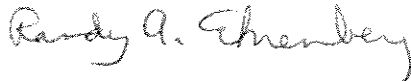


NORTH COLONIE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
91 Fiddlers Lane
LATHAM, NEW YORK 12110-5349

TO: Members of The Board of Education

FROM: Randy A. Ehrenberg, Superintendent 

RE: **Annual Evaluation Report 2006-07**

DATE: November 2007

This year's Annual Evaluation Report represents North Colonie's twentieth annual accounting of instructional and support programs. This is the seventh such report that I have been in charge of producing. The Annual Evaluation Report is our district's internal educational audit. The information contained within the document comes from reports submitted by our principals and supervisors. Their examination of each program, analyses and recommendations lead us forward and help us continually raise the bar for our students and ourselves.

We are extremely fortunate to have two assistant superintendents with remarkable talents and with tremendous long-term commitment to our school community and also an exceptional administrative team unparalleled in the Capital Region. I am deeply indebted to both Joseph Corr, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, and Thomas Rybaltowski, Assistant Superintendent for Business and our district administrators, for their assistance completing this document and for their tireless efforts on behalf of North Colonie.

As always, a number of talented staff members gave of their time and experience in the preparation and printing of this report. My thanks are extended especially to Rhonda Madigan, who worked diligently to put the document in a new organizational format, Janice Patrie, Sue Krosky, Marian Coffey, and Kathryn Bell for their assistance. I also wish to thank Anne Manzella, North Colonie Art Supervisor, and the North Colonie Art Department for the cover picture and the photos in the art section, and Joy Horsman and Mike Cavaleri for the photos included in the report.

Aside from those of us who create this report, the individuals who spend the greatest amount of time reading and scrutinizing it are the nine members of the North Colonie Board of Education. As with a myriad of other materials that they receive on a weekly basis in their roles on our Board, they review this document with great care in their continuous efforts to support the work of all of us in this district and to understand where we have been as we continue to advance. Without the support they provide, we would not accomplish all that we do and, on behalf of all of the employees of this district, we dedicate the 2006-07 Annual Evaluation Report to Paula D'Orazio, Ann Foster, Linda Harrison, Joan Hart, Theresa Joslin, Mary Nardolillo, Jacqueline Orr, Mary-Ellen Raup, and David Rosenthal, and we thank them for their rich contributions.

The two pillars of strength in our district are our program of academic excellence and high achievement and our strong, responsible fiscal management. These two features

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of our district account for our repeated standing as one of the top three districts out of 85 in the Capital Region as determined annually by the Capital District Business Review. We remain committed to both providing high quality comprehensive educational programs in North Colonie and to fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers.

With the successful annexation vote of October behind us, we look forward to the Maplewood School District becoming one with North Colonie. We stand committed to creating a smooth transition for all involved.

This year's annual evaluation has a new format. The overview section is a generic description of the philosophy, components, and activities that characterize each of our academic programs. Many of these elements remain constant over time and therefore, this overview is a document that will contain minor revisions from year to year. After the overview section, there is a section where the assessment results, highlights, and district goals for each academic subject are featured. Commentary on the assessment results may be found after the charts highlighting the data, in the highlights or in the goals section. We hope that by separating the overview from the assessment data, highlights and goals, the document will be clearer and more understandable.

The school year 2006-2007 was marked by continued striving for excellence. Although we were not selected as the top school by the Capital District Business Review, we were nonetheless ranked third out of the 85 schools in the Capital Region. This extremely high ranking is reflective of the commitment of our faculty, staff, administrators, students, and families to continued academic excellence. Again, this year, graduation at Shaker High School was a celebratory event, as over 97% of our students graduated with Regents diplomas. We continue to take pride in these outstanding achievements.

