



Superintendent's Bulletin

Triton Regional School District

April 11, 2008

Sandra J. Halloran, Ed.D, Superintendent of Schools

Volume 2, Issue 3

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A Message From The Superintendent

The Triton Regional School District is completing a great year that saw the reinstatement of several positions and addition of new positions to address the needs of our students. Last spring, all three Triton Regional School District member communities made a concerted effort to fund a budget that provided an increase in their assessments greater than 10%. At this time I want to offer a sincere thank you to all the parents and community members for your support of the Triton Regional School District.

For 2007-2008, Triton has attracted more new school choice students than in previous years. The number of new students is in the high 30's, with the net increase in school choice enrollment being 23 students. This number takes into account seniors that graduated and, therefore, were removed from the school choice roster. Along with this increase in students coming to our district, we have also seen the number of students leaving the district level off.

During last year's budget process, a promise was made to have an average increase in assessments of no more than 5% to the towns. As a result, the FY09 budget primarily reflects level services with the exception of a few key additions. The majority of increased spending is reflected in personnel. This increase is the result of contracts that were settled during the 2006/07 school year. We knew that due to these new contracts the 2008/09 budget would need to include a substantial increase to salary lines as corrections were made in the Teacher and Instructional Assistant salary schedules. The Triton Regional School District has had teachers leave in past years due to our salary schedule not being competitive with surrounding area school districts. This fact was particularly true for teachers with less years of experience. Therefore, we negotiated a contract that provided a greater increase for less experienced teachers and we are now competitive within our area. To attract and retain highly qualified, effective teachers is a significant challenge for all school districts.

The last of the major increases in the FY09 budget are focused around Special Education. As we have brought more students back to the district from Out of District Special Education placements, the costs for contracted services and summer programming has increased significantly. By increasing the length of the day and the number of days that the summer program is offered, we have been able to service students in Triton rather than having them attend residential and day programs outside of the district. The other major Special Education increase is in contracted services. Contracted services funds are used to pay for related services that students require according to their Individual Education Plans.

The FY09 proposed budget provides for continued efforts as we improve our technology standing. There are three major additions in the technology budget for the 2009 fiscal year. First and foremost is the addition of a total network management services contract. This contract has an annual cost of \$145,000 and was signed in January, 2008. Due to the demands of systems for both student instruction and administration of the district, the complexity and size of the network have grown. The district took a major step forward

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A Message From The Superintendent *(continued)*

this past fall regarding infrastructure and capabilities of the network. Now that we have the physical structure in place, there is a need for a higher and more diverse level of expertise to manage functionality to increase the “up time” of the network. With all computers tied into the network for file saving, internet access, database management, and network applications, we are now entirely dependent on the functioning of the network.

In addition to the network management contract, we have also included the funding for a district Coordinator of Instructional and Administrative Technology. The role of the Coordinator of Instructional and Administrative Technology will be to oversee the day to day functions of all aspects of technology. The primary focus will be on guiding all decisions related to technology towards our ultimate goal of having the most current technology in the hands of our teachers and students.

In addition to instructional coordination, this person will oversee and be responsible for the maintenance of all district student and personnel data. This coordinator will be responsible for all Department of Education Student Information Management System (SIMS) and Educational Personnel Information Management System (EPIMS) data submissions which occur routinely throughout the year.

The final major addition to the budget is the continuation of the technology refresh plan. In fiscal 2008, \$75,000 was budgeted for new leases of desktop computers. These leases provided 30 new computers across the district. This cost will remain for an additional three years at which time the leases will expire and presumably be replaced. This year, there is an additional \$50,000 budgeted, bringing the total for leases up to \$125,000. The new lease will provide approximately 250 new PC’s and laptops for the district.

In order to continue improving class size at the elementary level, four new classroom teachers are part of the FY09 budget. One classroom teacher will be added at both Newbury Elementary School and Pine Grove School while two classroom teachers will be added at Salisbury Elementary School.

The library /media and instructional technology programs at the middle school and high school have been reviewed and re-structured. In order to meet the needs of both schools, the following changes have been made. First, rather than have full-time library/media specialists for both schools, the two sites will share one library/media specialist and will each have a full-time library assistant. An instructional technology specialist will also be shared between the middle school and high school. This specialist will continue to have teaching responsibilities at the middle school and will provide instructional technology services for both schools. This model allows the middle school and the high school to benefit from both library/media and instructional technology services.

