

Board Report from Warsaw Middle School

Sandy Nevens, Principal

April 5, 2010

Students of the Month for February:

Congratulations to Warsaw's Students of the Month for February:

Hannah Emery, Nick Deckert, Paige Larochelle, Megan Noble, Leah Caron, Amelia McCannell, and Brandon Stevens. Pizza and other goodies were consumed last week to celebrate.

Two for One: March 22 Workshop Day at Warsaw

The March 22 Workshop Day began at Vickery with a Wellness Breakfast for all K-8 educators.

Warsaw staffs then were treated to two excellent presentations, the first on Formative Assessment from 8:30-11:30, the second on Bright Futures at Warsaw from 12:30-3:00.

> Formative Assessment

George Tucker

George Tucker, a consultant for the Maine DOE and long-time educator at nearly every level, grabbed our attention as he presented the concept and application of Formative Assessment with humor, interactive activities, and passion. Formative Assessment is practiced by all good educators, and George reminded us of its importance and value, but also inspired us to reflect on the Formative Assessment that we are already doing and to fine-tune what we are calling Formative Assessment.**

** A good description of Formative Assessment will be included with this Board Report.

> Warsaw's Bright Futures!

Jill Spencer

Jill Spencer has worked with our staff quite a few times over these past four years, and she brings a teacher's experience, a consultant's perspective, and an expertise on the middle school learner to the work she has done with our staff. Jill's past work with Warsaw has included focus on Literacy, Leadership, Differentiation, and school climate.

Jill's work with us this March has focused on Best Practices at Warsaw and how those practices connect to Bright Futures. Warsaw Middle School has been recognized by many educators in Maine and beyond as an exemplary middle school that focuses on the developmental as well as the academic growth of students. Jill helped Warsaw staff look at our *specific* strengths and what we believe is best for middle schools with our goal to frame those Best Practices within the Bright Futures Core Practices that the state has recognized as fundamental in educating our 11-15 year old young adolescents.

Ms. Spencer reviewed the programs, traditions, beliefs, and practices of Warsaw educators and the work we have done on Bright Futures and then had us frame what we at Warsaw do and what we believe within the Core Practices of Bright

Futures. We will use that information to inform practices and direction for Warsaw educators to reinforce our greatest strengths and practices that need improvement.

** **Formative Assessment** - Dylan Wiliam

“To me ‘formative assessment’ describes all those processes by which teachers and learners use information about student achievement to make adjustments to the students learning that improve their achievement. It's about using information to adapt to your teaching and adapt the work of the students to put the learning back on track - if you like, to make sure that the learning is proceeding in the right direction and to support that learning. It's what happens when you don't just lecture students and rattle through the material until you get to the end and ask them if they've understood it okay - it's constantly making those adjustments.

One of the ways I like to talk about it is: just imagine what would happen if a pilot flew like many teachers assess. I flew back from Seattle a few weeks ago - just imagine what the pilot would have done - he would have flown east for 9 hours and then after 9 hours he says 'Time to land'. He will put the plane down and then he will ask 'Is this London?' and of course even if it's not London, he says 'Well everybody has got to get off because I've got to get on to the next journey'. And that's exactly the way we have assessed in the past - we teach students material and at the end of that teaching we find out if they have learned it or not. And if they haven't we say 'Too bad, because we are on to the next unit'.

What formative assessment does is it encourages teachers to take constant readings about where students are just in the same way that pilots takes constant readings about their position. If the learning isn't proceeding as you had planned then you make adjustments - that is the essence to weighing formative assessment. The reason why I think that formative assessment is the right focus is because assessment is the right bridge between teaching and learning. It's only through assessment of some kind that you know whether what has been taught has been learned. That's why I think this focus on this assessment process is important, minute by minute, and day by day, not at the end of a sequence of learning. This allows teachers to reflect on their practice and make small steps in improving that practice in a more powerful way than anything we have seen before.”

PIE Night

Anne Miller, Architect

The PIE Night was our first in the district and, though we did not have a full house, those parents who came were quite positive and interested in what their children are learning in our schools. The jazz band entertained us all to start the evening off, and pies from Hillman's Bakery were a delicious intermission! Numbers may have been less than we all had hoped, but those who did attend were interested in seeing what Connected Math and math manipulatives are all about. The

program was great, the pie was delicious, and the music terrific. Great start, and next year our numbers will grow exponentially!

Math Focus:

Anne Miller has been facilitating work with math teachers throughout the year, and that focus is essential to our success as a school. Math is our reason for being designated a CIPS school, and we have worked particularly hard as a school to make gains in math through math meetings on curriculum that include the work with Meghan Southworth on CMP and Differentiating Math curriculum, through our desire to enhance both math and literacy through Skills Blocks, and through the work of the Data Team, CIPS Committee, and staff development in several formats.

Skills Blocks

It is year two of Warsaw's implementation of Skills Blocks at Warsaw. Skills Blocks are used for 7/8 math this year as well as 5/6 grades both in math and literacy. It is still a work in progress in that we are still finding ways to make it better, still finding what works well and what needs work. What needs work? Math time, scheduling, reflecting, planning time, working on curriculum for Skills Blocks, and more! But we are working together to address our needs!

Why We Are Here:

What makes Warsaw a great place to work? Teachers care enough to make it work, to put in the time to solve the issues at hand, and to connect with their students.

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