

## **WHAT'S NEW for FALL?**

**August 2006**

*Patricia H. Ansay, Ed. D.*

*Superintendent of Schools*

Welcome Back!

I am looking forward to beginning a new school year. Hope you all had an enjoyable and restful summer.

There is a lot going on in the Norton Public Schools. Students and parents in two of the elementary schools will be greeted by principals who are beginning their first full year as members of our team. Ms. Joan Goggin will assume the position of Pupil Personnel Director, replacing Mr. John Atwood and Mr. Michael Barth is the new vice principal at the high school. At all levels, new faces are appearing in the teaching ranks due to transfers and retirements. The district's teacher mentor program will provide assistance to these 18 new employees. The new teacher orientation program will be held on August 29 and 31.

As Superintendent of Schools, I expect the opening of school to go as smoothly as last year's closing. It is with excitement and anticipation that I will greet all of our staff members. My door is always open to any one dropping by to say hello or share concerns.

It is anticipated that Norton High will be the home for approximately 732 students, up from 661 last June. These students will, for the first time this fall, have access to new courses. Some electives were phased out and replaced with the following courses that are fully subscribed and running: Principles of Marketing and Retailing, Business Law, Computer Applications, Math of Investments, Oceanography, Writing and Visual Inspiration, Journalism, and Construction Technology. Student athletes will also have a new home varsity baseball field in the spring. Bleachers are being installed both at that site and at the new softball field. A work study program will be on the schedule beginning at mid-year. Students will be more involved in videotaping school events for broadcast on cable access television. This initiative will allow residents to see what goes on in our schools. Both the high school and the middle school are very fortunate to have Detective Jacob Dennett as their new School Resource Officer. This program is also starting this September. In order to further enhance the safety of our students and staff, representatives of the Town's Police and Fire Departments are meeting with building principals to firm up Multi Hazard Plans for implementation this fall. The Norton Public Schools enjoys a supportive and collegial relationship with the Town's Police and Fire Departments. The Norton Middle School will present Wheaton College President Ronald Crutcher, as a guest speaker in October.

The Henri A. Yelle School is instituting a volunteer program to provide classroom assistance. Individuals wishing to participate should contact the Yelle School at 508-285-0190. Another change at the HAY is that the first floor will house all fifth graders and the fourth will make the second floor their home.

The elementary schools are benefiting from the assistance of some of the Town's senior citizens who are helping to prepare the schools for opening day as participants in the Tax Rebate Program with the town.

District-wide staff will begin their school year on September 5<sup>th</sup>, with mini sessions on civil rights, sexual harassment, child abuse reporting requirements, due process, universal precautions and confidentiality. Also on September 5<sup>th</sup>, veteran teachers will be recognized for their years of service.

There will be more rigor in staff evaluation this year. During the third week of August, administrators, directors and academic coordinators will participate in a grant-supported training program entitled *Supervision and Evaluation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. In the area of curriculum and instruction, our teachers have been busy. This summer, teachers representing grades K-5 have worked to revise Norton's Science/Engineering/Technology Curriculum and to create a curriculum map for each grade level. Last year's purchase of new science materials played an integral part in this curriculum work as the program will be fully implemented in the fall.

In the area of math, teachers in grades K-5 worked to select two different National Science Foundation funded standards-based texts to pilot beginning in September. There will be two teachers from each grade level piloting each text. Professional development for these teachers begins on September 1<sup>st</sup> before the start of school.

There will be approximately 50 teachers who have participated in graduate courses offered through the district this summer... either the Studying Skillful Teaching Course I from Research for Better Teaching or Writing in a Balanced Literacy Classroom. Many staff members have attended summer workshops, conferences, courses and seminars to enhance their skills.

Teachers representing grades K-5 will be meeting to continue work on the revision of the elementary report card in mid August as well. Professional development initiatives for the new school year will concentrate on assessment of student learning.

Parents and guardians will have access to EdLine for grading and homework purposes at the Yelle, middle and high school, which have had this program for several years. The schools will also enjoy the use of the Alert Now emergency notification system. This program is supported by the school, PTO's. We cannot thank them enough for all that they do for us.

