

April 6, 2013

Dear Carolyn, Jackie and Members of the DWPC,

By the time you read this, all of our students will have headed back to school for the last stretch of instruction prior to summer vacation and finally – it feels like spring!

The governor's budget is in and analysts are busily working to clarify some of the requirements for school districts. Among these are that APPRs must be renegotiated and state aid is tied to successfully agreeing upon new parameters prior to the end of this school year. In addition, the probationary period for teachers has been expanded to four years (from three). And the 3020-a process has been amended yet again.

The good news is that the calls and letters many of you made to legislators proved successful in affecting a reduction of the G.E.A. Thank you for your efforts.

The April 8 meeting of the Board of Education is intended to be essentially a one-item agenda – THE BUDGET. After months of speculating whether or not there would need to be program cuts, due to a shortfall, we are very happy to report that Kingston has received a decrease in the G.E.A. for our district.

The state tests for elementary and middle school students are swiftly approaching and, as you know, there has been much talk in recent years about “opting out” of the tests. I have included a link to legal guidance that Boards of Education across the state are receiving. There is a misconception circulating that school districts are not negatively impacted when students “opt out”. Last month's quarterly newsletter that came home with your students, spoke to this very issue.

On April 15, the Women' Studio Workshop will kick off an exhibit of Hands-On Art produced by fourth grade students from Crosby School and eighth graders from J. Watson Bailey. There will be a reception in their honor at Cioni from 5 to 7 pm. Their work will be on display until May 18.

April 18 is swiftly approaching and Kingston High School is getting set to celebrate her 100th Anniversary in an event filled weekend. Beginning on Saturday, April 18 at 8:30 am, the public is invited to come and join in. A museum walk, an alumni choir performance and a continental breakfast are among the free activities available on Saturday. A “Dances of the Decades” event led by Drew Andrews from the Center for Creative Education and the Energy Dance Troupe at the Kate Walton Field House on Sunday, April 19, will culminate this weekend's festivities. A full schedule for the weekend is available on the KCSD website's homepage under KHS100. (Reservations for the Saturday evening reception at the Chateau -formerly the Hillside Manor - are \$25 per person).

Last month, there was a question raised at DWPC about the evaluation teams circulating in our district schools. Mrs. Safron commented that KCSD was being evaluated because it is a Focus District. Some discussion ensued as to what makes a district a “Focus District”. Please see a clarification below:

- Focus Districts were identified as a result of their low performance and lack of progress in ELA and math combined

OR

- Low graduation rates for one of more accountability groups (racial/ethnic groups, low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities).

New York State, limited by funds and resources, sent a team to evaluate two of the focus schools in our district: Miller and JFK. The Kingston District commissioned CASDA (Capital Area School Development Association) to evaluate the remainder. The reports done by CASDA will be discussed in an upcoming meeting of the Board of Education. The district has not yet received the reports from New York State. When the reports are finalized, information will be available on the KCSD website. (Graves and Crosby Schools are in Good Standing).

At a meeting on March 25, the architects for the KHS 2nd Century Project unveiled a new timeline for the completion of the renovations. Although it is disappointing to learn that completion will be delayed, it is important to note that the project remains on budget and the new academic wings, cafeteria, and student entrance are all in the new Phase I of the project still slated to be delivered September of 2018. (Please see the district website to read “Kingston High School Construction Plan Remains on Budget” and to view the video presented at that meeting.)

I’ll see you soon.

Sincerely,
Nora C. Scherer
Co-Liaison to the DWPC