

February 2019
Volume 11
Issue 6

Principal's Newsletter

Somers High School



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Okay, so our outdoor scenes do not look like the one above, these days, but we are getting some frigid air. Is it possible to get through the winter season without losing a day of school due to weather? Probably not, but it would be nice to graduate students in early June as opposed to much later in the month.

February usually tends to be a slower time for high schools thus allowing us to catch our breath as we await and prepare for the SAT (March 27th), AP Exams (May), and Next Generation Science Standards (April) testing to begin. Midterms are over and winter sports are winding down. We have been looking at PSAT data so that we can focus on areas of weakness in order perform at our best. Actually, our 9-11th grade scores from the fall of 2018 were commendable and overall showed nice improvement over previous years.

As we move forward, we have been working on changes that we hope will make SHS an even better place to learn. We have already made some headwinds into the vaping issues at SHS. Some of these solutions are parent and student forums we held, speakers being brought in, greater vigilance in our classrooms, hallways, and restrooms, as well as increased involvement of our School Resource Officers, Additionally, we will be working with our staff to recognize what vapes are they are impacting all students. I sent everyone our Comprehensive Vaping Plan in last month's newsletter.

Next month, I will begin elaborating on a few new initiatives that we have been working on over the past six months. We plan to pilot some of these initiatives in the 4th quarter, while others will begin in the fall of 2019. Stay tuned.

We will continue to work diligently to improve services to students and parents. This newsletter is a monthly publication that is designed to keep you updated on the latest educational issues. In addition, I always maintain an open-door policy and am here to assist you. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any concerns. I am looking forward to working with each of you and to helping make our school the best it can possibly be.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Cotzin
Principal
Somers High School

Assistant Principal's Corner

First, I would like to thank the entire Somers High School community for welcoming me into this new role with open arms. While I have been with Somers for many years, I feel very privileged to have the opportunity to get to know even more of our student body and families. Over the past few months, I have been working with faculty and students on the following initiatives:

Peer Tutoring Center

As a cooperative effort with the Counseling and Career Center (CCC) and the Library Media Center (LMC), a new Peer Tutoring program is in the works here at Somers High School. Classroom teachers were recently asked to identify exceptional students who are seeking leadership and service opportunities and interested students have met with Mrs. Grenier in the CCC to get involved. This will be a mutually beneficial program for both tutors and students seeking extra help. As a tutor, students have the opportunity to hone their content knowledge and to strengthen their communication and leadership skills, and students seeking assistance will gain reinforcement and new perspectives on content. We anticipate that this program will be rolled out later in the month of February. Tutor schedules will be posted on the CCC and Main Office windows, as well as in the Library Media Center, and on the Somers High School website. Students who are interested in tutoring or receiving assistance, please see Mrs. Grenier or Mrs. Gustafson.

Spartan Crew

The Spartan Crew is looking for fresh ideas to promote the Spartan Code in our school. This club is open to all students who are looking to take on a leadership role here at SHS. The Spartan Crew will be working on improving advisories, planning Spartan Code rallies, and will be planning other initiatives to celebrate our students and the Spartan Code. Our next meeting will take place Thursday, February 14th. Hope to see some new faces!

SHS English

Students from College English 10 and Honors English 10 showed tremendous growth on their second round of NWEA MAP testing in January. In the fall, sophomores averaged a 228 RIT, which was 8 points above the national norm. Eighty-one students scored above that national norm of 220 with 39 students finishing above the 80th percentile. This time, Somers sophomores raised their average to 232, but more importantly, 83 scored above the norm while a whopping 52 Spartans scored above the 80th percentile. This success can be attributed to the hard work students are putting in, rigorous curriculums, and a decision to include the test score as a portion of their English midterm grade. The Reading portion of the MAP test was given as the skills portion of sophomore English midterms. The improved commitment to do well on the test shows in the data.

On March 7th, 2019 the sophomore class is attending a play at the Hartford Stage called *Detroit '67*, which includes the following overarching themes from the students' *Raisin in the Sun* unit: familial strengths and conflicts, overcoming racial tensions, resilience, and economic ramifications of segregation.

The College Prep English 11 teachers have been working to prepare their classes to take the ELA portion of the upcoming SATs. Practice is integrated into the regular curriculum through the use of Khan Academy, College Board, and NewsELA interactive resources. Teachers are tracking student progress on SAT Reading practice tests to better inform them of how to best support students in their preparation for the spring session of the SAT.