One new K-8 mathematics/science and technology-engineering coordinator position is part of the FY09 budget. This curriculum coordinator will work directly with the assistant superintendent and the principals to provide oversight of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The coordinator will seek out alternative funding sources such as grants, provide community outreach, and conduct professional learning programs. Most importantly, the coordinator will work with teachers to provide the highest quality learning opportunities for all of our students and to ensure that improved student achievement is ongoing.

Upcoming Events

- **Mon., April 14th;**
Middle School/High School Presentation
7:00 PM
Triton High School Library
- **April 21st through April 25th;**
No School
Spring Vacation
- **Wed., April 23rd;**
Tentative School Committee Meeting
7:00 PM
Triton High School Library
- **Mon., April 28th;**
Return to School from Spring Vacation
- **Tues., April 29th;**
School Committee Communications Subcommittee Meeting
4:00 PM
Superintendent's Conference Room
- **Thurs., May 1st;**School Committee Policy Subcommittee Meeting
3:00 PM
Superintendent's Conference Room
- District Communication Meeting
7:00 PM
Superintendent's Conference Room
- **Fri., May 2nd;**
Early Release Day
- **Wed., May 14th;**
School Committee Meeting
Triton High School Library
- **Mon., May 26th;**
No School
Memorial Day
- **Wed., May 28th;**
Tentative School Committee Meeting
7:00 PM
Triton High School Library

A Message From The Superintendent *(continued)*

Budget meetings were held on Wednesday, February 6th, and Wednesday, February 13th. On Wednesday, March 5th, a public hearing was held. Following these budget deliberations, the Triton Regional School Committee unanimously approved an FY09 budget with total operating expenses of \$34,955,496.

Again, I want to thank our three communities, parents, and town officials for working cooperatively with the district to ensure that resources are provided to meet the needs of our students. I especially want to thank the Triton Regional School Committee for their hard work and support as the district continues to move forward.

Response to Intervention (RTI) Report

The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 2004 (IDEA 2004) focused national attention on the successful practice in the general education classrooms known as Response to Intervention, otherwise known as RTI. Although it is part of the special education regulations, it is a regular education initiative.

RTI is a multi-step approach to providing early intervention to children at risk for academic failure. In this model, a student is given research-based instruction and interventions. Student progress is monitored and results are used to make decisions about further intervention.

In short, services to students in an RTI problem-solving model are flexible and fluid based on student need and are not premised on a particular label, program, or placement. Services flow to and from students based on the effectiveness of interventions and the level of resources needed to support learning based on data.

Implementation of RTI requires a tiered model of intervention. Tier I is the foundation and contains the core curriculum which should be effective for approximately 80-85% of students. Tier I interventions focus on group interventions for all students and are characterized as preventive and proactive. Tier II interventions serve approximately 15% of students. Interventions are targeted group interventions. Students at Tier II continue to receive Tier I instruction in addition to Tier II interventions. Based on performance data, students move fluidly between Tier I and Tier II. Tier III serves approximately 5% of students. Students at this tier receive intensive, individual interventions. Once students reach target skills levels, the intensity and/or level of support is adjusted. These students also move fluidly among and between the tiers.

Everyone is responsible for student learning in the RTI model. Belief systems must embrace the philosophy that all children can learn. This commitment requires that we transform current practice in order to create conditions that support student learning.

Unlike pre-referral, RTI is not a formal part of the special education referral process. It is a general education initiative with the goal being to help general education embrace a method intended to help students early on so special education does not become part of their future.

We are in the process of examining our professional development needs so that administrators, teachers, related service providers, and instructional assistants possess the requisite skills and attitudes to implement RTI.

- Wed., June 4th;
Early Release Day
- Sat., June 7th;
Graduation
11:00 AM
- Wed., June 11th;
School Committee Meeting
7:00 PM
Triton High School
Library
- Thurs. Fri., Mon., Tues.,
June 12th, 13th, 16th, 17th;
High School Exam Days
- Wed., June 18th;
Early Release
Last Day of School
- Wed., June 25th;
Tentative School Committee
Meeting
7:00 PM
Triton High School
Library

Triton High School Curriculum Initiatives

As the high school moves towards a more encompassing college preparatory status, there are a few initiatives we will be implementing to help us begin to align ourselves with higher performing high schools in the Commonwealth.

New Grade 12 ELA Curriculum: Seniors will have several semester-long options from which to choose. If the numbers warrant it, honors classes will be offered in addition to the College Prep I class.

Renaming “Advanced” to College Prep I (CP I), and renaming “Standard” to College Prep II (CP II) is a name change only. The course levels as they currently exist will still be in effect.

