

Message from the Superintendent
December 2009

It is now three weeks after what can only be described as an historic vote that will result in Rockland getting a new middle school and a renovated high school. So many people worked on behalf of this project and I thank all of you on behalf of the children of Rockland. The next few years will be difficult as almost all our schools will suffer some disruption as a result of the work. As these plans are finalized, I will share them with you. The timeline for construction is a long one. For the next six months, the architects will be finalizing design and working on the construction drawings. At the end of this time the project will go out to bid. Actual construction will not start until November 2010 at the earliest and possibly not until January 2011. We are hoping to do some site work this summer. Although the next few months will seem very quiet, behind the scenes everyone will be working to move this project forward as quickly as possible.

We have been very fortunate in terms of the impact of the flu on our school system. Last week we had thirteen students out with the flu as reported by their parents. While absenteeism in general has been up slightly, we have not been impacted as much as neighboring towns. Thank you to all of you for working with us to control the spread of the flu. New guidance from the Department of Education has requested that we temporarily discontinue our policy of requiring a doctor's note after 5 days absence with an illness. We will reinstate this requirement after the flu season.

At the same time as the building project has commanded the headlines, many exciting new things are happening in the classroom. While we continue to build on last year's success in English Language Arts, particularly in the elementary grades, we have an additional focus on mathematics this year. Principals are finding extra time in the schedule for math, where possible, and we are purchasing new software to assess our students on the Massachusetts standards as the year progresses. We are working to coordinate the math curriculum between the schools to make sure that transitions between grades and between schools are smooth. The staff are enthusiastic and motivated as we strive to improve in all areas of the curriculum. Thanks to a grant we are also adding significant technology to the district. Reconditioned laptops donated by Serono are being distributed to teachers for their classrooms. LCD projectors, smart boards and document cameras are being purchased. These will not be in all classrooms, but we are making progress in this area. With the replacement of computers in the downstairs lab at the middle school, all our computer labs will have machines that are less than three years old.

I hope everyone had an enjoyable Thanksgiving. Christmas is around the corner and it is essential that our students work hard throughout December in spite of the distractions of the holiday season.