

***“The essential mission of public schools is not merely to prepare workers for the global workforce, but to prepare citizens with minds, hearts, and characters to sustain our democracy into the future.”***

**Ravitch, p. 325**

***“Students need a reason to come to school, not as a duty, but for the joy that comes from performance and imagination.”***

**Ravitch, p. 325**

Dear Students, Parents, Staff, and Community Members:

As the 2017-18 school year approaches, we look to strengthen our commitment and work to help students become life, career, and college ready. We understand our responsibility to educate every student for an uncertain future in a complex world. Further, we recognize our responsibility to change how we approach teaching and learning in ways we may not be prepared to do, but know we must continue to learn more about ways in which this generation of students learns best. We concur with AASA’s (the School Superintendent’s Association) *Redefining Ready* Initiative that states that, “Today’s students are driven by ideas and innovations, and they should not be reduced to, or defined by, a single test score as the primary readiness indicators for being life, career, or college ready”.

To this end, our goal, with a sharper focus, is to enhance our engagement and participation in helping students develop a defined exit plan, that ensures they can make confident, competent choices, that are defined by what learning and work pique their interests, use their knowledge and skills, and ultimately brings them happiness and success. This work will be ever evolving, starting with the staff coming together on Tuesday, August 29<sup>th</sup> to engage in activities and discourse that will take stock of how we currently help prepare students for life, career(s) and college, how we can better help students prepare for life, career(s) and college, and what next steps will be needed to recognize our stronger commitment. What follows are some identified goals and ideas that will be part of our work plan.

**Some Foundational Core Beliefs (from Littky, Dennis. *The Big Picture: Education is Everyone’s Business*. Engel, Susan. *The End of the Rainbow: How Educating for Happiness – Not Money – Would Transform Schools*.)**

From Littky:

- Learning is personal.
- Learning is about learning how to think.
- Figure out where each kid is at and develop his or her learning from there.
- The people who are best at their jobs are the ones who are passionate about their work.
- Depth over breadth
- If each kid is pursuing his or her own individual interests, competition is eliminated.
- Trust kids enough to allow them to help direct their own learning.

From Engel:

- Learn a few potent things so well that children could use them forever.
- Our list must consist of abilities that will enable all kinds of children to become all kinds of adults.
- The reason curiosity wanes is because we don’t nurture it.

**Core Beliefs Regarding Curriculum and Assessment:**

- Teachers should model learning.
- Increase coaching and reflective practice for principals and teachers.
- Increase teacher/student partnerships/relationships.
- Connect “real experiences” to daily instruction.
- Increase collaboration among teachers and students.
- Increase students’ reflection of their learning.

**Related Work in Progress:****From the BAHS Academic Audit**

- Redevelopment of the schedule that will accommodate more 1-1 student/teacher time, more opportunities for students to practice, process, and apply new learning, and allow for teachers to team teach.
- Strengthen relationships between teacher, administrators, students, families, and communities.
- Continue to explore teaching practices.

**BAHS School Level Goals**

- Create a school culture and climate where there is a high degree of trust and respect between and among staff members, students, families, and the community.
- Students will become even more engaged, invested, and hardworking, and will show increased motivation to complete, revise, and reflect upon rigorous work.
- Create a systemic (9-12) method for helping each student identify his/her passions, strengths, preferences and skills, explore post-secondary options for education and work in the world so as each student graduates from high school, and each graduate has a clear plan in which he/she is invested.

**BAHS Accreditation**

- BAHS Staff will be completing the NEASC Accreditation Self-Study in preparation for the spring accreditation visit and review.

**THMS Academic Audit**

- The Academic Audit will be conducted this fall.

We recognize we need everyone to help our students become better prepared for life, career(s), and college. Please join us in strengthening this commitment and work. Thank you in advance for help and participation.

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