



Michael Havens
Superintendent of Schools

Phone: 315-524-0201
Fax: 315-524-4233
mhavens@wayne.k12.ny.us

Wayne Central School District

LETTER to the BOARD

May 16, 2003

"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles with it." - - Winston Churchill

Greetings from Wayne Central School District. Below are some items of interest.

Board Meeting

1. **Budget Forum:** The Budget forum will be held from 7:30 – 8:00 in the Board room. If we have a large crowd, we will plan to move the meeting to the High School
2. **Budget:** I will report the latest news regarding the State budget and its impact on our budget.
3. **Reading Buddies:** Reading Buddies coordinator Ann Blocker will present a report on her first year with this program.

Newsletter:

1. Budget Update: Again what ever I tell you will be dated but..... The governor vetoed the budget on Wednesday night. The Legislature began work on over riding the veto Thursday. At 11:53 A.M. the Assembly passed the Education portion. The Senate overrode at 2:00 P.M. I have been in contact with both our legislator's offices, first to encourage, then to thank one of them. While we haven't seen any new budget runs, it appears that our 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 strategy will work.

2. Primary Mental Health Project: Board members asked for some additional information regarding the Primary Mental Health Project. I think there was some curiosity about why the administration was not recommending the program for restoration even though we heard passionate support for the program from one of the counselors and two of the building aides involved in the program. These "choices" are always difficult but let me explain our rationale.

Primary project consists of individuals in grades K, 1, and 2 attending the playroom with a building aid for approximately 30 minutes once a week. The playroom is just that; a room with many toys and games. The main purpose of this intervention is to assist children in the process of acclimating themselves to the world of school, adjustment issues (shy, withdrawn), and friendship issues. The program structure allows students to communicate their feelings through playing with the toys. The goals are to have the children become more effective communicators, have increased self-esteem, increased classroom participation and become more proficient problem-solvers. Children with severe emotional concerns are not considered candidates for primary project, as this is not a true counseling program and the intervention is not considered "therapy".

These are positive and important goals, and in fact they are the very goals we want for all our children. Throughout our district we have worked to create a culture of character. This is particular true at our elementary buildings. The expectations that our children become effective communicators, in touch with their own feelings and how to deal with them, are goals taught by our entire elementary staff. We also strongly believe that our elementary counselors and psychologists provide an essential role in helping both students and staff develop these skills.

One concern we share about Primary Project is that it removes the child from the classroom to provide this intervention. At times this is necessary to provide appropriate instruction. However, it is equally reported that pulling children from the classroom can lead to feelings of inadequacy and stress, in that students feel they are missing important learning when they are out of the room. This in essence works contrary to the goal of the project.

While it is strongly assume that Primary Mental Health has been helpful to the students that participate, it is difficult to prove. It is also difficult to look at data and gage the impact of PMPH on academic performance. Classroom environment, parental and teacher influence, natural maturity, all play a role in the development of self-esteem. Also the activities and discussions that occur in the playroom are quite confidential including even who participates. As a result it id difficult for even the principal to obtain information.

The Board asked how many students involved in primary project also did not make satisfactory progress on their report cards as shown in the presentation made by Mr. Spring Tuesday evening. We were able to obtain the following information.

- At kindergarten 1 of the 15 students participating were reading below grade level
- At grade one 8 of the 23 students participating were reading below grade level
- At grade two 7 of 24 students participating were reading below grade level.

As we look to prioritize additions to the budget, we ask ourselves several questions.

- Is this going to enhance student's achievement? In what way? How do we know?
- How many children truly benefit from this program?

- Can we, or more importantly should we, be providing this intervention in a different way? Do we want to take the responsibility of developing self-esteem away from the classroom or the teachers?
- Is this the best way to work on these skills, in isolation, away from peers?

We also have to consider what staff are currently in place to meet these self esteem needs and what staff and programs are needed to increase our student's academic success. We are blessed at Wayne with very good support mechanisms. We are one of the very few districts that have full time psychologists for each of our elementary buildings. Many districts have one psychologist for three elementary buildings. We are one of very few districts that have a full time counselor in each elementary building. Most area schools do not have elementary counselors. Those individuals are there (along with the classroom teacher) to provide the kind of support needed to help our children with these self-esteem issues.

The areas we have not been as blessed with are the academic ones. As example two years ago we had three counselors at the middle school but only one reading teacher and no math remedial teacher. We now have three reading teachers and a part time remedial math teacher. Our students also need better academic success at the beginning of their schooling. To that end we are moving towards full day kindergarten. Also, Tuesday we recommended adding a .5 elementary special education teacher. At the high school we have very few electives. Tuesday we recommended adding a science teacher.

We would not say that PMHP has not been a good addition to our elementary schools. It has helped to increase our awareness and focus on social skills training and the importance self-esteem plays in the role of a productive student and citizen. It also has to be said that being academically successful in school brings its own self esteem. While failing at schooling, especially at the younger years, is devastating to a child's self esteem. Schools build real opportunities for increased confidence and self esteem when our child excel at school.

When we were asked to make tough choices about our students' programs, we tried to weigh our desired outcomes. It is for these reasons that PMHP was eliminated as a priority on our restoration list. Should we receive even additional money we would prefer to add additional academic help for our students before we restored Primary Project.

1. **Four County Annual Meeting** – Please let Lori know if you plan to attend. Information is attached.
2. **Events** -
 - May 17 – Red Ribbon Car Wash – Ginegaw Park – 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.
 - May 20 – OP Spring Concert @ PAC – 7:00 p.m.
 - May 21 – Board of Education Meeting/Public Hearing – 7:00 p.m.
 - May 27 – OE Choral Concert @ PAC – 7:00 p.m.

May 28 – Board of Education meeting CANCELED

May 29 – FE Choral Concert @ Freewill – 7:00 p.m.

May 30 – Memorial Day Parade (HS to American Legion Post) – appx. 6:00 p.m.

June 2 – HS Band Concert @ PAC – 7:30 p.m.

Athletics: (home games)

5/19 – Boys JV Tennis vs. Victor – 4:15 p.m.

5/27 – Boys Modified Baseball vs. Penn Yan @ MS – 4:15

5/27 – Girls Modified Softball vs. Penn Yas @ MS – 4:15

6/2 – Boys Modified Baseball vs. Canandaigua @ MS – 4:15

6/2 – Girls Modified Softball vs. Canandaigua @ MS – 4:15

6/6 – Boys Modified Baseball vs. Mynderse @ MS – 4:15

6/6 – Girls Modified Softball vs. Mynderse @ MS – 4:15

3. Attachments:

- a) Four County School Boards Annual Meeting Information
- b) Supt. Letter re: Hunter near school
- c) Walworth Town Board Meeting Minutes – 5/1
- d) Ontario Town Board Meeting Minutes – 4/28