
QAHS NEWS BULLETIN

Volume 1, Issue 2

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STATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Congratulations to all faculty and staff! Last week I received an email acknowledging that our school is **IN GOOD STANDING**. Henry Ford stated, "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." Progress happens when there are individuals who are diligent to make it happen. We are fortunate to have the professionals who can make a difference. Thank you.

Good Morning!

I wanted to extend my heartfelt wishes to each of you (and your school teams) as you have been recognized by SED as a School in Good Standing under state and federal NCLB guidelines. For some, this was a short-lived obstacle, but for many, the identification as a SINI, CA, PFR, Restructuring School was a label worn for several years.

To your credit, your school has beaten the odds by being designated as a School In Good Standing, and I am so happy to have been a part of this event in your school's history. I wish you continued success.

Best wishes-

Mohamed

**Mohamed Yasin
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Let's celebrate this first accomplishment of the new school year at our Department Meetings in Flushing on October 5th.

Student Health - H1N1

Monday morning you will receive a FAQ document on the city's plans for the flu season. This document will be mailed to parents and posters will be placed around the building reminding all of us of what we can do to prevent the spread of the flu. The NYC Department of Education and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene have information on their websites.

Visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/flu/flu.shtml> or www.nyc.gov/flu for the most up-to-date information.

Good News Phone Calls

I may have shared this story with some of you, so forgive me if you have heard it before. When my son was in preschool, the precocious child he was, many teachers found him to be challenging. As a working parent my son was in child care for about ten hours a day. This was not an ideal situation for me as a parent, but I really did not have another option. One day, I picked him up and I could see the teacher was anxious to speak with me. She spent considerable time telling me how "bad" my four-year son had been referring to one particular incident. As a parent, it upset me terribly that my son had misbehaved. On the other hand, as an educator, I began to think about how educators give parents feedback and how the kind of feedback can make or break a relationship. In this case, I could not understand how the teacher could not find one positive thing to say to me about my four-year old. She dwelled on something negative that lasted approximately twenty minutes when the better part of the day was obviously uneventful.

You know working with our students can be most challenging! Sometimes a negative situation can have a significant impact on how we feel and react to a situation. I would like you to try to put yourself in the position of hearing something negative about your child, grandchild, niece or any other loved one. As a guardian, you may begin to feel beat up upon, wonder what you did wrong as a parent/guardian, and feel resentful and/or angry. You may turn off to those who are giving you this negative information and avoid contact with them. This is not the type of relationship we want to build with our parents. As a school, we are trying to build a collaborative community with all of our constituencies. This includes our parents. We can best accomplish an ongoing line of communication when we have a balance in the types of communication we are sharing.

Something positive can be said about every student in our school at one time or another. Let's think about our students and find at least one positive comment we could say to a parent. I would like you to identify each week two to three students (different students each week) and take the time to give a "Good News Phone Call" to a parent or guardian. You will be surprised how this call can make a difference to a parent and student.

As for me, I found another school for my son where he could be nurtured and challenged academically.

From Bill ... walkthroughs

A number of years ago, I had the opportunity to shadow for one entire week the principal of Lehman High School, Robert Leder, who happened to be at the time the most senior High School principal in the city. We met early in the morning, walked to the top floor, and proceeded to conduct “walkthroughs” as we traveled back downstairs. We visited every classroom, spending on average 3-4 minutes in each room, and completed our itinerary at his office just in time for lunch. By the end of the week, I learned an important lesson: to keep his or her finger on the pulse, an instructional leader needs to be in the classroom frequently and regularly. Ever since then, I have incorporated walkthroughs into my own practice. For me, these visits serve many purposes. They allow me to maintain regular contact with students and to determine their academic needs. It would be difficult, for instance, to lead any meaningful curriculum development without knowing what those needs are. They also allow me to develop a more accurate and nuanced picture of the quality of instruction with which we are providing students. The stress of that one yearly, often unannounced, formal observation is alleviated, because it is no longer the sole measure of one’s work. Finally, walkthroughs promote professional growth: teachers will benefit from my ongoing feedback, and I will benefit from the opportunity to continue my own learning. Starting next week, I will begin conducting regular walkthroughs. I look forward to visiting your classes and beginning what will be an ongoing conversation about what matters most: teaching and learning.

From Beverly ... Learningwalks

Last year for the mock Quality Review, I informed the team that I wanted teachers to be a part of our learningwalks because I felt that it was important for our community to see and understand what and how outsiders hold us accountable. I believe this practice provides us with a school-wide view of our best practices as well as areas we need to develop as a school, and to help formulate meaningful professional development. As such, we plan to include you in these learningwalks as much as possible to invite honest, professional, non-evaluative feedback about teaching and learning.

What are learningwalks?