Grade Point Average (GPA) and Class Rank: Beginning with the **Class of 2010**, class rank will be **based solely on GPA**, and GPA will continue to be calculated using a “weighted” (according to course level) scale.

Physical Education (PE) Changes: PE classes will be meeting three times per cycle instead of two times.

Two Year Foreign Language Requirement: Pending approval by the School Committee, a two year minimum Foreign Language requirement for graduation will begin with the class of 2012

District Volunteer Program

Under the direction of Kathleen Willis, Assistant Superintendent, the Triton Regional School District is fortunate to have a vibrant district-wide volunteer program making a difference in preschool through grade twelve. The week of April 27 – May 3 is National Volunteer Week and I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all of our volunteers. The volunteer program is managed by a group of motivated volunteer coordinators representing each school. This year the volunteer coordinators are:

Newbury Elementary School	Amy Speak
Pine Grove School	Mary Behringer and Cathy Jean
Salisbury Elementary School	Sandy Soucy
Triton Middle School	Julie Languirand
Triton High School	Dina Sullivan

The volunteer program has steadily grown in participation and scope. In fact, there are now over 1,400 registered volunteers across our district! Please join me in thanking the volunteers for the important contribution they are making every day in our schools.

Don't forget to check out the district website, located at <http://www.trsd.net> for all the latest happenings. Be sure to sign up for the TritonNews List Serve so you are notified of all important events.

Middle School Task Force

Background

The Middle School Task Force convened on March 27, 2007, under the direction of Assistant Superintendent Kathleen Willis. The purpose of the task force was to make a recommendation to the superintendent regarding the grouping of students for instruction at the middle school level. The middle school's 2006 School Improvement Plan included a goal to shift grouping practices from homogeneous to heterogeneous grouping in the content areas. Heterogeneous grouping refers to grouping arrangements where whole classes of students of varying ability and achievement learn together in one classroom. Homogeneous grouping refers to grouping arrangements where students are grouped with others who have been judged to be at a similar ability or achievement level. The superintendent requested further study of this goal prior to implementation.

Membership on the task force included parents (one from each elementary school and one from each grade in the middle school), three teachers representing grade seven, grade eight, and special education, and the middle school assistant principal. Twelve parents and three teachers responded to the announcement. When Middle School Principal Jared Fulgoni was hired, he also joined the task force and assumed the role of chairperson in October 2008.

The Process

- At the initial meeting members of the task force brainstormed a list of questions they felt required research to create a common understanding of the middle school model and best practices associated with that model that addressed homogeneous, heterogeneous, and flexible grouping practices.
- Task force members read several documents that provided a philosophical grounding of the middle school model as well as grouping practices. The task force identified key points made within each of the readings and discussed those key points to develop a common understanding of research findings.
- The task force requested a meeting with representation from the TMS School Council to discuss the research they conducted prior to the development of the 2006 School Improvement Plan goal to move toward heterogeneous grouping.
- At this point, the task force decided to ground their research in practice by identifying a number of high performing middle schools and examining grouping practices used by these schools. The task force decided to conduct a telephone survey to gather answers to a series of questions. In general, all content areas except for mathematics are heterogeneously grouped by the schools surveyed. Most middle schools surveyed maintain levels of instruction in mathematics, especially in grade eight where Algebra instruction takes place. In most cases, this practice has been in place five or more years. A variety of criteria are used to place students in leveled math classes including teacher recommendation, MCAS results, local assessments, and report card grades.
- Finally, members of the task force identified schools as potential locations for site visits. The purpose of the site visits was to observe classrooms that were heterogeneously grouped and to speak with both teachers and administrators to gain a deeper understanding of the practice. The task force developed a series of questions that were used by each visiting team so that a level of consistency guided the process and information gathered could be compared.

Recommendation to the Superintendent

As a result of their research, surveys, and site visits, the task force concludes that:

- Due to a variety of flaws inherent in the current practice of grouping students, many of the middle school classes are already heterogeneously grouped.

Middle School Task Force *(continued)*

- The highest performing middle schools in Massachusetts instruct their students in a heterogeneous model in all curricular areas except mathematics.
- The elimination of standard level classes reflects the beliefs associated with the TRSD core value of “Excellence for All.”
- Substantive changes must take place in grouping, pedagogy, and programming to facilitate high levels of learning for all students at every achievement level.
- Many of the middle school teachers have been trained in and are implementing the practice of differentiating instruction. Ongoing professional development for teachers regarding differentiating instruction and collaboration are vital to the overall improvement of the school.
- Class size that conforms to district guidelines of not more than 25 students in a middle school classroom contributes to the success of heterogeneous grouping practices.
- Teacher feedback indicates that a change in grouping practice would be enthusiastically embraced by the majority of teachers in the middle school.