Custodial and grounds staff have worked hard this summer despite being short-handed. Buildings have the newly-polished, shiny look! Summer work includes refurbishing of the gym floors at the Yelle, middle, and high schools, refurbished handicap parking, miscellaneous painting and select floor and ceiling tile replacement, preventive maintenance, installation of door entry systems at L.G. Nourse and the Norton Middle School. The interior of the walk-in freezer at the L.G. Nourse School has been completed. Heating system adjustments to minimize energy consumption and defective window replacements have been made to the J.C. Solmonese School. Energy management initiatives placed exhaust fans and hot water schedules on systems. The boys' locker room now has two new ceiling-mounted air handler units, as prescribed by the NEASC evaluation. Replacement of the gymnasium bleachers at the high school will occur in mid fall. These two initiatives are supported by Capital Improvement funds. Elevator repairs and issuance of certificates were also accomplished. The L.G. Nourse playground has a new basketball backboard and swings for a new look.

Work has been begun on the Brick Park at the entrance of the high school athletic area. Soon we will be able to sit and enjoy the beautifully-landscaped area. This initiative of the Athletic Complex Committee is a fundraiser that will benefit the Field of Dreams Project through the sale of engraved memorial bricks, flag poles, flowers, lantern lighting, granite benches, trees, concrete pavers, and so forth.

The district will continue to work toward assisting students to meet higher learning standards. Data-driven changes and a new five-year strategic plan will assist the district in meeting its goals for student learning. Teachers are indispensable to helping students perform at high levels, as is the support of community members.

Challenges facing the Norton Public Schools include enhancing community involvement, increasing attendance rates at the high school level, reducing drop-out rates at the high school level, and increasing student success at all levels. Maintaining existing programs for children, providing them with the necessary instructional materials, while keeping within the current budget boundaries, will be quite a task. The district will be moving forward despite budgetary issues. It will be a challenge to maintain our momentum at a time when finances are inadequate. We are trying to make up for shortages caused by less Title 1 money and minimal increases in Chapter 70 state funding. Not having access to libraries on a regular basis will impact students and our literacy program. Class sizes will be large at all levels due to reductions in staffing. Exactly how these will affect our MCAS performance remains to be seen. Transportation and athletic User Fees are new to the Norton system this fall. A result of inadequate funding for education, money derived from the fees will be used to purchase necessary instructional materials such as textbooks and technology.

Make no mistake, we have a great team. Everyone who works for the Norton Public Schools contributes to our success. We look forward to another terrific year, constantly striving for educational excellence with the cooperation of parents, guardians, the community and town officials. The School Committee continues to be a strong advocate for the children of Norton and it will continue to champion for their needs.

## **STAFF CHANGES**

### **Resignations:**

Mrs. Diane Ready, NMS Grade 8 English  
Mr. Don Edwards, NMS Structured Resource Room  
Mr. Sean Sullivan, HAY SPED  
Miss Elizabeth Larkin, JCS School Nurse  
Mr. Jonathan Veccharelli, NHS SPED Educational Assistant  
Mr. Steven Patterson, NMS SPED Educational Assistant  
Miss Elizabeth Kelly, NMS SPED Educational Assistant  
Mrs. Beth McManus, JCS SPED Educational Assistant  
Miss Erin Kirrane, LGN SPED Educational Assistant  
Mrs. Marytheresa Lee, LGN SPED Educational Assistant  
Mrs. Randy Deasy, LGN SPED Educational Assistant  
Mrs. Katy Kehoe, LGN SPED Educational Assistant

### **Leaves of Absence:**

Mrs. Michele Baeta, NMS Guidance Counselor, September, 2006 - June, 2007  
Mrs. Jerusha Bjork, JCS Grade 1, December, 2006 - June, 2007

### **Appointments:**

#### **Norton High School**

Mr. Michael Barth, Assistant Principal  
Mr. Robert McCoy, Social Studies  
Mr. Andrew Young, Structured Resource Room  
Miss Tanya Benoit, Biology  
Ms. Jennifer Dowty, Science

**Norton Middle School**

Mr. Adam Vareika, Adjustment Counselor  
Miss Carrie Richter, Grade 8 Science  
Mr. Paul Jenner, Grade 7 Math  
Ms. Heather Ciurylo, Grade 8 Math  
Mrs. Virginia Murray, World Language  
Mrs. Debbie Saperstein, Grade 6 Reading  
Mrs. Jessica Carvalho, Guidance Counselor

**J. C. Solmonese School**

Mrs. Kerry Wall, JCS .5 Reading  
Mr. Joseph Curran, JCS/HAY .5 Gym

**L. G. Nourse School**

Dr. Barbara Pummell, LGN .6 Preschool Team Chair  
Mrs. Jacqueline Simmons, LGN .4 Psychologist  
Mrs. Danielle McNeill-O'Brien, LGN SPED

**Systemwide**

Ms. Joan Goggin, Director of Pupil Personnel Services  
Ms. Rebecca Miguel, ABA Therapist