- Learningwalks are organized visits to a school’s learning areas to focus on:
 - How teachers teach
 - How students learn
 - How students are assessed

Learningwalks focus in on certain instructional principles to improve teaching such as:

- Questioning strategies
- Classroom management
- Differentiated instruction
- Cooperative learning
- Wait time in the questioning process
- Classroom environment

Learningwalks allow for Reflection

As reflective practioners, we learn from our teaching experiences to modify our instructional practices to better meet the needs of our students.

What are some questions that walkers may ask students?

- “What is the purpose of the lesson?”
- “What are students learning?”
- “How are students being assessed?”
- “Why are you doing this assignment?”
- “How is this lesson useful to you?”
- “Can you explain what it is you are working on?”
- “Can you tell me how you know if you are correct?”
- “May I see your class notes?”

Why do we advocate Learningwalks and Reflective Questioning?

- Gain a sense of the current state of instruction and learning
- Enable educators to share strategies with one another
- Create a system of excellence in teaching and learning
- Facilitate discussion and reflection on what is working well
- Provide opportunities for continuous learning and improvement

As a result of our learningwalks last year, we began to address:

1. Lesson objectives
2. Accountable talk.
3. Higher order thinking questions (Bloom’s Taxonomy)
4. Differentiated instruction
5. Student Assessment

We will continue to work on these areas and use best practices to improve teaching and learning.

SIDEBAR

Hispanic Heritage Month – let's not forget this group of students. It is important that we recognize all ethnic groups in our school. How will you be supporting our Hispanic students? Thanks Jenny for getting started with your wonderful poster.

Hispanic Education Resources, Issues, & Scholarships<http://www.nea.org/home/15648.htm>

Please see Angeleke to join. The **School Leadership Team** is seeking faculty, staff, students, and parents to join our leadership community. The core responsibility of each SLT is to develop the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) that is aligned with the school-based budget. SLTs are strongly encouraged to solicit input from various school community constituencies in order to ensure that all voices are heard regarding the needs of students.

Emergency information form will be distributed to you this week. Please try to capture as many students as possible so we can obtain updated information. This will make our outreach efforts easier. Make sure students include cell numbers for their parents/guardians and themselves.

It is important that students come to school prepared with the materials needed. It is just as critical to make sure students are organized so they can be successful. If you have noticed on the yearly calendar, posted in the main office, regular **notebook checks** are scheduled. This first week make sure students have the required materials, which are listed on the weekly calendar.

We have a number of team meetings scheduled this year to address the wide variety of issues in our school. In the past, you may not have been informed about the outcomes and decisions resulting from these meetings. This year, each team will be reporting through this news bulletin so we all are aware of the going-ons in the school. This is an effort for us to improve our communication. Please let us know if it is working for you.

Constitution Week Reminder– September 17th through September 23rd

The materials are free and include videos on DVD of a discussion with Supreme Court justices and high school students and talking radio programs reviewing highlights of the Supreme Court this term. Let's hear from the social studies department about their plans for this special week.

FIND OUT MORE ON THE CONSTITUTION DAY WEB SITE.
[HTTP://WWW.ANNENBERGCLASSROOM.ORG/DEFAULT.ASPX](http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/default.aspx)

Questions, Answers, and Suggestions

As we mentioned at our meeting on September 8th, we would use this bulletin as a forum to improve communication. There were so many unanswered questions, mainly because of our time constraints, we will begin to address as best as possible a few each week to provide you with the feedback you need. Please note some of the questions may need clarification so we can best respond. If you need additional information, please speak with us or drop a note in the communication box in the main office (coming soon).

How can teachers keep students who are struggling engaged?

There is no one response to this question. First, students struggle for a number of reasons: the work may be too difficult, there has been continuous failure and the student expects more of the same, expectations may not be clear, the project may be too large and overwhelming, etc. I would recommend giving students opportunities to have successes early on, so there is an immediate sense of accomplishment. Start with a student's strengths and build upon those while addressing areas that need improvement. Also, try to make learning relevant to students' lives. You will often hear from students, why do I have to learn this? When a connection can be made, students can often see the significance of learning. It is also suggested to divide large projects into smaller pieces with frequent check-points and opportunities to edit and correct work giving students the chance to improve their work.

Is lesson planning not still the singular purview of the teacher?

Teachers may choose the format, organization and physical aspects of the lesson plan. There are certain elements of a lesson (see handbook on lesson planning) which will make it more effective. If, for example, the objective of the lesson is missing, one may question, what were the expectations of the lesson?, did the students know why they were learning ____?, and/or how did the teacher know if the expectations were met? Other considerations in lesson planning are, how are teacher planning to differentiate instruction?, how did the teacher plan for academic rigor when all of the questions are literal?, how were the students assessed to determine if the students learned the information? An effective lesson plan is like having a good recipe. You need all of the ingredients to make it effective. If you are missing an element, it can throw off the recipe. The key to planning is to make sure that the not only the plan but the teaching from the plan is the most effective.

Is it verbal abuse to repeat a statement made by a student?

While the Chancellor's Regulations do not address this, I would avoid repeating a statement in front of students. This could be easily misinterpreted as your having used abusive language toward the student.