Therefore, the Middle School Task Force unanimously recommends that the Triton Regional Middle School move to the practice of heterogeneously grouping students in all content areas other than mathematics beginning in the 2008-2009 school year in order to advance the achievement of all students. Objective criteria for student placement in a mathematics level must be identified and stringently applied.

News From Our Schools

- ***Newbury Elementary School Students Volunteer for Community Clothing Drive:*** Thirty-six Newbury Elementary School 6th grade students recently joined forces with seniors and staff from the Senior Center of Newbury to sort donated clothing for the eleventh annual Joint Clothing Drive. The community was very generous in donating clothing which was distributed to a number of programs in the area. All volunteers were hosted at a get-together in celebration of their efforts.
- ***Massachusetts Book Awards & Parent and Child Book Club:*** Salisbury Elementary School’s library/media teacher, Anne O’Brien, leads interested fourth & fifth grade students in discussions of various Massachusetts Book Award winning selections during lunch/recess for a number of weeks during the winter months. The *SES Lunch Book Club* recently culminated with a pizza party and certificates were awarded for another successful year of the book club.

The *21st Century Parent & Child Book Club* is a new program this year that invites students and parents to gather once a month in the evening to discuss Massachusetts Book Award selections. This pilot program, lead jointly by Anne O’Brien and Brenda O’Connell, has enjoyed a very successful first year. We are happy to report that the Parent & Child Book club will continue during the summer months thanks to our partnership with the Salisbury Public Library. Registrations will be available at Salisbury Elementary School and the Salisbury Public Library.

- ***Cape Ann League “Coach of the Year” Awards:*** Congratulations are in order for the following varsity coaches recently named coaches of the Year by the Cape Ann League.

Donna Anderson – Boy’s Lacrosse, Rich Dube – Golf, and Joe Colbert – Spring Track.

News From Our Schools *(continued)*

- ***Triton High School Students Volunteer for Anna Jacques Hospital Benefit:***
Triton High School students volunteered for the 20th Anniversary Celebration of Great Chef's Night. This Anna Jacques Hospital benefit was held on March 14th at Governor's Academy and Triton students helped to set up and bus tables for the entire evening. There was such an abundance of volunteers that many had to be turned away. THS National Honor Society officers were responsible for overseeing the volunteers for the evening. Thank you to the following students who so graciously donated their time.

Alexander Alders	Matthew Emerzian	Meagan McCowan	Melissa Norton
William Antrim	Thomas Howard	Brian McDonnell	Emma Odell
Michael Astuccio	Jessica LaPlante	Julie Mosher	Leah Parks
Amanda Atherton	Margaret Leahy	Sarah Murray	Kelsey Schroeder
Peter Buswell	Colleen Loughlin	Matthew Musto	Anna Sczepanski
Thomas Buswell	Erin Loughlin	Daniel Norton	David Simon
			Alison Story

- ***Visual & Performing Arts Festival:***
Recently, all of our five district schools came together at Triton High School to celebrate our students and their artistic talents in a Visual & Performing Arts Festival.

Musicians in grades 4-12 worked together on a musical presentation with Mr. Robert Lathrop conducting the combined choirs and Mr. James Brauneck conducting the combined bands. Ms. Susan Densmore conducted our very talented jazz band.

Visual art teachers from each school created a hanging exhibit displaying the art work of their students from all grade levels as well as the art work of fellow staff members.

The Visual & Performing Arts Festival was spectacular and the extremely large audience was duly impressed with the talents of our students and their instructors. Congratulations to all involved along with sincere gratitude towards the following staff who made it happen with hard work and dedication:

Newbury Elementary School: Amy Merluzzi, Laurie Peterson

Pine Grove School: Jennifer Dubis, Lois Freeman

Salisbury Elementary School: Shannon O'Brien, Deb Walton

Triton Middle School: Kathy Muse, Mary Parks, Deanna Hardy

Triton High School: Susan Densmore, Robyn Verette, Joshua Andrews, Anne Beaulieu, Robert Lathrop

- ***2008 Pat Polletta Memorial Trophy Award***
The YWCA of Greater Newburyport has awarded the 2008 Pat Polletta Memorial Trophy Award to Meredith McWeeny, Triton High School senior, in honor of her "athletic achievements in indoor and outdoor track, her role as team leader, and the breadth & depth of her community service."

