

November 14, 2006

Partnering with Concord

Backwards planning, an educational expression that means plan with the end result in mind, is a term that is salient to systemic planning for Carlisle Public Schools. Most students graduate from Concord Carlisle High School, entering an outstanding array of higher learning institutions, so early collaboration benefits both Carlisle and Concord students. Parents of students at the high school discuss where each system's strengths lie, and we can learn from one another. Dr. Brenda Finn, Superintendent of Concord-Carlisle, and I are strong supporters of educational discourse leading to district collaboration.

If we visualize the desired result, it is to provide a rich educational experience that prepares Carlisle students for CCHS, leading to bright futures in numerous careers. We hope that their experience in Carlisle helps students develop as student leaders and life long learners who excel in literary, math, the sciences and the arts as well as appreciate diversity; we also strive to encourage students to enter STEM careers (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and to develop a foundation in world languages leading to their potential as bi-lingual or tri-lingual speakers so they are prepared for a global community and the economic needs of the twenty-first century.

In the reality of our smaller system, the Carlisle School, we are expanding our work with Concord to build alliances to provide the best education for our children. Here are some of our joint ventures to date:

- 🍏 Monthly meetings for the superintendents to foster collegial dialogs between our K-8 systems
- 🍏 Administrative meetings with superintendents, assistant superintendent and principals
- 🍏 Collaboration between the world language departments to provide similar experiences and opportunities
- 🍏 Joint purchasing of electronic whiteboards to receive better pricing
- 🍏 Collaborative staff development in writing through the Columbia University Teaching College Reading and Writing Project
- 🍏 Sharing progress on STEM initiatives such as Lego-Robotics in Grade 5 in Concord and our parent-teacher partnerships
- 🍏 Beginning dialogs on elementary math
- 🍏 Representing our districts and Massachusetts superintendents in China

As we pursue academic excellence for all of our students, we will continue to work closely with our allies in Concord. We look forward to building a deep, reflective partnership that benefits our children.

Thanking Our Parent Groups

Our pursuit of excellence is regularly enhanced by the generosity of our parent organizations, the Carlisle Education Foundation and the Carlisle School Association. As a result of their fund-raising efforts at last spring's auction, we have been able to purchase a number of tools to help our teachers. These include a portable computer lab, DVD players and speakers, and a new color

printer for the school library. We are also in the process of researching and preparing to purchase new electronic whiteboards for 3 classrooms. All of us at the Carlisle Public School are deeply grateful to both the CSA and the CEF for their unwavering support.

CEF Davida Fox-Melanson Grants

We are very grateful to the CEF for the generous Davida Fox-Melanson grant of \$6800, which will support teacher attendance at math workshops and will allow Principal Paul Graseck and three teachers to attend the annual conference of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Thanks to the CEF and to all the parents who contribute to the CEF fundraisers.

Veterans' Day

Veterans' Day was recognized in Carlisle last Friday. While political views abound on the war, the reality is that the men and women serving in the military are our sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, cousins and neighbors.

When I was in eighth grade, our English project was writing to a soldier in Vietnam. My assigned soldier, Chris, was a nineteen year old, and we exchanged several letters. In May of that year, I was pulled from class and informed that he was coming back to the hospital as "he was injured as he walked on a mine." Our first meeting was at the Veterans' Hospital in Jamaica Plain, and I was unprepared to meet a "casualty of war," a nineteen year old changed forever.

On that day, my understanding of war, a topic studied for many years in school, changed forever: it was not about countries, money, land, domination, religion, heroes or victory, but about young men and women who would never be the same. Chris' legs were gone, his depression deep, and his silence telling. The hollow look in his eyes took months to leave, and the innocent spark of youth was vanquished forever. I left the hospital to return to my safe home in Belmont, where high school students were marching down Concord Avenue to protest the Vietnam War. Paralyzed by the dichotomy, I retreated from the political agendas without an eighth grade opinion, instead understanding what war meant at the most emotional level: young people were injured and dying, on both sides of the battle. As neighbors were drafted over the next few years, and my brothers were not, I deeply understood what this meant. Regardless of one's political persuasion, how could a nation turn on Chris and his friends at the Veterans' Hospital? How could we send men and women to war and not support them when they came home? How could we ignore the obvious pain in their eyes?

As our children go to Iraq, history repeats itself in many ways unless we are the guardians of respectful behavior where we celebrate diversity, appreciate different opinions and thank those who serve us. I am proud to be in a community that recognizes and supports our soldiers and veterans, regardless of our political persuasions. On November 11th, Carlisle paused to recognize the men and women, many still living, who served us through two world wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, and Iraq. A grateful, and sometimes ungrateful, nation salutes our men and women in all branches of the military, both past and present, on this Veteran's Day.

Marie Doyle