

August 1, 2009

Greetings, Colleagues:

As I write this traditional "Welcome Back Letter" to you for yet another school year, I wonder how much longer this ritual will occur. A welcome back letter, sent to staff to start a new school year, is steeped in ritualistic practice from so many decades ago.

What a tradition within educational communities all over the country!

Is this an archaic remnant of the "olden days"? Will it go the way of the ink well and the quill? How long before every staff member is PDA connected and the notice comes via e-mail or text message? When will we use our phone reverse communication systems ('09-'10 implementation) to simply leave messages? How long before you are asked to check the website for school start-up information? How long before we are so paperless that there is even no snail-mail being delivered? Will our rural mailboxes go into antiquity like the Pony Express?

These are the questions one ponders when technology is ever more pervasive in our personal and professional lives. All of the signs are there for dramatic changes. The technological impact on organizations and the way business is conducted is moving at lightening speed. Even if we move full steam ahead we are in danger of falling further behind (hence, your afternoon workshops on Friday, August 28th).

Our five year theme of "*Quality Educational Environments: Responsive, Collaborative, Clearly Defined*" takes on an ever more urgent interpretation within this arena.

In today's world, being **responsive** means something extraordinarily different than even a few short years ago. Our move to the "*mygradebook.com*" arena requires that educators be responsive to parents and their right to have current information regarding their child's progress. The speed of technology and the use of current data on student performance will enable us to intervene and make advancement in a much more timely and objective-focused fashion.

Our **collaborative** environment is never more evident than with our IEP Direct and our RtI database initiatives and the need to service our students in a much more customized and partnered way. Collaborating with staff members from every department, as well as with parents and a host of community members, can ensure much greater levels of student success. Some of our students only thrive because of our work with the town social service agencies.

Finally, this technological environment showcases and enables the attribute of **clearly defined**. Whether we are studying the tech-based information of our specified curriculum items, our individual student performances, our building energy use, our recycling efforts, our Food Service program revenues and expenditures, or the incidences of student flu... clearly defined data and its related plans of action are more powerful than ever.

We will address responsiveness, collaboration, clearly defined educational practices and technology at our district staff development gathering. Please refer to the enclosed agenda and note that Thursday, August 27th is designated as site-based activities and our **district-wide welcome back activities are being held on Friday, August 28th**.

I do so look forward to your return and to our continued partnership on behalf of Coventry Public School students. Stay well.

From my computer... on the road...

Donna Bernard, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Encl.