The district remains committed to infusing technology into the classroom and also using technology to effectively analyze data on student learning. Our vision has always been tied to teaching and learning and as part of our initiative on differentiating instruction, we believe in the capacity of technology to allow students to learn in new and different ways. In the 2006-2007 school year, under the capable leadership of Galina Kats, informational technology was reorganized and instructional and administrative technology were consolidated under one umbrella. This marked an important step in committing the district's resources toward this important endeavor. We are also devoted to the staff development of our faculty and much of the activities for 2006-2007 were focused on using technology tools to enhance instruction. Video, Mimio, and the Smartboard, are just a few of the new tools that were featured in North Colonie's classrooms. Observations of students learning in these classrooms show that they are engaged and on task. Subsequent conversations with our students also indicate that they learn better because they are engaged and because they can visualize the instruction presented to them. For the upcoming school year, we are pleased to announce that we now have a full time Director of Informational Technology, Dr. Elizabeth McNamara. Dr. McNamara will hope to sustain and expand upon the wonderful initiatives begun by Mrs. Kats, and we remain most excited about the many ways in which technology can enhance instruction K-12.

In English Language Arts, we continue to implement the best instructional practices in reading and writing. Our balanced literacy approach to reading instruction is now in its seventh year. As with all good staff development, it is continuous, consistent, and ongoing. Most important is the fact that we continue to take control of our own staff development and rely less frequently on the assistance of outside consultants. With our turnkey trainers firmly in place in grade 6, building principals have capable assistants in providing staff development to our existing staff as well as offering our new teachers the proper orientation to the district reading program. Most importantly, by emphasizing the same skills and components in reading instruction across the district, we have a standardized program that offers equity to all our students across our six elementary buildings. With the coming of Maplewood School as the seventh district elementary school, we are committed to bringing the Maplewood staff on board with our balanced literacy program and are committed to providing the corresponding staff development to them.

The work on the district revision of the writing curriculum made substantial strides during the 2006-2007 school year. This past year, we expanded upon the universals for writing instruction in grade 12 and developed a framework for writing instruction. Taking these universals as representative of our core philosophy on the teaching of writing and the best practices for writing instruction, we then went on to develop units K-12. These units were implemented throughout the spring in the elementary schools and will be implemented in grades 7-12 throughout the 2007-2008 school year. For this year, we plan to debrief and analyze the instruction of these units and then commence the development of a new introductory unit across grade levels K-12. We will then begin the process of curriculum mapping K-12 during the summer of 2008. We continue to be enthusiastic about this work and its prospects for developing our students as powerful writers with strong voices.

Differentiated instruction is yet another initiative focused on promoting the maximum learning and achievement of each and every child. During grade level meetings throughout the 2006-2007 school year, as well as through summer curriculum work in 2007, North Colonie teachers and administrators worked to develop more units of instruction and all the disciplines incorporated the key components of differentiated instruction. With this important endeavor, we carried to fulfillment the idea that students can learn and express their knowledge in many ways. Sharing with faculty the strategies as well as the units developed through summer curriculum work, remain our key means of advancing this important initiative. It represents the district's strong commitment to maximizing the learning potential of each and every child.

The district also continues to celebrate diversity through the globalization initiative. In December, a group of faculty members were trained by the group known as TRAC (Tackling Racism in Albany County). This training provided faculty, administrators, and community members the opportunity to become discussion leaders for TRAC study groups. Two literature study groups also explored the issue of diversity in schools by reading Lisa Delpit's Other People's Children in the fall and The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down by Anne Fadiman in the spring semester. The fall study circle was highlighted by a video conference by Lisa Delpit. In both instances, our faculty and

staff, through reading and deliberative discussion, gained insight into the issues of diversity and its impact upon families, teaching, and learning.

The district continues to take great pride in the fact that it spends a considerable amount of time devoted to research and development of its educational program. Again, this past summer, our K-12 staff participated in 45 curriculum writing and staff development projects. These efforts covered the entire curriculum including art, music, health education, special education, career and technical education, foreign language, and English language arts, science, math, and social studies. We are anticipating the benefits of the work that was done this summer preparing for the implementation of foreign language in grade 5 and 6. Under the direction of Mrs. Kats, teachers developed an exploratory program for foreign language in grades 5 and 6 that will expose our upper elementary students to French, Spanish, German, and Russian foreign language and culture. We anticipate this program beginning in the 2008-2009 school year and will continue to work on its inclusion in the elementary program.

