



OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL

School Board Report - March 2021

Scott Gordon, Principal

There is no “i” in T. E. A. M.

On Tuesday, February 23rd, I received a phone call from Nurse Jana stating that we had a positive case and this had the potential to “be a doozy.” It was a doozy and I remember calling Mr. Walker that afternoon and dejectedly stating that this might force us to go ‘all remote’ for a period of time. This episode ended up forcing just under 40 students and six staff members into quarantine due to exposure. We did not end up going “all remote” thanks in large part to a number of staff members who each took on a little bit to help bridge the gap and cover the classes necessary to get through. I can’t say enough about all of those folks. It was just another reminder of the cooperative mindset that exists with so many of our staff members - it was great to be a part of and we should all be proud of their efforts.

Athletics at OTHS - update

Winter

Our winter season finished up on Friday night, as our girls’ basketball team fell to a very good Bangor team in the Big East Championship. The previous week, our girls’ won an exciting come-from-behind game vs. Hermon last week erasing a 9-point deficit in the 4th quarter as they outscored the Hawks 17-4 in the final frame. This garnered them the Class B PVC Championship.

Our OTO Ice Hockey team won the PVC Championship on Friday night, defeating Hampden 2-0. Our OT Swim team concluded their season on Friday night as well, swimming in their PVC virtual meet.

Spring

We do not yet have any final details on the spring season. The mantra from all involved across the state has been to stay clear of the traditional starting dates for spring season to provide every opportunity to have as normal a season as possible since our students lost that season completely a year ago. As of the writing of this, we have no further details. My best guess would be that we will start either March 22nd or March 29th - we should know something more very soon.

Mr. Bousquet will be in on the meeting this Wednesday to share any updates that come along between now and then.

Graduation, Scholarship Night & Prom, Oh my....

I have started to field some questions around graduation at OTHS and I am sure that some of you have probably been asked what you know as well. With the Governor's update last week and numbers moving back to a point where we can have our gymnasium at 75% capacity after Memorial Day, it is looking more and more like we may be able to do a very close to normal graduation and scholarship night. In terms of prom, we are looking to be a bit creative and do an outdoor prom in June. We are sharing details with senior parents on Monday.

Author Visit to OTHS

Chris Crutcher, author of "Whale Talk" will be "visiting" (via Zoom) Ms. Davis' English classes on Wednesday, April 7th. He did a session last spring as well in Mrs. Woodard's classes and some honors diploma students. The visits are free and everyone who has listened in has really enjoyed it.

Crutcher has written more than a dozen books for young adults, one of which many of the freshmen here read. All English 9 Honors students, and some English 9 students, read Whale Talk by Crutcher. It's the story of an unlikely swim team led by a multi-racial, self-proclaimed "smart ass" coming together to earn letter jackets. In the process, the team learns that everyone has a story to tell. For 10 years, students have enjoyed this novel and it is very exciting to bring the author to them.

An Interesting Perspective

A staff member shared this next passage with me....

This early morning, I sat down with my cup of coffee, turned on the news, half-listened while I was reading the paper, and looked up when I heard: "So we are looking for any young person willing to donate a year of time to their country." I wondered what for. Building homes? Beautifying parks? Filling diaper banks, food banks?

Nope. To work as tutors in schools to help undo the "learning loss." Training will be provided.

First, #MSNBC stop. Just stop. You are sharing stories that embrace a deficit model. Hundreds of thousands of kids will return to schools next year with much on their minds. Not knowing how to do some 9th grade algebra while in 10th grade is ok. Deciding certain skills should be learned in 9th grade was an arbitrary decision to begin with. And if we have a 2nd grader who lacks the automaticity in reading we would more normally see from 2nd graders, telling a 19-year-old to tutor that kid would be akin to me tutoring kids behind in calculus: harmful. I fear how reductive teaching reading will become if our goal is to check off certain skills because of learning loss.

Teaching is not a cause. It is a calling.

And the term learning loss has become viral and it needs a vaccine. That vaccine is embracing a strength model of teaching rather than a deficit model.

We can destroy teachers and students and their parents if they start next year with the school bell ringing "You must catch up. You must catch up."

Let's begin by celebrating how they lived through a time they will discuss the rest of their lives. They are back in classrooms!!! They are with teachers and friends! For many, they will feel safer than they have felt in a long time.

Let's figure out all the non-test skills they did learn, everything from making scrambled eggs to carrying the grief of losing someone to Covid.

Many showed up on-line faithfully and learned that learning in a chair staring at a screen takes enormous self-control.

And those that did not, I promise you their stories to tell, their experiences they endured, matter and deserve to be told.

As teachers notice "Hey, I need them to know this," then it will be taught.

But I can promise if we send our kids back to school to catch up, we will add more fear to their lives, more stress to their lives, and for many, confirmation that schooling is about hoops, hurdles, test scores. And we will overwhelm teachers and parents.

If we learned anything this year, it is that kids are highly aware of their surroundings and deeply concerned about what is happening to them, their families, their friends, and their communities. Start there. Start with their learning leaps. They have made huge strides in empathy, compassion, independence, responsibility.

To the naysayers who proclaim, "If they are so independent and responsible, why are they behind in physical science and physics?" Easy: those subjects were not helping them get through a pandemic that left families hungry, tired, scared, angry, and sometimes grieving. Why didn't that eight-year-old show up all the time? Because he was taking care of the six-year-old.

Teaching is not a cause, it is a calling. Students don't need fixing. They may not have learned some things this past year, but they did learn other things. Let's thank our teachers and parents for all they did and celebrate our kids and all they learned the year of the pandemic.

- Kylene Beers (former middle school teacher, now educational consultant/author), Facebook post, March 12, 2020

By the Numbers

Total Enrollment 533

Grade 9 133

Grade 10 135

Grade 11 127

Grade 12 138

Monday/Tuesday Cohort * 194

Thursday/Friday Cohort * 170

All Remote * 129 [exact same as last month]

* = numbers taken from 3/12/2021 - as those numbers fluctuate daily

Always In (Self-Contained) 15

UTC Students (Monday/Friday) 28

As always, if you have any questions or concerns - please feel free to drop me an email.
Thanks so much for your on-going support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Principal, OTHS