

Thompson Public Schools

Winter 2019 District Newsletter

Superintendent's Message:

The second semester of the 2018/2019 school year will bring a community-wide effort to develop plans to improve curriculum and instruction in all Thompson schools. As a result of a Capacity and Coherence Audit conducted by the Connecticut Center for School Change, the report details specific areas that must be addressed in order to meet the Board of Education's goals of being one of the top performing school districts in our region. We will need your help!

HAPPY
NEW YEAR

Our first task will be to establish a "Portrait of a Graduate" (POG) that will include a community-wide consensus of what skills all Thompson students must learn in order to be a successful Thompson

graduate. Several community forums are being planned to gather input from all stakeholders in the community. Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in one of the sessions. Please watch for upcoming information.



**PORTRAIT OF
A GRADUATE**

It will also be important for parents, caregivers, and students eligible to vote to support the school and town budget. Passing the budget in May will ensure all parts of the Strategic Plan such as curriculum revision, professional development, and staffing needs are met as well as the recommendations from the Capacity and Coherence report.

It is clear that 2019 will be an exciting and busy year in Thompson Public Schools! I must extend a note of appreciation to the members of the Thompson Board of Education, administrators, faculty, and staff who are working together to provide students with an outstanding learning environment.

Middle School Update:



The Thompson Community welcomed Interim Principal Steven Knowlton to Thompson Middle School in November. Under Principal Knowlton's leadership along with the assistance of the faculty and staff, student behavior challenges are being addressed. Behavior expectations have been made clear to students and as a result the overall culture and climate of the school is much improved. In addition, the district is in the process of developing a new alternative program to better support students who require individualized learning in a smaller class setting. It is our goal to open the program early next month.

Teachers have redesigned the PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Support) program which allows students to earn the opportunity to participate in enrichment activities of their interest. They have also participated in numerous professional development activities to enhance instruction and support student social emotional health.



Theater Returns to Thompson Public Schools:

This spring, Thompson students will perform the timeless musical hit, *The Wizard of Oz*. The district has partnered with theatre directors, Adam and Jessica van der Swaagh. Adam and Jessica were the directors of The Little Theatre on Broad Street in Killingly. We are fortunate to have them working with Thompson students.



Auditions for students in grades four through twelve will be held on Monday, January 14, 2019 and Tuesday, January 15, 2019 from 6:15 to 7:30 pm in the Ryscavage Auditorium located in the original Tourtellotte Memorial High School (Administration Building). Please enter the front doors and then proceed to the right to the high school cafeteria.

Grade four students may audition for ensemble roles. Students in grades five through twelve may audition for speaking roles. Scripts are available from your child's music director or you may access them online on the district's website.

A mandatory parent meeting will be held on Thursday, January 17, 2019 at 6:30 pm in Ryscavage Auditorium. We will also be looking for parent volunteers to help with ticket sales, concessions, and theatre assistance. Let us know if you can help out!

School Safety and Security:

Safety and security improvements continue to be an important focus in Thompson Public Schools. The members of the district's Safety & Security Committee meet regularly to refine safety procedures. Each school has an established safety team to address school specific issues.

You may have noticed that the entire campus has been alphabetically and numerically labeled. This is necessary in order for first responders to easily locate the area of the building that requires their attention. We are also working with our State police and local fire departments to continue to practice evacuation and lockdown drills.

For this school year, the district has included the following resources and procedures in an effort to improve safety and security in schools:

In August, each educator put together an emergency kit that is stored in their classroom or office. The kit has a variety of supplies which can be used during an emergency. Supplies include first aid, water, snacks and other helpful tools. A special thank you to Jennifer Vear, (TMHS Teacher) and Danielle Pederson, (Executive Administrative Assistant) for organizing the distribution of the safety items.

The district has established a reunification site at Thompson Speedway in the event of an emergency which will require students to evacuate the entire school campus. The management of Thompson Speedway must be commended for the time and effort they have invested in working with the members of the district's Safety Committee to develop the school department's crisis plan. If a situation requires a full campus evacuation, parents will be instructed to go to the Speedway to meet their child.

The district plans to conduct a low key "mock" evacuation and reunification at the Speedway with a select number of students. We will be recruiting parents to volunteer to help us while we practice the reunification process. More information to come regarding this drill.

The district has established "Rally Points" with area businesses if a situation occurs that will require students to evacuate the campus on foot. Students led by their teachers would walk to the sites and wait for bus transportation to the Speedway. All teachers and Dattco Bus Co. are aware of the sites.

School personnel are also participating in ALICE (<https://www.alicetraining.com>) Active Shooter Training. The district has several certified ALICE trainers under the direction of TMHS Principal, Megan Baker. During the professional development day held on January 2, 2019 faculty and staff completed "hands on" exercises to practice some of the strategies they have been taught over the course of this school year.



Alert
Lockdown
Inform
Counter
Evacuate

Teachers will begin to use some of the non-threatening strategies during typical lock down drills with students. Ongoing ALICE training will continue over the next several months. The district plans to refresh this training annually.

Electronic Cigarettes and Searches:

The district has experienced an increase of incidents involving the use of electronic cigarettes (vaping) and illegal substances over the past few months. To address this concern, additional instructional time has been added to our health curriculum to provide students with information that will help them make healthy decisions when it comes to any form of smoking and drug use.

The district is currently working with Troop D to schedule routine canine searches at both Thompson Middle School and Tourtellotte Memorial High School. Once scheduled, the dog searches will be conducted during the school day. Students and teachers will be asked to remain in their classrooms while the animals sweep the school for several minutes. If the search locates any illegal substances, the school will follow the regular investigation and disciplinary protocols. Discipline procedures and information about canine searches can be found in the student handbooks given to each student and family to review at the start of the school year.

The intent of proactive monitoring of our schools is to serve as a deterrent for this inappropriate student behavior.

Weather Related Closings or Delays:

Please be sure that your contact information has been updated in our school district's database. If you have changed your primary contact number or email address, please be sure to contact your child's school secretary to update this information.

This database is connected to our call, text, and email system. If the information in the database is not current, you will not receive the important school closing or delay information.

Please note that closing or delay call must be made by 5:15 am as bus drivers must report for the secondary bus runs. The decision to cancel or delay is made after multiple pieces of information have been assessed. The final decision is made to keep our students, faculty, and staff safe.

As always, the school closing information will be posted on the following television stations:

WVIT 30	WBZ TV-Boston
WTIC Fox 61	WFSB/Channel 3
WTNH Channel 8	



We will also do our best to post early on our school website, Facebook, and Twitter.

Pupil Services Director Search:

A letter was sent home last month informing families that Scott Sugarman has resigned from the position of Pupil Service Director for Thompson Public Schools. If you have any questions regarding your child's special education program, please contact your child's principal directly.

We will begin our first round of interviews this week to secure an administrator for this position. It is our goal to have someone in place by March 1, 2019.

Important Dates:

January 21, 2019 – No School, Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Observation

February 13, 2019 – Half Day for Students

February 18-19, 2019 – No School, Winter Break

February 20, 2019 – No School for Students, Staff PD

March 13, 2019 – Half Day for Students

March 29, 2019 – No School for Students, Staff PD

