessity.
- Left over construction supplies from the “blue gym” need to be moved so it can be once again used as an instructional space.
- Continue to balance the heating system in each building. The heating problem at the elementary school has improved through adding fin tube in the main and nurse’s offices. Some of the hallways and the BOCES administration office remain cool. We have approached the architects about heating options in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade wing as initial design may not allow for appropriate capacity.
- The key card system and replacement of locks is still on-going. Our goal is to install and be operational by spring break.
- The outside lighting needs to be properly regulated to minimize costs but allow for safety/security in the evening.

The high school main offices are functional as the nurse, guidance counselors, and principal moved in during break. Space is also available to move the athletic director in this central administrative location. The new front office/entrance is a tremendous addition to our campus.

**Wetland Mitigation Area/SEQR Review**

During the capital project, the stream channel was redirected to accommodate the work on the new field. As a result, some of this wetland area was taken out while more was added in other areas as the stream channel was diverted. In total, this wetland area amounts to approximately 1.56 acres. Under New York State law, the District needs to take certain actions to accommodate these circumstances. First, a State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) is required to indicate whether there are environmental impacts. Second, the District needs to pass a resolution stating it will place restrictions on further

disturbance of the wetland. I will discuss further at Tuesday's meeting and recommend approval at the 1/27 meeting.

### **Speech & Debate Trip**

Our new advisor to the speech and debate program, Jason Harris, is requesting permission to attend a tournament at Columbia University with five of our students. The team will leave on Friday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> and return on Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the itinerary has been placed in the Board packet. The team will be paying for all expenses through their fundraising activities and participant contributions. A regular volunteer, Kaley Schrecengast, will also chaperone the event. As it is an overnight trip, they will require Board approval.

### **AP French Course**

SUNY Potsdam has a collaborative program which allows students taking upper division foreign language courses at the high school level to receive college credit if the course curriculum meets established requirements. Last year, Patty Moosbrugger presented the French IV course to the Board of Education and it was approved. French teacher Danielle Wilson would like to add AP French to this "College in the High School". A copy of the proposal has been placed in the Board packet. If acceptable, I will place the agreement with SUNY Potsdam on the agenda for the 1/27 meeting.

### **Teacher Learning Center**

As you know, we have put the hiring process for the TLC Director on hold until we can determine the status for next year in light of the state budget. However, there are requirements with the grant and other initiatives we need to fulfill that have proven difficult to accomplish without a director. This became very evident on Wednesday when Joann Chambers and I met with the mentor coordinators to discuss the status of the new mentor grant program. Joann and I have discussed the idea of posting and advertising for a temporary person who could come in and work three days per week. This might be a retired teacher or someone else with the expertise needed. We have 17k left in the grant for salary and another \$6k in the mentoring grant which could be used for this purpose. We have sent this proposal out to the TLC Policy Board for their review and I would like to have the Board's consideration as well. The Board would not need to take any formal action at this time, as you have already given me permission to fill the position.

### **Sports Merger Request – Colton-Pierrepoint CSD**

We have an official request from the Colton-Pierrepoint CSD for a spring track merger at the modified level. AD Tom Caruso and I have discussed this proposal and are not recommending approval, as our numbers are sufficient in this sport. Since it is an official request to the Board, I will need to bring forth for discussion.

## **STEM Update**

One of our Board goals this year is to “actively recruit teachers for STEM training and create a high level of implementation of the integration of VEX and Lego Robotics concepts into the curriculum.” At the meeting, I will discuss our status toward meeting this goal. In the packet is some information about student programs such as the robotics competition and a spreadsheet of professional development that our teachers have engaged in to learn STEM skills for integration into the classroom.

## **Other News**

### **NYSCOSS Conference**

I will be attending the Mid-Winter Conference for the New York State Council of School Superintendents in Albany from Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup> until Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. If you need to reach me, please call the school and the necessary contact information will be provided to you.

