

To: Mr. Daniel Durgin, Superintendent of Schools
From: Mr. Mike Lucas, Principal, Tantasqua Regional High School
RE: The February School Committee Report
Date: February 24th, 2010



Announcements:

On Monday night, January 11th, approximately two hundred 8th & 9th grade students and their families attended a special presentation on “College Planning Basics” in the high school auditorium regarding the college planning process. This was a first ever event that we hope gave families a head start on the college planning process. The guidance department made a formal presentation and three young alums spoke to the audience about proper planning decisions in high school. The three young alums spoke about the importance of participating in extra-curricular activities in high school, putting forth your best efforts academically, and finding a challenging and successful pathway at Tantasqua. Due to the great attendance and positive feedback, this presentation will become an annual event.

Mrs. Sawyer reports that Karrie Sullivan, Senior Admissions Counselor at Quinsigamond Community College visited Tantasqua on Friday, January 15. Guidance counselors encouraged seniors who had not applied to any colleges and those interested in two year colleges, to attend the presentation. Of particular interest was the presentation of the new QCC campus located on the site of the former AO Company in Southbridge. Ms. Sullivan discussed programs offered at QCC, courses available at the Southbridge Campus and admission requirements. An “Instant Admissions Day” is scheduled for Tuesday, February 23. Students who bring a completed application, copy of their transcript and letters of recommendation can meet with Ms. Sullivan, who will then determine if the student’s credentials meet QCC’s requirements. Students who qualify will receive on-the-spot admission to the college, with an official letter from the college to follow later.

On Thursday, February 4th, Mr. McGuinness and the guidance department conducted their yearly presentation entitled “A College Planning Session for Juniors” to more than 180 visitors. Mr. Paul Lynsky, from the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority, made a presentation on the college application and admission process to more than 180 people in attendance. Although this event was primarily aimed at students and families about to enter the college application process, all members of the Tantasqua community were invited to attend.

On Thursday February 25th, for the first time, all AP students will be called to a special assembly in the auditorium. These students will personally receive the AP bulletin which explains the AP testing process and allows them to sign up for exams. That night, a connect ed message will be sent home to all AP student families to remind them of the importance of signing up for AP exams. Guidance counselors will work with students who are unable to pay the exam fee. For seniors, the AP exam scores can help them receive college credits for AP courses. These scores have little or no effect on the college admissions process as that period has passed for them already. For juniors and sophomores, the AP exam scores can aid them in the application process to colleges.

Student Council sponsored two activities that inspired school spirit and community. A pep rally honoring the winter sports season took place on the afternoon of January 25th in the high school field house. Various student groups participated in the Pep Rally show, including the new Hip Hop Dance Club which was a big hit with the students. Haley Fuller led the student body in various games, and Anthony Chasse added another installment to his “Legend of the Spirit Stick” performance. After the Pep Rally, students

and faculty enjoyed the traditional Winter Fest celebration with activities in the cafeteria, auditorium and gymnasium. Although the rain prevented us from having the typical Winter Fest activities – sledding, snowman competitions, and skating – the indoor event was a success at fostering community in the high school. Student Council has also been hard at work preparing for the March conference in Hyannis, and has recently submitted the “Book of Excellence” to the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils. The Book of Excellence is a record of the activities our Student Council sponsored over the past year and represents our council’s nomination for the 2009 “Council of Excellence” award.

Ms. Willard reports that the Latin Club is a recent addition to the extra-curricular opportunities offered at Tantasqua Senior High. The club has approximately 10 members who meet weekly to learn how to read Latin. Students are currently reading “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone” in Latin, as well as developing an “Ides of March” after school activity.

During the week of February 8th-12th, in honor of Valentines Day the freshman class sold “CRUSHES”. Cans of Crush brand soda were purchased during lunch for one dollar and delivered to a student’s crush with a personal message during their lunch. All proceeds will go towards the class of 2013!