Meredith was nominated by her coach, Mr. Joe Colbert and her nomination stood out among many other excellent nominations.

We are proud of Meredith and join in the congratulations and wish her the best of luck in her future endeavors.

FREE Summer Enrichment University at Triton Middle School:

TMS Summer Enrichment University @ TMS is offering **REAL ENRICHMENT** opportunities to our **Current grade 7 & 8 students**. This program is grant funded and is offered free of charge to students and transportation to TMS is also provided.

Enrollment is on a first come, first served basis so it is recommended that students return the registrations to the TMS office ASAP!

Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays - 9:00-12:00
Free of Charge - Transportation Included

Registration forms have been made available to students
Written confirmation will be mailed home.

Questions: Call or email Carla Collins at 978-465-2397 ccollins@trsd.net

1 Media Productions with Mr. Lathrop

Class Limit: 10 students

This course introduces students to basic camera techniques, non-linear editing software and television production techniques including studio lighting and blue screen! Students will be required to work in groups to film a music video and commercial spot. For a final project, students will produce a television show to highlight their work.

#2 African Clay Creations with Ms Verrette

Class Limit: 20 students

This course will introduce students to African art design & the hand-building skills involved in the slab, coil & pinch methods of creating with clay. Students will also learn and practice clay glazing and firing methods. Participants will be able to implement different hand-building techniques in the creation of two musical instruments; rattles based on organic shapes and decorated in African tribal designs and clay whistles based on animals and insect shapes. Students will learn to incorporate musical scales into their clay whistles.

#3 History & Science through Baseball with Ms Beaulieu

Class Limit: 20 students

This enrichment course offers a variety of activities and culminates with a tour of Fenway Park!! Students will build a timeline of the history of baseball and incorporate the “happening” in our country at the same time. They will review articles and a letter from Franklin Roosevelt and discuss the reasons why baseball was so important to this country during WWII and after the 9/11 attacks. Additional activities include comparing the differences between frozen & non-frozen tennis balls & baseballs. How do baseballs move & bounce, how can weather affect the game? How do we find the center of gravity on the bat – how can we use physics to explain baseball? Let’s build a baseball time machine to compare statistics of legendary players of “Then & Now” and **end with a visit to one of the most historic ballparks in the country – FENWAY PARK!!**

#4 Explore the “Taste of Countries” with Ms Kearney

Class Limit: 12 Students

Have you ever eaten authentic Chinese food? Here’s a hint, this is not the food served in local Chinese restaurants. How about authentic Thai, French or Polynesian cuisine? Come and “tweek your taste buds and expand your worldly knowledge” as you explore a variety of countries through their authentic foods. Students will use computers to research countries and then prepare and sample one country’s food each week.

FREE Summer Enrichment University at Triton Middle School:

(continued)

#5 “Beads for Life” with Ms Sternlicht

Class Limit: 15 Students

If you think you are too young to make a difference in the world, you are **WRONG!** Here’s your chance to learn more about how you can **MAKE A DIFFERENCE & have a blast at the same time!**

Students will learn how “Beads for Life” helps to eradicate poverty by creating bridges of understanding between impoverished Africans and concerned world citizens. Students will understand “how and why” Ugandan women turn colorful recycled paper into beautiful beads and use the income from these beads to buy food & medicine and pay for their children’s school fees. All profits from “Beads for Life” are invested in community development projects that generate income and help people work their way out of poverty.

Students will practice this same method of bead making from paper and decide how they might use their bead creations to help the women of Uganda. They will connect the craft with community outreach, explore the Peace Corps and the possibility of a Foreign language learning/pen-pal exchange.

#6 Exploring & Modeling Geometry Concepts with Ms. Riese

Class Limit: 10 Students

In this enrichment course, students will explore geometry rules by **creating models of key geometry theorems** involving characteristics of polygons, triangle similarity, geometric probability, perimeters, areas & volumes. Students will connect geometry rules to real life situations, and compose a geometry portfolio of their work & learning.

#7 TOTALLY SPANISH, SPANISH, SPANISH with Ms Sterrett

Class Limit: 15 Students

Students who have successfully completed one year of Spanish are welcome to come and be **immersed** in Spanish enrichment through games & short biography writing. Students will learn new techniques to improve language usage and be able to communicate effectively through classroom discussion.