### **Lice Issue**

In Friday’s Courier Observer, there was an article about a lice problem we have been experiencing, particularly at the elementary school. It reached its peak just before break, but there were 11 cases found by the nurse upon the students’ return. Our nurse, Sarah McCargar, has been following the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Association of American Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines to deal with the problem and educate the parents. She has also been using a Robo-comb which zaps the lice and nits as it runs through the hair. Though these agencies do not recommend following a “no nit” policy for students to return to school, we have reintroduced this policy given the continued issues. Other efforts include the custodians being careful in vacuuming the floors and bagging up materials which are difficult to wash. The teachers have been separating coats and telling students not to share hats, combs, etc... Despite these strategies, there continues to be some recurring and new cases. This is very frustrating for the parents, particularly those who have experienced the issue more than once, as it is a time intensive process to follow. Our hope was that the holiday break would end the issue, but it did not, so it is clear the problem is being generated out of school and brought in. Mr. Jenne tells me that the Canton CSD is also dealing with an increase in lice cases. We will continue to educate and work with students and families and hopefully we can soon be rid of these pesky parasites.

### **Wings Program**

I received a call from Karen Richmond of the Children's Home of Jefferson County, which administers the Wings program. She said the state was cutting funding to the counties which they use to support Wings. This would not affect us this year but will be a problem in 2009-10. I subsequently received an e-mail from St. Lawrence County stating it would not support the program next year if funding was cut. Also, on Monday

evening, the St. Lawrence County Legislature did not authorize the Chair to sign a contract with the Children's Home of Jefferson County for the WINGS program. Currently, the District pays \$15,000 of the \$89,000 costs of this program. We are very pleased with the impact it has on some of our most at-risk students. Ms. Richmond is trying to secure other funding but if unsuccessful, it could effectively end the program. Massena CSD, the only other district to pilot Wings, has already pulled out.

### **High School News & Notes**

- On Wednesday morning, tenth grade students ventured to the Roxy Theater for a special viewing of the film *Valkyrie*. The movie, which is set in Nazi Germany during World War II, depicts the July 20, 1944 plot by German army officers to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Upon their return, students have been researching the film's historical accuracy. Thanks to Global Studies teachers Mrs. Val Chiarenzelli, Mrs. April Martin, and Mr. Phil Foisy for organizing this event for students.
- The female faculty and staff at Potsdam High School received a letter of thanks from the Potsdam Holiday Fund. In lieu of the traditional gift exchange or secret Santa event, Mrs. Leigh Stark proposed that the ladies instead gather during the holidays for a "eat and treat". Staff members enjoyed a get together at the Cactus Grill and each made a donation to the Potsdam Holiday Fund. The group generated \$310.00 for this worthy cause.
- Thursday evening, a number of parents of juniors and seniors joined guidance counselors Mrs. Kim Miller and Mrs. Kathy Robinson, as well as representatives from both SUNY Potsdam and Clarkson University, for our annual Financial Aid Night. Thanks to Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Robinson for their efforts to assist parents through this sometimes daunting task.
- Friday afternoon, the cafeteria and hallways were bustling as members of the French Club under the supervision of French teachers Mrs. Patty Moosbrugger and Mrs. Danielle Wilson set up for the annual Snowflake Garage Sale to raise funds for the French Exchange. Many parents and community members dropped off donations after school, and the students worked hard to organize items for Saturday morning's sale.

### **AAK Middle School News & Notes**

- We had many visitors to AAK this past week. NYS Trooper Bridget Dillon visited Ms. Cowen-Wilson's health classes. She discussed prescription drug abuse and the consequences. She showed a video and discussed these dangers with the students. Mr. Jim Baxter and Mr. Bob Belyea gave a presentation to Mr. Kaiser's

class about birch bark canoes. This supported his students' project work on the Adirondacks. The students were shown the steps taken in building a traditional birch bark canoe. A model size canoe was passed around for the students to observe. Mr. Tony Woods also visited Mr. Kaiser's class to speak about the logging industry. All the visitors to AAK impacted our students and the curriculum in a positive manner. Thank you Ms. Cowen-Wilson and Mr. Kaiser for organizing these visits.

