

REPORT OF THE ELLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Last week I reviewed the Assessment Report of the Ellis School by the New England League of Middle Schools that was conducted on May 10-12, 2004. A comment by the chair of the visiting committee caught my eye and I think it worth repeating. The comment was "As we said good bye, we felt that we were leaving wonderful educators and newfound friends behind." I have shared with many of you that my impressions and observations of our school are very positive. We are blessed with a devoted, experienced and competent faculty and staff. My daily visits to a variety of classrooms reveal students at all levels who are engaged in learning, appreciative of their teachers, safe, and well adjusted. This is not to suggest that we have attained a level beyond which there is no reason to improve. Like any public school charged with the education of all students, there are needs yet to be met and skills to be developed and refined. There is also the ever present need to focus our collective efforts to establish a communications process that truly allows for greater participation by all factions of our school community.

Ellis continues to embrace a co-principal leadership model designed to provide equal focus and support for all students and staff at the elementary and middle school. This model seems to work well for us and will be continued as part of the Strategic Plan for our school district conducted by the New England School Development Council Project Team (NESDEC). We will begin the search for a permanent middle school principal during spring of the 2009 school year. I am indebted to the help, advice, leadership and collaboration from Dawn Lewis during my interim tenure as the middle school principal for this current school year. Her knowledge of Fremont young people and their families has been invaluable. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Ms. Lewis. She is a real professional.

The middle school continues its work towards a teaching and learning process that recognizes and accommodates each child's learning styles, needs, and expectations. Our teachers constantly avail themselves of staff development opportunities and related professional experiences that help them identify and effectively meet the needs of all our children. Assessing the effectiveness of teaching and learning is an on-going process that has great significance on what we do at Ellis.

Fremont students are doing well at Sanborn Regional High School. A recent look at the standings of our students at the end of the school year 2007-2008 indicates that of 165 students attending (only 12 seniors in attendance) 75% achieved at 2.5 or higher Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) based on a scale of 4.0. Twenty-four of 54 freshmen achieved at a 3.0 or above. Twenty-four sophomores of 61 earned a 3.0 or higher. Eleven juniors of 38 achieved at a 3.0 or higher. Of the twelve seniors in attendance, six achieved at a 3.0 or higher. Approximately 14 of a total of 165 in attendance received below a 2.0. Although grades are not the total measure of a student's success in high school, they are one of the more significant measures.

We recognize the importance of continuing our work with Sanborn Regional to align our grade level expectations with their high school curriculum expectations. This process requires commitment and time but is considered essential in preparing our students for success in their high school classroom experience.

A new science program entitled Science 4 All is being instituted in all grades that emphasizes an inquiry-based approach to the teaching of this important curriculum area. All science teachers will eventually be trained in the use of this instructional model. The uses of technology in the implementation of inquiry-based instructional strategies is a very important part of this program. This Science 4 All program is part of an initiative to improve science teaching and learning by the New Hampshire Math and Science Partnership project.

The Gifted and Talented Program is in its second full school year at Ellis and much has been accomplished. The needs and interests of this special group of young people continues to be identified and addressed with specific activities both in and outside the classroom environment. The Gifted and Talented Coordinator consults with teachers and administrators concerning these enrichment activities and programs and provides leadership necessary to expand these opportunities. The coordinator meets frequently with students concerning special topics, competitions and interests.

The middle school is committed to developing a standards-based report card that meets the expectations and needs of everyone within the school community. The process has been somewhat convoluted and confusing as we have moved ahead to meet the variety of challenges that accompany this task. I am convinced that the final results of our efforts that will be presented to the Fremont School Board at the conclusion of this school year will work for everyone. It is my hope that the Board will adopt the recommendation for implementation during the school year 2009-2010.

I am very grateful and appreciative of the support and leadership of Normand Tanguay, Superintendent of Schools. I am also appreciative for the support and leadership of all members of the Fremont School Board. The Fremont PTA continues to be a strongly supportive and contributive force for our school, and, along with other parents of our children, help us to address and meet our many obligations. Our teachers are terrific and are truly professionals in every sense of the word. I am particularly appreciative of the very competent and dedicated work of our secretaries, Sherri Ficker and Theresa Blades. They are wonderful and do so much for everyone. Our Maintenance Supervisor, Scott Brown, is among the finest as are members of his staff. I know perhaps better than most, after 51 years in education, that a school cannot rise above the expectations set for it by the community in which it exists. You should be proud of Ellis as it is a place devoted to the education of your children. I would want my own children here! I can give Ellis no greater compliment. It has been a privilege for me to serve to as the middle school interim principal for this 2008-2009 school year. I wish you all continued success.

Respectfully submitted,

William H. Marston
Middle School Interim Principal