Classroom Activities:

Mr. Metcalf reports that a number of recent students in art classes have recently begun their designs for twelve murals that will be placed in the 3rd floor hallway displaying twelve eras in U.S. History from the Revolutionary War to Modern Times. Historic events as well as related works in literature and the arts will serve as references for the images our students create. Students will meet one afternoon each week after school to develop their designs. Themes to be included in the murals were reviewed and approved by our History and English departments who will be sharing the artwork with students when it is permanently installed in their hallway on the 3rd floor. Students in Fiber Arts have just completed a variety of masks just in time for Mardi Gras on February 16th. Pottery students are now working on sculptural tiles with a “Negative / Positive” concept.

Mrs. Norton reports that the journalism class continues to work with the Tomahawk staff in writing articles, etc. for the newspaper (which is coming out on Friday, March 5th). In addition, the class works daily to create and maintain the 3rd floor bulletin board as a means to promote school community and school spirit. Glass cases, provided by the carpentry shop, were installed on Tuesday, February 9th, so that the kids can display their photography and pictures of fellow classmates that have been taken throughout the school year. Journalism students are trying to include as much of the school community as possible in our photography, demonstrating the positive nature of our diverse student body. This class is a great group of enthusiastic, hard working and talented kids!

Students in Ms. Willard’s Spring Semester Freshman Literature class are writing a collaborative novel. They are in the beginning stages of the brainstorming process and hope to have the novel completed by June. Students have each taken on a character from their novel and will write a unique chapter from their perspective. As we learn about various writing strategies and elements of fiction in the novels we read, we will incorporate them into the chapters we are writing.

The Gingerbread House Project in the foods classes was a huge success. Students made all the gingerbread from scratch as well as the Royal Icing that holds everything together. Teachers & support staff came in to judge the houses and kids were awarded prizes for 1st, 2nd & 3rd place. Last week students also completed the cake unit. Every

student made their own individual mini cake with 2 different types of homemade frosting. Students were shown the basics of cake decorating – how to do a variety of different borders, how to make a rose, rosebud, stems & leaves, etc.

Mrs. McDonald reports that freshmen and sophomore PE classes just finished a unit in the pool. Students were challenged with the following activities: swimming & diving lessons, pool safety lessons, water polo games, and a segment on lifejacket safety. Once the lessons were over, if time permitted, students were allowed to free swim for the rest of class. The American Red Cross Waterfront Lifeguarding class has been working on the Recognition & Response section of the course. The first test was right after vacation. Topics covered during this section included: characteristics & responsibilities of a professional lifeguard; decision making; legal considerations, the lifeguard team; how facility management helps promote lifeguard professionalism; strategies for preventing injuries, & techniques for removal from the water. Students have been working on their swimming strokes, kicks and retrieving with a 10 pound brick improving their endurance.

Ms. St. Jean explained that her AP Language and Composition Class has completed the writing for their CSL project: “Community Voices.” Booklets containing two writing pieces per student, a memoir piece and an interview, will be produced soon. Each student will receive a final booklet; each interviewee will receive a booklet; and the TRHS Media Center will receive a booklet. There will be a reception and a “sharing” of the writing for all participants at some point during Semester II. These AP students, along with Mrs. McKinstry’s African-Asian Literature students, went to see the movie “Invictus”. This movie is about Nelson Mandela’s struggle to lead and unite South Africa following Apartheid. Students were then required to write analysis papers concerning William Ernest Henley’s Poem – “Invictus” – which was an inspiration to Nelson Mandela and they were required to write a composition answering the prompt - “What Inspires You?”

Mrs. Bousquet reports that Mr. Hinckley, a high school guidance counselor, recently visited the Principles of Psychology Classes as a guest speaker on Hypnotherapy. Students who participated undertook a relaxing hypnotherapy wherein they could de-stress, calm down and rejuvenate themselves during this busy time of year with final exams and college application processes looming on their minds. The presentation excited the students and gave them 1st hand experience with a therapy method used in the psychology field today. Mr. Hinckley did a great job really connecting with the students and offering real-world examples of how hypnotherapy has practical uses.

