

It is an exciting experience to take the reins of a school in a new environment where there are some 550 faces, personalities and aspirations (including teachers, students as well as parents and guardians). I have so much to learn from these impressive people as they are truly invested in the quality of this school.

As I sit writing this, I have just returned from bringing my daughter to Kindergarten as this was her first day. Many teachers at my children's school are aware that I have started here at Strafford School and nearly all have inquired about my impressions of Strafford School. My response is "what's not to like?"

The culture of the Strafford School learning community exemplifies all necessary components of a successful school. Parents have approached me to tell me how much they love the school, the teachers, the lunch program and the sports; they have had little to say about what they would like to see changed. This tells me how blessed the children of Strafford are to be part of a truly caring environment. I, in turn, feel blessed to be here.

The school enrollment has remained fairly constant. We began the year with an enrollment of 455 students. While we will certainly see students come and go, I expect that this overall number will remain fairly constant throughout the school-year.

The start of the school year is also the start of the "testing season". As is typical in schools throughout New Hampshire; we, too, will begin the testing cycle. In September we will begin to administer the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) test. This test will be administered to all students in grades K-8. This test is again administered in the spring, so that teachers can assess student progress. This test also serves as a diagnostic tool so that teachers can plan explicit instruction based on students' needs.

In October we are required to participate along with the rest of the state of New Hampshire in the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP). The NECAP test, which is administered to all children in grades three through eight, encompasses three components: Writing, Math and Language Arts. The results of the NECAP test will determine the status our school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Strafford has continued to make AYP and I expect that this year will be no exception. Although NECAP testing is administered in the fall, the scores for this test will not be available until late winter or early spring.

Summer school was very productive as staff members taught literacy, math, instrumental music, and art. These programs provided wonderful opportunities for students to maintain and or enhance their skills in these. Most of these summer programs are funded through the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) grants.

As we begin our 2009-2010 school year, some faculty members have changed positions and a few have left us over the summer. As a result, Shelly Welch has joined our first grade team. Mrs. Welch has replaced Janice Stimmell, who has recently become a member of the Literacy Team as a Reading Recovery Teacher. In addition, Sharon Olsson has agreed to undertake a year long position for Amy Adams, who is on sabbatical in England. Lastly, we would also like to welcome Misty Lowe who has assumed the position of Special Education Coordinator.

New paraprofessionals have joined us this summer as vacancies have emerged. Terry Smith will be working in Ms. Edgerly's classroom, Kim Morrisette will be working in Mr. Colby' room and Jodi Labrie has agreed to fill in for Sue Johnson as a long-term substitute in Mrs. Garland's room.

In closing, I would like to reiterate how grateful I am for the opportunity to lead your school. I look forward to meeting with many of you soon. Please feel free to contact me at any time with any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jerry Gregoire