

## *Grateful*

There are so many things that could be said about this school year that we are about to put to bed. It has felt like the longest year ever and it has been filled with stress, anxiety, uncertainty, and frustration. We've mourned the loss of so many things that we previously took for granted even as we tried, every day, to make the best of a seemingly impossible situation. Along the way, we've also discovered some new ways of going about our work that might even (dare we admit it?) be better than our old ways.

Given all of that, however, as I begin to look back over the year I realize that the one word that keeps coming to my mind is "grateful".

I'm certainly not grateful for the pandemic, and I'm well aware of the very real losses and disruptions the pandemic has caused for millions of people world wide, but I am grateful nonetheless. I am grateful to work in a place where the focus every day is on doing our best for students, while also supporting adults. I'm grateful for the unparalleled collaboration and cooperation that has been behind every single decision we had to make as we adjusted all of our practices to meet the challenges of the year.

I'm grateful for the colleagues that I am enormously privileged to work with on a regular basis. My fellow administrators at both the district office and in all of our buildings are incredibly talented and hard working and have demonstrated amazing amounts of creative problem solving, determination, compassion, flexibility, and empathy as they have led each of their respective buildings or departments through the year. Our standards leaders and other teacher leaders have led by example, taking on additional responsibilities in order to make our Temporary Learning Models work, while continuing to provide much needed support to our teaching staff. Our teachers, in all settings, have been nothing short of awe-inspiring and I will forever be grateful for how they have provided our students with a happy, productive, and safe year full of learning, despite the many challenges they faced on a day-to-day basis. Every member of the organization has been called upon to work "outside of their comfort zone" and I am beyond grateful for the manner in which everyone has responded to this call.

I'm grateful to be in a place where even when things were really hard, we could find laughter and joy just around the corner. Our students are amazing and they reminded us every single day of just how lucky we are to do what we do.

Some day when our kids or grandkids learn about the "pandemic of 2020-2021" we will be able to think back on this year and know that we were part of history. We taught, we supported, we led through history. We supported our community in the best way possible through history. We did something really hard, together, and we did it really well.

I don't ever want to experience a year like this one again. But if I had to be part of leading and supporting through something as challenging as a global pandemic, I am ever so grateful that I was able to do it here, with all of you.

I wish you all a relaxing, restorative summer full of love, happiness, friendships, adventures, solitude, and good health.

Until next time...

*Melanie*

*The Pittsford Central School District community works collaboratively to inspire and prepare our students to be their best, do their best and make a difference in the lives of others.*

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## *Re-envisioning our K-5 Roadmaps*

Our Elementary Instructional Roadmaps served an important purpose during the 2020-21 school year. Originally designed to allow for anticipated movement of students between Temporary Learning Models while also honoring the need for teachers to focus on social emotional learning needs, they provided clarity around the most essential standards/skills/content in each of our core subject areas. Those essentials were directly aligned to our report card indicators. Along the way, we discovered some additional benefits, as well as some potential drawbacks, to the roadmaps.

Providing a focus on the essentials gave teachers permission to let go of some things while going more deeply with others. The alignment suggested by the roadmaps strengthened the work of PLC teams within and across the buildings. They were a useful tool for learning specialists as well as other support service providers and teachers new to Pittsford, or new to a grade level, found them to be an invaluable tool for guiding their work this year. Some teachers, however, have shared that the roadmaps felt overly prescriptive or inflexible, and that they impeded on their ability to be responsive to their students and in charge of their own planning.

Our goal moving in to next year is to retain what was good and important about the roadmaps while also making important changes in order to keep the document flexible, responsive, and supportive for teachers. We will be re-envisioning the Instructional Roadmaps into “**Guides to the Essentials**”, but we need the help and input of elementary teachers to do so!

To facilitate continued collaborative work around this Guide, the Teacher Center Catalog will include a one-hour asynchronous offering that will provide an opportunity for all elementary classroom teachers to provide feedback, suggest revisions, share ideas, voice concerns, make suggestions, etc. to inform the Guide to the Essentials for their grade level.

As soon as the course has been created in the catalog, a link to it will be pushed out to teachers via their grade level Teams site. Be on the lookout for that information as we genuinely hope that your voice can be heard and your expertise can be used to frame this important resource.