- The Impetus program is beginning to build their roller coaster. This exciting project is done with Ms. Drummond and in conjunction with Clarkson University.
- Ms. Huff's 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are displaying their Rococo Shoes project. In this project, the students are charged with the task of creating art from old shoes. Students and adults have been asked to vote for their favorite. Mr. Cruikshank has a particular affinity for the one that looks like a soccer field, but he won't tell which one he voted for (it might be the one covered with M&M's). The shoe designs are on display across from the cafeteria.
- We would like to congratulate the 10 students that were chosen to represent Potsdam Central Schools in the North Country Region Reflections program. 8 of these students received "Best of Show" recognition at the Region level and will be going on the NYS PTA level competition. The Best of Show winners are Claire Maciel, Marie Amell, Kaitlin Burke, Nathan Moose, Andrew Hou, Madeline Stevens, Emily Bradshaw, and Madison Laubscher. In addition, Karrigan Deon received an Honorable Mention award, and Michael Amell also participated at the Region level.
- AAK was disappointed and saddened with the news that the Schools to Watch Team could not come to AAK this past week. One of their reviewers experienced the death of a family member. Our condolences go out to the family and we look forward to the visit on January 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>.

### **Lawrence Avenue News & Notes**

- Mrs. Frick's kindergarten classes are movin' and shakin'. They are preparing for their Valentine's Day Dance on Friday, February 13th. They are learning The Hokey Pokey, The Macarena, The Chicken Dance, The Alley Cat, The Twist, and The Bunny Hop.
- For the second year, students in Library with Mrs. Smith are beginning a unit about Internet Safety. Through the i-safe program, students in Kindergarten through fourth grade begin lessons about citizenship, personal safety, and cyber security. Third and fourth grade students complete the unit with lessons on intellectual property. This week, third and fourth grade students took a pre-assessment test about their Internet use. Kindergarten, first and second grade

students were introduced to I-Buddy, who will help guide their learning about what the Internet is and how to use it safely.

- The Third Grade P.E. classes at Lawrence Avenue have been ice-skating at Walker Arena for the past few weeks. The students will also have the opportunity to skate with the Clarkson's men's and women's hockey team. Also, the P.E. teachers have been teaching Abduction Prevention to the students in grades K-4<sup>th</sup>. The students are learning ways to prevent abduction and what to do in different situations when they encounter strangers.
- The students in third and fourth grade have been working hard preparing for the NYS ELA test, which will be administered next week. The teachers have done a wonderful job teaching the skills and strategies needed to be successful on this very important NYS test.
- Now that the math lab is open on a daily basis, all the students have the opportunity to go to the math lab and play many different games to enrich the math lessons being taught at their grade level. Starting next week, there will also be volunteers working with students from first through fourth grade to provide additional enrichment activities during the school day and after school.

## **Upcoming Events**

1/12— Music Friends Meeting—6:30 pm—HS Rm 744; Boys JV/Varsity Basketball vs. Gouverneur – 6:00/7:45 pm – H.S. Gym

1/13—Health Insurance Committee Meeting—3:00 pm—District Conference Room; Board of Education Meeting—6:30 pm—HS Library; Boys Modified Basketball vs. Franklin Academy – 4:30 pm – AAK Gym

1/14—Girls Varsity Hockey vs. St. Lawrence Central – 6:30 pm – Pine Street Arena

1/15—District Finance Committee Meeting—4:00 pm—HS Library; Girls Modified Basketball vs. Massena – 4:00 pm – AAK Gym

1/16—Boys JV/Varsity Basketball vs. Franklin Academy – 6:00/7:45 pm – H.S. Gym

1/17—HS Winter Ball—7:00 pm—HS cafeteria; Girls JV/Varsity Basketball vs. Salmon River – 11:00/12:45 pm – H.S. Gym

1/19—Martin Luther King Day—No School

1/21—Girls Varsity Hockey vs. Salmon River – 6:30 pm – Pine Street Arena; Boys Modified Basketball vs. Norwood-Norfolk – 4:00 pm – AAK Gym

1/22—Program & Policy Meeting—1:00 pm—District Conference Room; Girls JV/Varsity Basketball vs. Norwood-Norfolk – 6:00/7:45 pm – H.S. Gym

1/23—Boys JV/Varsity Basketball vs. Norwood-Norfolk – 6:00/7:45 pm – H.S. Gym; Girls Varsity Hockey vs. Oswego – 8:00 pm – Pine Street Arena

1/24—Girls Varsity Hockey vs. The Albany Academies – 1:00 pm – Pine Street Arena

