

US News & World Report Portsmouth High “one of the best”

Congratulations to Portsmouth High School, recognized as one of eight Best High Schools in New Hampshire by *U.S News and World Report*. This is a wonderful recognition for the entire K-12 school community.

US News and World Report uses a three-step process to determine who makes the list. The first step ensures that “schools serve all of their students well and looks at state proficiency standards as the benchmark.” The second step is to determine whether the school’s least advantaged students were performing better than average for similar students. If schools make it past the first two steps, the final step is to assess the “degree to which schools prepare students for college-level work.” Top schools are placed into four categories: gold, silver, bronze and honorable mention categories.

There are 92 high schools in New Hampshire. Three high schools were placed in the silver category, namely, Hanover, Hollis-Brookline and Oyster River High School. Four other schools join Portsmouth High in the bronze category, Coe-Brown, Colebrook, Grovetown and Sunapee High Schools.

The *2010 US News & World Report* analyzed 21,786 high schools in 48 states. Nebraska and Oklahoma did not provide the full data. Kudos to PHS students, staff and administration and the entire district for preparing our students well and earning this recognition.

For more information, visit: www.usnews.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS, KUDOS AND DISTRICT DOINGS

- **Kudos to Kathy-Birse Siegel**, middle school health teacher, for her **recognition as Teacher of the Year** by the New Hampshire Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- **Congratulations to Mr. Tim Stokel, the cast, crew and musicians** who put on an outstanding production of “Fiddler on the Roof.”
- **Thanks to Steve Zadavec and Joanne Simons** for teaching this fall’s in-district professional development course on *Common Formative Assessments*.
- The **middle school project** is now in the hands of a Joint Building Committee (JBC) which has just approved JCJ Architects to do the work and will settle on a construction manager by February, 2010.
- **Thanks to all staff and students at the Robert J. Lister Academy** for an amazing **Thanksgiving celebration**.
- **Kudos to all of the middle and high school musical performers** in this year’s Portsmouth Christmas Parade.
- **Thanks to our elementary science leaders** for building strategies to share work related to the newly drafted Science Power Standards.
- **Congratulations to the participants** in our two approved **Professional Learning Projects (PLPs)**. Stay tuned for more details about action research being done in the **areas of elementary math and H1N1**.
- **Kudos to Judy Blouch and students** in her English classes for a great project using a wiki to have online discussions.
- The district’s efforts to prevent substance abuse have been underway under the direction of our grant funded **coalition coordinator Stacy Kramer**. **PHS students in Terra Merry’s Computer Graphics class** have designed a name and logo for this initiative.



Superintendent's Update

December 2009



**Portsmouth
School
Department**

Educating all students by challenging them to become thinking, responsible, contributing citizens who continue to learn throughout their lives.

Entry Plan Draft Submitted

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate and share their perceptions about the Portsmouth School District. I have completed a draft report and shared it with the School Board. A final report will be issued to all sometime in January. Again, I thank all who took the time to meet with me and for your warm welcome and kindness.

Professional Learning Community SMART Goals Published

As you know, the most significant goal adopted by the school board in 2009-10 is to not only review and monitor PLC implementation, but most importantly, *to evaluate the results of building level student achievement goals.*

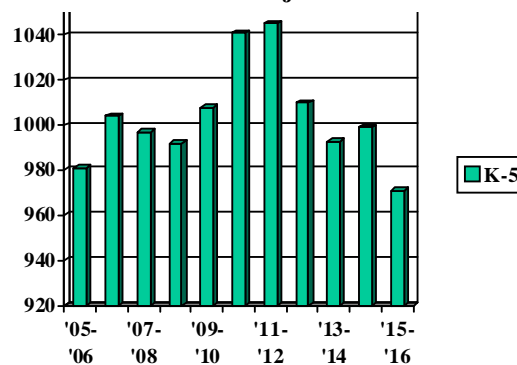
Principals have shared goals established by their PLC teams with Assistant Superintendent Zdravec. We will publish the goals on our district's webpage. We are proud that every PLC team has set such a goal. Robert Marzano, in his book, *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*, notes that establishing goals for students is a critical school-level factor of high performing schools. "In addition to its impact on achievement, Mike

Schmoker (1999) notes that setting academic goals for the school as a whole has a powerful, coalescing effect on teachers and administrators. "Goals themselves lead not only to success, but also to the effectiveness and cohesion of a team" (Marzano, p.36). Richard Dufour states that a "results orientation" is an essential characteristic of a PLC. PMS has set up a Ning to share their goals and work: <http://plcatpms.ning.com>.

School Board to Form Facilities Committee in January.

At its December 1st meeting, the Portsmouth School Board decided to create a long-range planning committee that will examine our K-5 school program, our current school design and capacity to deliver programming in conjunction with an architectural facilities assessment. The school board, by consensus, agreed that redistricting would not solve the issues confronting the district.

K-5 Historical / Projected Trend



The School Board examined the historical trends and enrollment projections prepared by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) for the district through school year 2015-2016. K-5 enrollments are expected to "peak" to 1045 pupils in 2011-12. The last time K-5 enrollment was at 1045 was in 2001 when Portsmouth underwent redistricting.

The school board also examined the classroom capacity at each of the schools. Little Harbour has 26 classrooms, Dondero has 25 and New Franklin has 18 classrooms, which is to say, spaces of 800 square feet or larger. The district's K-5 classroom capacity for graded classrooms and unified arts is 62 classrooms.

Finally, "school choice," as contemplated in the "No Child Left Behind" legislation and applied to Title I schools, could be an impediment to establishing new attendance sectors.

Next year's anticipated kindergarten is 171 students. In March, each elementary school will have a better understanding of whether three or four kindergarten classes will be required. Each school will work to manage the anticipated bubble. The school board will establish this committee early in 2010.

Enjoy the holidays!