## *One-to-one initiative starting in grades 6-9*

Thanks to the overwhelming support of the Pittsford Community, a resolution was passed by the voters on May 18th allowing us to use monies from our Technology Reserve to purchase a significant number of devices for student use. These devices will, in part, replace those that need to be recycled after 15 months of remote learning stretched some of our laptops beyond their normal “end of life”. However, a significant focus for this purchase is to allow us to put a district-owned device into the hands of every student, grades 6-9, next year allowing for a “one-to-one” environment at both middle schools and across many of our 9th grade classrooms.

During the 2020-21 school year, both Barker and Calkins were able to re-deploy their existing allotment of laptops in a manner that allowed every student to have use of a device in school all day long. Students were assigned a device that they took with them from class to class each day. Those who needed a school owned device on their at-home hybrid days, took the device back and forth between school and home. Other students left the device at school where it was used by a student from the other cohort on the opposite days. As a result, both students and teachers became skillful at the seamless use of instructional technology to support and deepen learning.

As we looked ahead to life beyond our Temporary Learning Models, it was challenging to think about the need to pull back on the student access to technology. Not only have our current middle school students come to rely on unimpeded access to devices, but so have their teachers. Teachers have embraced the technology and made significant and impactful changes in their practice that we would not want to lose. This was the incentive for moving forward with the proposal to purchase enough devices to be able to provide all students, **grades 6 through 9**, with their own device.

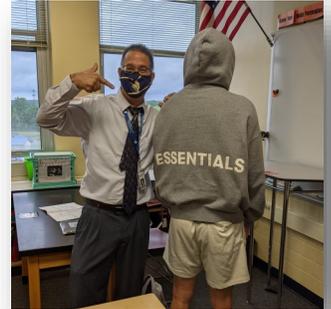
The District Technology Management Committee has been processing this initiative for the last several months and will play a key role in supporting the initial roll-out and evaluating its impact. The 2021-22 school year will serve as a pilot year for us and the impact of this early foray into a one-to-one environment will be studied to determine any appropriate next steps.

Due to ordering timelines and supply chain challenges, we do NOT anticipate having the devices available for students on the first day of school. This delay will provide us with some time for further communications, supports, and trainings in the late summer and early weeks of fall. We are excited to be able to support both teachers and students with this work.

## *Things we hope we don't forget...*

At the final meeting of the District Standards Leaders Team this month, we brainstormed a list of things that came out of this year that we don't want to forget. Hopefully, some of what we learned will make it's way into our ongoing practice as we return to school, "post-pandemic", in September. Here are just a few of the many things that quickly came to mind...

- ◇ We value the importance of connections with kids; kids above content!
- ◇ The alignment between teachers and schools - vertical and horizontal- was powerful. Roadmaps were a game changer.
- ◇ Don't sweat the small stuff. Learn to let some things go. We don't have to be perfect.
- ◇ PLCs provided a place for teachers to help teachers to grow.
- ◇ There is a growing willingness for teachers to focus on what is really essential.
- ◇ We have seen that there are ways of doing things that are not the way we've always done them, but are just as valid and allow us to meet students' needs in different ways.
- ◇ It is important to find and use alternative ways to assess student learning that go beyond traditional pen and paper objective assessments.
- ◇ There is power in a virtual environment to include parents, grandparents, and extended family members in classroom celebrations; to take students on virtual field trips; to have guest speakers address the class; and to have quick face-to-face meetings with parents and colleagues.
- ◇ It's (more than) OK to stop and focus on social emotional and mental health needs of our students and our staff.
- ◇ The world needs more mercy; let's be kind.



What else would you add to this list? As we reflect back on this year and begin to plan for next year, let's be sure to hold on to all of the things that went well, the lessons learned, and the tools that made a positive impact on our instruction.

## *A final farewell to the 2020-21 school year!*

Yes, we really did it. We made it to the end of what felt like a never-ending school year. Know that every single day you made a tremendous impact on the lives of others, most especially your students. You were here for them every single day, meeting them where they were at and supporting them every step of the way. And now, it is your time to relax, celebrate, and enjoy some downtime.

**Happy Summer!**

