

# GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## *Superintendent's Corner*

**August 30, 2019**

After a summer hiatus, welcome back to what I hope will be regular additions of the *Superintendent's Corner*. With staff and students back in school this week, slightly cooler mornings, the country fair cycle in process and a significant decrease in daylight hours, there's little doubt that fall is rapidly approaching. As in the past, our staff who work throughout the summer (administrators, secretaries, central office staff, custodians, ground care and maintenance staff) have been busy preparing for the opening of school. Bus schedules, class schedules, maintenance schedules, and technology schedules have all been updated, prepared, and shared to ensure that school gets off to a good start.

This summer, as with almost every summer, has seen several changes within the district. Thanks to the support of our towns, we now have a curriculum director in place to help us move forward with a number of positive initiatives. As this new position was filled by Deana LeBlanc (middle/high school assistant principal), this necessitated hiring a new assistant principal, and we're very pleased that Martha Clark, an experienced administrator, is joining our team. While we are saddened (but also happy for her) by the retirement of Wendy Long, our grantwriter and public relations person, we look forward to working with Jeanne LeClair, the district's first 'joint' staff person shared with the towns of Blandford, Chester, Huntington and Middlefield (the other towns elected not to continue supporting the economic development position previously shared by all six Gateway towns). The district is also pleased to be able to continue developing a vocational program in early education and childcare by hiring an experienced teacher/coordinator to help move this process forward. While these changes will impact the daily operations of the district, we believe they will benefit students, Gateway, and our communities over time.

A major change that won't impact us until next year is the decision by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to not allow the use of 'Blizzard Bags' beyond the 2019-2020 school year. We will use them for up to five snow days this year, but not at all in the 2020-2021 school year. I believe Gateway did an outstanding job of implementing Blizzard Bags and know they were accepted and supported, more and more, by parents over the years we have used them to avoid holding school in late June. We will be studying options to minimize the number of snow days we have to use and will report out on this as we move through the year. While the loss of 'Blizzard Bags' wasn't a surprise, it does mark yet another instance of the state taking local control away from duly elected and appointed officials within the towns.

We're also requesting your patience as Gateway transitions to a new student information system (SIS) that we feel will better meet our needs as the state continues to require an ever-increasing amount of data from local school districts. I'm assured that once the kinks are worked out, staff and parents will be pleased with the change. In other technology news, this school year marks the completion of the roll out of Chromebooks to every student from grade 3 to 12 and the beginning of a planned replacement schedule to keep these computers up-to-date and functional.

We look forward to another year of growth, student success, and providing opportunities to our students and their families.

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