It is bittersweet to say goodbye to our English 11 and Honors English 11 long-term substitute Ms. Catherine Gleason, but we are also excited to welcome back Mrs. Heather Connors. Ms. Gleason is moving on to teach English in South Korea, and Mrs. Connors has returned officially with her classes as of January 28th.

Bienvenue Mademoiselle MEYERS!



Mademoiselle MEYERS joined The World Language department at Somers High School at the end of October 2018. She has taught at Mabelle B Avery Middle School for the past three years and we welcome her at the high school.

Mademoiselle MEYERS is artistic and incorporates self-drawn visual aids on the boards to help students grasp certain concepts in French. One honor student says, "My favorite part of this class is the creative and fun visual techniques used for note-taking. Characters on the board carry out conversations and represent certain situations."

Mademoiselle MEYERS' mantra is "Learning by Doing." Her French students enjoy a variety of projects and activities that are both engaging and educational. She has taught all of her classes the "Impératif" verb tense or "Commands" in French playing sports in the school gymnasium. Students enjoy playing games, such as basketball, while speaking French to the other students on their teams. One student says, "This class is so fun! I especially like when we play basketball en français."

Mademoiselle MEYERS shares, "I care about each and every student in all my classes. I want nothing but success for them, but I also want them to look back on French class with fondness and reminisce about the many connections we've made and the knowledge they've gained."

We are happy to have Mademoiselle MEYERS at our school and as she would say: "C'est chic!"



Spartan Sports

Both the boy's and girl's basketball teams have qualified for the NCCC and CIAC state tournaments, with the girl's NCCC playoffs starting the week of February 14th and the boy's playoffs starting the following week. The wrestling team has completed their regular season and will be competing in the NCCC Championships on February 9th at Granby High School followed by the Class S Championships scheduled for February 15-16th at Windham High School. Tri-Town hockey is currently in the top 10 in Division 3 and still has (4) remaining games left at Enfield Twin Rinks. In preparation for the Class S Championships, our (4) indoor track athletes just competed in the NCCC Championships with Kylie Raymond setting another meet record in winning the 3200 meters. Our Unified Sports basketball team begins their season this week, and will have their only home home game on February 27th. For more information and weekly updates, please refer to the Somers High School athletics tab on the district website. Also, spring sports sign-ups are now available on our website.

Nurses Corner



Concussions

With the recent changes in weather and melting and re-freezing of snow, come increased chances for falls and head injuries. January has had the highest report of concussions here at SHS this far in the school year. A concussion is a type of brain injury that changes how the brain normally works. This happens when the brain jiggles and slams up against the skull. Usually there is some type of blow to the head, but a fall can also result in a concussion. Studies have shown that Adolescents ages 13-16 have more severe symptoms and a harder time dealing with the effects than adults. It is important to recognize a concussion when it first occurs to prevent further injury and so that the injured person can begin the only treatment for a concussion; which is REST. Signs to be on the lookout for are change in behavior, personality or memory. Often a persistent headache may be the only symptom reported. Seek medical attention for your child if you suspect a concussion so we can create a medical plan informing teachers of

their need to rest the brain. They will need to limit screen time and avoid any strenuous activity. If the student is an athlete they will need to be retested with impACT and will be slowly reintroduced to play once cleared. With proper rest and plenty of sleep complete recovery can be as soon as a few days up to a few weeks. With that said, please enjoy your winter activities while you still can! Healthy is Happy!

Library Media Center Happenings

Carpe Librum- Seize the Books!

Recently the Library Media Center received a loan of over 50 books from the Connecticut State Library. The titles included a mix of new fiction and non-fiction books, several of which were current 2019 ALA Award winners. These books are only here for a limited time, so stop by the LMC to check one out. For more information or to see the complete collection, visit the Media Center homepage or [click here](#).



Don't Judge a Book By It's Cover

Looking to spice things up this Valentine's Day? Try a blind date with a book! We have a selection of books that are dressed up and ready to be checked out. Only a few key words are on display, so come see what speaks to you and make a connection.



Mario Kart Tournament

On January 31st, the Class of 2021 held a Mario Kart Tournament in the LMC. Over 20 students and staff showed up to compete and support friends. Congratulations to Jack G., the tournament's first champion! All proceeds went to support the Sophomore class. Plans to hold another competition are in the works.





Important February Dates

2/12/19 Grade 8 Parent Night [Snow Date 2/14/19]

2/18/19 President's Day – No School

2/19/19 Professional Development – No School