



Spencer East Brookfield Regional School District

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Superintendent Report to School Committee



December 13, 2016

It's hard to believe but in eighteen days **2016** will be over!



As we end one calendar year and prepare for the next, I would like to start with a sincere thank you to School Committee members for the support they have shown throughout the past year. I'd also like to offer my gratitude to the families who continue to trust us with their children everyday throughout their preK-12 educational journeys. Kudos go to our dedicated educators and parent groups for their talents and determination in helping to support students reach full potential. And finally, to the custodial crew, cafeteria staff, secretaries and support personnel who keep our buildings safe, clean or organized, thank you for your continued commitment to this District. The SEBRSD *pockets of excellence* continue to grow because of all of you. **2016** was full of advancements and growth for our schools, our teachers and our students... and next year will be even better.



Since our last meeting, the calendar has been quite busy with events and activities and I'll highlight the most significant ones in this report. For Thanksgiving week there were plays, rallies, feasts and food drives and a well-deserved 4-day break for family time.

Aside from the usual school visits, administrative staff meetings, public hearings, individual meetings with SC members, principal/director budget workshops, holiday performances, and mounds of paperwork (that never seem to dwindle), my office had a calendar full of local, regional and state events. I met with the student reps, East Brookfield parent group, and also Wire Village parent group. All our parent support groups thrive on planning fundraising, field trip and social events for our students. They are critically important in the work we do in our schools every day.

And, now, to what I know will be very good news-



Tonight Mr. Suter and I are requesting that any remaining funds from Lake Street and Maple Street student activity accounts be moved to the student activity account for Wire Village. The money left in these accounts represent funds that had originally been intended for students in the same grades now housed at Wire

Village... it is fitting that this money be transferred to that account so it can benefit WV students now. Mr. Suter has informed me that that there is approximately \$20K and tonight, if the Committee votes to move those funds, I will be earmarking \$15,000 of it for the purpose of helping to construct the Wire Village Playground. I have spoken with the PAWs parents and they are thrilled to have the seed money to finally start the project.



During the past month, Mass School Building Authority (MSBA) held a meeting to speak with the District representatives to determine next steps in the process either for renovation of the HS or to build new. Board of Selectmen Chairs, SC Chair, Spencer Town Administrator, Business Comptroller, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor, HS Principal and myself were invited to meet with them and, after some discussion, all those present took a tour of the facility. The SC Chair will address this matter later in tonight's meeting.



On November 17th, the SC Chair, EB SC member Heather Messier, the Comptroller and I attended the Regional Budget Roundtable at Charlton MS. Area superintendents, SC members, and state legislators were present and the issues raised were unfunded mandates, special education costs, transportation, and health care costs. It was a productive and collegial meeting that included discussion of possible solutions, strategies for regionalizing services, cost sharing and working with our state legislators. The next step will be on December 16th when superintendents will convene to determine future task force meetings. (attachment #1)

SUBSTITUTES: For the past few months, the District has been having difficulty finding enough substitutes to cover teacher absences. This is especially true for nurse absences. Several factors contribute to this issue, but I am very concerned since we have not even hit the winter months when illnesses are on the rise. In reviewing other District's rates of sub pay, it appears that we may be somewhat lower, so tonight I would like to request that the Committee consider raising substitute teacher pay rates. I have provided a proposal that includes raising teacher sub pay from \$75 to \$85/day (with 4 year degree or certification) and \$60 to \$70/day (with 2 year degree). In addition, due to the extreme difficulty getting nurses to sub, I'm recommending increasing nurse sub pay from \$75 to \$100/day. (attachment #2)



As an update to professional development (PD), the District has been working with Teachers21, a highly respected Massachusetts-based educational consulting organization. Consultants are working with schools on District PD half days from November through February in two separate groups- one for elementary and one for secondary. The focus of their work is on Growth Mindset and Student Engagement, the general theme for our District PD this year. In concert with the teachers' work, Administrators met on separate dates in October and November for calibration of the evaluation protocol- again focusing on the theme of "Growth Mindset and Student Engagement" and they will continue meeting in January. In other PD news, there are currently afternoon offerings for instructional staff designed to support their work and maintain their certifications.



Over the past 2 years, I have spoken often about STEM and the importance it plays in the future of students. As you probably recall, the four letters in **STEM** stand for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. We now sometimes refer to **STeAM** because the "a" represents the art or creative design component necessary for applying the other disciplines. There is an abundance of evidence that STEM and

STeAM are growing fields in Massachusetts, the United States, and the world. It is estimated that employment in occupations related to STEM will grow to more than 9 million by the year 2022. That means that students who enter the workforce after graduating college in 2022 (those are students in grade 10 or 11 now), must be ready for the demands of these new STEM jobs. James Brown, the executive director of the STEM Education Coalition in Washington, D.C. stated, “The future of the economy is in STEM... That’s where the jobs of tomorrow will be.” And data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics support that assertion.

Tonight I am happy to announce several new program possibilities that will expand these STEM opportunities for our students:

First, a Special Meeting of the SC was held on November 28th to review and approve an easement agreement for Knox Trail for Zero Point (pro-tech energy solutions), a company that will be constructing a solar array on property they purchased near KT. They requested an easement so that they can connect to the grid via access to KT land. As a result, I negotiated a deal for them to pay for the easement as well as make a substantial donation to the District for the purpose of advancing Global STEM programs and activities. They will be working with us to provide additional STEM study opportunities for our classrooms such as innovative energy solutions, energy monitoring, engineering solutions, etc. (attachment #3)



Early this month I was honored to meet with Engineer Larisa Shelkin from the Global STEM Education Center. The Center has chosen to work with our District in a project-based science program. Ms. Shelkin and I discussed how our teachers could receive high-level training from, and collaborate with, international scientists during the summer of 2017 in order to implement a project-based science program during the school year. Our middle and high school students, in turn, will collaborate with students from another country to solve real world problems. This science is standards-based, hands-on, and relevant to the real world of engineering. I have also agreed to assist in a National Science Foundation grant for the ‘18-‘19 school year that would provide students with a free collaborative project-based program in environmental science linked to NASA scientists and researchers.(attachment #4)

I cannot emphasize enough how important these programs are because of the STEM opportunities that are emerging. By participating in these initiatives, the District will be connecting students to their future studies, developing the skills needed in the college or workplace, and preparing them for employment opportunities in the STEM fields.



Finally, on behalf of the entire Administration, I would like to wish everyone a wonderful holiday season full of family, friends, food and fun.



And...we hope you will join us in the exciting work that lies ahead in the New Year 2017!

Respectfully Submitted,
N. Tracy Crowe, Ed.D.