

# GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

12 Littleville Road Huntington, MA 01050

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## *Superintendent's Corner*

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As residents of the six towns that the Gateway Regional School District serves, I believe we've been fortunate to have such an innovative school serving the needs of our children. It's not often that a small and rural school district is able to continue being an educational technology leader while still operating under a budget that is significantly lower than it was 15 years ago. Gateway shares many qualities with other small schools – small class sizes where every student is known by staff; a cohesive student body where students get to participate in a wide range of activities; an environment that is positive and builds on community spirit; course electives buttressed with online course offerings as well as the ability to participate in dual-enrollment for college credit; staff members and administrators who tend to stay in the district for long periods of time; and, perhaps most importantly, having towns and community leadership that strongly support good schools.

I'm also pleased with the positive working relationship the district enjoys with local and state police. This is evident in our safety plans, table top exercises and consistent help from law enforcement in many other ways. Most important is the positive relationship between these officers and our students with many students knowing, and interacting positively with, our local officers. While this is not rare in smaller districts and towns, it still does not happen in every school across the Commonwealth.

Gateway is pleased to acknowledge that, due to collaborative efforts, we have succeeded in moving forward an opportunity to expand our vocational offerings. We are in the process of being approved to begin an early childhood vocational program that will operate in conjunction with our new full-day preschool program at the main complex. This will provide us with two Chapter 74 vocational programs in conjunction with our wood working, broadcast and STEAM programs (science, technology, engineering, art, math programs) which all provide hands-on opportunities for our students.

These programs are important to student success in terms of broadening opportunities, exploring potential careers, and providing chances to put factual knowledge into practical use. In conjunction with the athletic programs, career exploration opportunities through guidance, a range of extra-curricular activities, job shadowing, internship offerings and academics, Gateway does well in preparing students for life after high school. Given that our graduates are successful in so many different ways, from the military to being an entrepreneur, from technical to Ivy League colleges, and from volunteer services to being professional members of the workforce, it appears that Gateway continues to provide the essential educational services required to be successful in today's world.

The ongoing problem that smaller districts (and towns) have is the lack of understanding from those who make the regulations without factoring in the many differences between urban and rural areas. Of course, this isn't unusual across the country or even limited only to state governments, but still makes life more difficult. Coupled with the still growing number of unfunded, or underfunded, mandates that we must all cope with, this makes life as a town or school official in small towns and school districts much more complicated and difficult than it perhaps should be. What we're seeing now is changes that have already happened in schools

(certification issues, meeting regulations) that forced a much more professional workforce, are now transferring to towns that now require professional staff in positions that were once easily filled by town volunteers (town

administrator, town clerk, town financial positions). We've certainly seen this over the past several years in many of our towns and, short of a significant change in writing laws and regulations, will likely see this increase over time. That being said, it's still true that our towns survive due to the service of volunteers and those officials that get paid a small stipend, considering all that they do for our towns.

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