

To: School Committee
From: Michael Sullivan, Superintendent
Date: February 26, 2017
Re: Report for meeting of February 28, 2017

1. We are scheduled to discuss our preliminary FY18 budget with the Montague Finance Committee at its meeting on March 1, at 6:15 pm.
2. I have mentioned before that Hillcrest and Sheffield have joined an Elementary Literacy Academy project sponsored by DESE and run by an organization called Hill for Literacy. This project will guide and support our literacy improvement initiative over a two and half year period. I joined our team of 17 admin and faculty leaders for the first day of training on January 10 in Marlborough and we will be returning for day two on Tuesday, February 28. I have attached our training PowerPoint slides for both dates in case you wish to learn more about the trainings.
3. More good grant news. Once again, initiative taken by our Community School Partnership leaders, Kara McLaughlin and Jen Audley, will reap benefits for the district. Kara and Jen initiated a grant application process working with an area social services organization called Clinical Support Options (CSO) to fund a project called Building Resilience by Creating Trauma Sensitive Schools. The project will bring together staff from three local secondary schools; TFHS, Mohawk Trail, and Pioneer Regional to train with area behavioral health specialists for eight months. Participants will learn together how schools can play a larger role in mitigating the negative impacts of toxic stress and trauma on the learning and health outcomes for children and adolescents.

The grant selection process was highly competitive and our grant was one of just seven innovation grants funded by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts. The grant is for \$45,000 to be administered by Clinical Support Options. The Turners Falls High School team includes Kathi Smith (special education teacher), Rebecca Zuklie (behavior interventionist) and Nancy Parlakulas (director of pupil services). I believe a key factor in our receiving this grant is the work in trauma informed and trauma sensitive practices already being undertaken in our district. A related press release accompanies this report.

4. I have set up the following tentative schedule for school principals, perhaps joined by school-community-council members, to provide a report on current school improvement plan achievement/progress as well as on progress with the development of future school improvement plans.
 - Gill Elementary and Hillcrest Elementary, March 14
 - Sheffield Elementary, March 28
 - Middle and High School, April 11
5. I am pleased to inform you that our Director of Pupil Services, Nancy Parlakulas has just completed compiling a district Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual which has

been long a long time in coming. It is a comprehensive document which will provide greater clarity and consistency in managing the complex work of supporting students with disabilities. I am including this manual for your review.

6. I have received several inquiries from citizens interested in making donations to help fund the cost of replacing Indian logo or nickname uniforms or signage. We have posted information that such donations may be sent to either the high school or central office business offices.
7. On February 23, all superintendents received a message from the Commissioner of Education reaffirming and clarifying the state's statutory and regulatory commitment to protecting the rights of transgender students. I have included his message with this report for your review.
8. Our Spanish speaking liaison, Jimena De Pareja, and Assistant Principal Santiago have met with, and are continuing to be in communication with, families of students who are concerned about changes taking place in federal immigration enforcement practices. They are providing people with reassurance that our schools are not playing a role in determining student or family member immigration status and they are communicating the importance of having parents/guardians provide up to date emergency contact information should a student need to be dismissed from school to a not previously identified guardian. I would like thank Jimena and Ervin for taking the time to provide this assistance.
9. Agenda Item Information--District Calendar 2017-18. Should you approve Option A, I would recommend that half day pre-school and kindergarten classes occur on September 5,6, and 7. Then, on Friday, September 8 we would have a half day of pre-school and have kindergarten students experience their first full day before closing out the week and returning to a week full of full days. We estimate the cost of running mid-day kindergarten busses on September 5-7 do be approximately \$ 800 a day.

The elementary principals believe they can develop a schedule for next year that will rotate the specials classes students miss on early release days.