New York State testing continues to be a challenge. This was the second year of test administration in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3-8. This testing is part of the federal No Child Left Behind mandate. Due to exhaustive efforts of our elementary and junior high administrators and teachers, the program continues to be a success. Nonetheless, we continue to be concerned about its impact on instructional time and its implications for students with special needs and English language learners are also a source of great concern. We also continued to use the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to provide us additional information to make good decisions with regard to providing additional services for students in need. During the upcoming school year, we will be using a more up-to-date version of the IOWA tests and we are working diligently to enhance our capacity to understand and apply testing data to teaching and learning.

Summary of Assessment Results

On standardized assessments, North Colonie's students performed well during the 2006-2007 school year. The new state assessments in grades 3-8 assess standards at each grade level. This is different from the previous assessments that were given at grades 4 and 8. The former assessments were benchmark assessments that assessed the entire program K-4 and 5-8 respectively. Thus, to compare student achievement on these former assessments is not valid and we will need to get data from several years before we can establish trends. We continue to exceed New York State norms at each of the grade levels in both English language arts and in math but continue to fall in the middle of the Suburban Council in grades 3-7 in English language arts. However, by grade 8, our students are at or near the top on the ELA assessment. In mathematics, our students tend to do better and generally are in the upper half to upper third among Suburban Council schools. This year, on most of the state assessments in grades 3-8, we saw some improvement in the number of our students scoring at levels 3 and 4.

At the high school level, a review of data shows that students are at or near the top for the five Regents exams needed for graduation. This data indicates that the overall instructional program at North Colonie is preparing our students to achieve the content

and skills they need for success upon exiting from K-12 education. These results also reflect the strong efforts of our faculty, staff, and administration in identifying the needs of students and meeting those needs through a variety of interventions including academic intervention services.

We are also proud of solid results on other New York State tests. The New York State social studies test for grade 5 is administered each November. This exam tests content from grades 3 and 4. Our students continue to do well on this test. Ninety-three percent of them achieved competency by scoring at level 3 or 4. On the grade 8 social studies assessment, 88% of our students scored at level 3 or 4. Science results in grade 4 also exhibited solid achievement as 96% of our students attained competency by scoring at level 3 or 4. At the junior high school, our achievement on the science 8 exam was also solid as 94% of our students achieved at level 3 and 4. We continue to be confident in the quality of our science and social studies instruction as it is apparent that our students have a solid grounding in content and skills attendant to both disciplines.

As noted earlier, the Shaker High School graduating class of 2007 was also marked by strong academic achievement with 97% of our students walking across the stage and graduating with a Regents diploma. This marks the third year of a very high graduation rate and is evidence of the outstanding education offered to students at Shaker High School. Over 85% of the class completed three or more years of foreign language study and 50% of grade 12 students completed a five-year foreign language sequence. This past May, 267 students sat for 490 Advanced Placement examinations. Our Advanced Placement program continues to remain strong as over 93% of the students scored at level 3 or better. Shaker High School also provides multiple opportunities for students to achieve college level credit in high school. These programs include the University in the High School, College in the High School, and partnerships with Schenectady County Community College, Hudson Valley Community College, and the University at Albany. Our dropout rate remains low at 1.5% and in announcing their post-secondary plans, 94% of our students plan to attend two or four-year colleges, with 63% attending a four-year college. We are pleased by these exemplary results and the reflection on the cumulative hard work of our faculty and staff in K-12.

North Colonie continues to be committed to developing the whole child and to achieving strong academic results through a comprehensive general education. We consistently review and reflect upon teaching and learning and make the adjustments needed to promote better results. The collective efforts of an exemplary faculty and staff, a knowledgeable and supportive Board of Education, and an actively involved community all serve to make North Colonie a school and community committed to working toward teaching and learning excellence.