

Report of the Superintendent

It is difficult to believe that another year has passed and again I have the privilege of letting you know the great things that have come to pass this year at Ellis School! The District continues to work through the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. For the 2016-2017 schoolyear, a STEaM program (science, technology, engineering, design (art), and math curriculum) was piloted in grades 5 and 6 with the hope of expanding it school-wide for the 2017-2018 school year. This new program is being spear-headed by Shona Emery who spent her summer writing lesson plans and receiving professional development to begin leading our students' journey into this new and important scholastic endeavor. Students also began receiving instruction in executive functioning skills, also known as work study habits. This was done through the development of a unified K-8 curriculum and its implementation is throughout the building. Students will receive progress scores in the many aspects of this area on their report cards this year so that parents can see how this is being included in their student's curriculum. The ability to organize, break work down into chunks, think strategically and logically, and more are all a part of work study habits and will make Ellis students more successful both now and in the future in anything that they wish to do. There is still more work to do to meet the plan. One area of the Strategic Plan in which ground was lost this year was in our world languages program. Ellis was unable to secure a part-time Spanish teacher again. There is a state-wide shortage of teachers of Spanish as most schools are seeing the benefit of having Spanish taught at all levels. There was an abundance of full-time positions and our part-time teacher moved on. Therefore, the FY18 budget includes a full-time position for a Spanish teacher in the hopes of securing a teacher for the long-term.

THE ELLIS SCHOOL BUILDING

The Ellis School Building has improved immensely in health and safety over the last four years. With the abatement of the asbestos tiles last year, and the replacement and upgrading of much of the older systems, students now enter a building that is cleaner and healthier than ever. This year, most likely due to the drought, the Ellis water system failed its municipal well water test and we spent several weeks working through the system, upgrading and/or replacing various parts. From a new, more powerful well pump, to an additional holding tank, to replacing high water use toilets, it has been a busy year, but it has made the difference. Tests are now coming back clean and the water pressure in the building is better than it has been since my tenure began four years ago.

Much work has been done, but we hope to refit the elementary level bathrooms this summer. Some of the fixtures there date back to the original building of 1950. More hallway floor tiles are in need of replacement as well.

STUDENTS AND STAFF

The population of students at Ellis School was supposed to have dropped significantly for this school year, but instead it held nearly steady. Despite a projected enrollment of 32 students in Kindergarten, 49 students showed up for school, and in third grade it was necessary to add a classroom and teacher due to a last minute rush of new students.

Last June, we saw the retirement of Kathy Whitehouse (teacher), Mary Hale (case manager), and Brenda Fabrizio (psychologist). All were long-time staff members. This year, we welcomed Hannah Gage to grade 4. Erin Drake moved from paraprofessional to grade 3 teacher to fill the last minute need. We replaced retiring and leaving case managers with Joanne Hernon, Jennifer Scott. Karin Doherty, Joanne Hennessey, Matt Hewson, and DeAnna Lester joined us as paraprofessionals. Natalie Klopman took the school psychologist position. Cheryl Rowell moved from substitute teacher/para to Library Technology Assistant. We also welcome Karen McKusker as the new school nurse. David Perkins took over Supervisor of Building and Grounds, and Wayne Hersey came on as part-time custodian.

THE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

With the recent change in administration in Washington DC and the US Department of Education, we wait to see what will happen with the requirements placed upon the public school system. The new Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act), is still being interpreted at the state level and from those interpretations, the NH Department of Education will set up its rules by which we run our schools. Pretty much at the moment, we are in a holding pattern. We live in interesting times.

MANY THANKS

After four years of serving the Fremont School District, I have given my notice to the School Board and will be leaving the district at the end of my contract on June 30, 2017. I have enjoyed serving the Fremont School District and take many good memories with me for which I am thankful.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Betsey S. Cox-Buteau
Superintendent



Voters at the February 2016 Primary, held in the Ellis School Gymnasium

Photo courtesy of Neal Janvrin