



# Gill-Montague Regional School District

35 Crocker Avenue  
Turners Falls, MA 01376  
tel 413-863-9324  
fax 413-863-4560

To: School Committee  
From: Michael Sullivan, Superintendent  
Date: April 9, 2017  
Re: Report for SC Meeting of 4-11-17

1. As you may know, the federal government has replaced the expired *No Child Left Behind Act* with a new law, the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). The state Board of Education has just approved Massachusetts's plan, submitted by Commissioner Chester, to comply with this new law. I am enclosing the Commissioner's 14-page executive summary of the state's plan. Our district needs to take no action based upon this plan but I thought you might be interested in seeing where the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is likely headed with its major initiatives focus in the coming months and years.

I will mention just a couple of highlights from this document here:

- There will be increased focus on supporting student performance in literacy at the earliest grades, mathematics at the middle school level, and enhanced early college and career-technical education at the high school level.
- Additional attention will be paid to supporting districts and schools performing in the lowest 5 to 10% range in the state accountability system, through the application of a range of turnaround strategies.
- More resources will be directed towards promoting student social and emotional learning.
- Additional accountability measures beyond MCAS scores and high school graduation rates will become part of an enhanced school report card and accountability system.

2. As part of what DESE calls its state-wide system of support for level 3 schools, Sheffield Elementary was invited to use state grant funds to host something called a Turnaround Site Visit last week. A team of educational consultants from a firm called SchoolWorks visited Sheffield last Thursday, observing classes, interviewing staff, and reviewing files. The visitors looked at school operations through the lens of Four Turnaround Strategies mentioned in item #1 above. On Friday morning, the SchoolWorks team presented their findings to the Sheffield administrators and a team of teachers in the presence of our state DSAC support team and Donna Fitzpatrick and myself. We have not received a final report from SchoolWorks but for now I can share with you that their findings confirmed much of what we recognize as highest priority work at the school and we look forward to using their data and observations to inform our improvement initiatives.

3. Montague Catholic Social Ministries (MCSM) recently announced that it wishes to recognize three people we know for their outstanding contributions to our community. Our Spanish speaking liaison, Jimena Cabezas de Pareja, is being awarded a "Beyond the Call of Duty" award for her compassion, concern and active support of the community's immigrant families. Jimena provides countless hours of support doing among other things offering homework help to students and coaching for their parents four nights a week, in addition to her long daytime role within our schools.

Lesley Cogswell and her husband Kyle are also being recognized as “Volunteers of the Year” for their efforts in leading a food drive that filled the shelves of MCSM’s food pantry during a recent period of very high demand. The recognition from MCSM states that “you have impressed all of us with your dedication to our neighbors and for being a conduit to allow community members to get to know each other while lending a hand.”

These recipients will be honored at MCSM’s *Heart to Heart* event on May 5 at the Terrazza Ristorante at the Greenfield Country Club and we are proud to associated with these well deserving awardees.

4. Some huge congratulations go out to Gill Elementary’ s sixth grade *Destination Imagination* Team. Under the direction of teacher David Grout, the team finished second in the state and is now invited to participate in the international finals in Chattanooga, TN, in May. Principal Driscoll’s press release on this achievement is attached (and I will probably read it aloud at the meeting).

5. Attached are two documents received post-packet-mailing from Principal Leonard. One is her slides for her schools’ initiatives presentation and the other is a memo she has composed about the daytime usage of the school committee’s meeting room. Both of these documents pertain to agenda items of this meeting.