Mr. Tieri explained that the TWN semester one students (even though it is now semester 2, they are well-prepared for the challenge) are collaborating on a P.S.A to enter in a video contest sponsored by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. The EOPSS, in partnership with the Registry of Motor Vehicles, is working with corporate partners to make this prom/graduation season safer for teenagers on Massachusetts roads. The theme “Dance. Don’t Chance” is a safe driving video contest that calls on students to write and produce a 60-second video to promote safe, drug and alcohol free driving – not only during the prom and graduation season, but year-round.

Community Service Learning Activities:

The Future Teachers of America have been fund raising for the Tantasqua 2010 FTA Scholarship. Each year they give 2 scholarships to seniors pursuing careers in education, (\$250 each), one to a member and one to a non-member. FTA students sold snacks at Winter Fest in the cafeteria with cotton candy being a popular seller!

Mrs. Costello reports that the Choraleers gave a 40 minute concert for the Harrington Hospital Women's Auxiliary. Over 100 people were there, and we received multiple compliments and accolades. The kids who performed were:

Ciel Blodget *Beth Gravel* *Cian Ashworth* *Jon Costello*
Brege vonBleicken *Julie Boyd* *Connor Munnis* *Joe Conceison*
Rebecca Campbell *Sarah Bessette* *Brooke Tasse*

The program went off without a hitch and the students did a great job socializing with the patients. Their performance was a testimonial to not only our great kids, but the outstanding school system that has educated them and made them the young men and women who they are today.

Fine Arts:

-The High School Show Choir, ENCORE, just performed at the Central MA Show Choir Competition at Shepherd Hill Regional High School on February 6th. The group earned a Silver Medal as well as a standing ovation from the enthusiastic crowd for it's performance in this year's competition program, *Africa*.

-Tantasqua's new Hip Hop Dance Crew has been busy performing at home basketball half times at both the Junior and Senior High School. The ten member dance team is under the direction of music faculty member, Mr. Reagan Paras. The "Crew" looks forward to performing at the Choral Showcase concert in March.

-Rehearsals are well underway for the Choral Showcase concert scheduled for March 5th at 7:00pm in the high school auditorium. This concert will feature performances by the High School Concert Chorus, JH Show Choir, High School Show Choir, and our own "Mother's" Show Choir, *Maternal Instinct*. This season, the "moms" are performing selections from *The Golden Years of Broadway* and we are excited to have their group as part of our annual production!

-The Theater program at the high school is currently preparing for auditions for their Spring production of Oscar Wilde's, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Theater students will also take part in the Music Department's first ever Madrigal Dinner which will be held on Sunday evening, March 28th at the high school cafeteria.

Athletics:

Mr. Casaceli reports the following:

GIRLS INDOOR TRACK

SWCL CENTRAL CHAMPIONS, 13-2 overall, 11-1 SWCL

Just an awesome season as this team produced more District and State qualifiers than any team in recent memory.

BOYS INDOOR TRACK

8-6 overall, 7-5 SWCL

A young team that will be a force in the future. Tremendous work ethic every day.

SWIMMING

3-6 overall

This young team set many event records and became a much improved team.

BOYS BASKETBALL

SWCL CENTRAL CHAMPIONS, 12-5 overall, 11-3 SWCL

A true team that plays well together. Many outside of TRHS thought this would be a "down" year. They have qualified for the tournament for the 8th straight season Jake Gubitose was named to "All-Tournament Team" at the Hoop Hall Classic and he placed 2nd in the Hoop Hall Classic 3 Point Contest.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

9-8 overall, 7-5 SWCL

A "never say die" team that gives outstanding effort every game. They need one win to qualify for the district tournament which would qualify them for the 18th year in a row.