

# Vestal High School

Clifford R. Kasson, Principal  
Board Report – November 2018

## Principal's Message

- The school year is well on its way. We have completed the 1<sup>st</sup> marking period, our classes and clubs are well into planning upcoming events; including, the King Bruin Dance (12/15/18); the Dig Blue for Liam Volleyball Tournament (11/17/18); and the Running of the Bears 5K (3/30/19). Fall Sports have begun and the teams are doing great. Signups for Ski Club participants are being held, Cap, Gown & Announcement orders are being handed out to seniors, and volunteers for Make A Difference Day (11/9/18) are being recruited.

## Art

- The Art Department Senior Portfolio class had visits from three different colleges in October. Pratt at Munson William Proctor, Alfred and SUNY Purchase. The college representatives give an overview of the schools they represent but more importantly give a one on one review of student work and make recommendations regarding their portfolios
- IB Year Two students met artist/illustrator Ralph Masiello at Clayton Ave. Mr. Masiello is a creator of many How to Draw books for Children and wonderfully intricate alphabet books. Mr. Masiello spoke to the students about his experiences as an artist and a bit about marketing and pay scale in his illustration field.
- Art Madness our artist bracket program for Studio Art and Drawing and Painting Classes is well underway. One of our featured artists, Banksy, was studied by students the very week he made national news with his Sotheby's Auction painting scandal....needless to say, Banksy is moving on in his bracket!

## Biology

- Our teachers in the biology department have been busy. Rosanne Van Wie attended the Wetland Research Experience with two Vestal students in July where they looked at the importance of (and human impacts on) watersheds on environmental sustainability. At this point, students and teachers from VHS are collecting water samples from various sites and sending those samples to the biogeochemistry laboratory. This was coordinated and conducted by Professors George Meindl and Jonathan Schmitkons (Environmental Sciences) at Binghamton University.
- Danette Berry is putting her training from the Teach for Understanding workshop this summer to work having done an extensive revision of her first unit in Living Environment. The students are being challenged to use inquiry and independent thinking skills each day. They are applying these skills in the lab setting and are practicing scientific writing by submitting detailed lab reports.
- Kyle Rizzo and Kate Minde are currently attending the Teach for Understanding workshops as part of the new teacher program.

- Katie Donlin went to Cornell this past weekend to meet with other teachers from around the state and attend professional development workshops specifically centered on biology through the CIBT program.
- Next Friday, multiple teachers from the department will be attending a Biology PLC at BOCES to continue the discussion around the change in standards to NYSSLS in the coming years. This is an opportunity to collaborate with other teachers from around our area to develop new curriculum and best teaching practices as we move forward.
- Our department appreciates the opportunity for professional development offered within our district!

### **Chemistry**

- The Chemistry department hosted Glenwood and Vestal Hills 4th grade classes for the first two Chemistry Magic Shows of the year.

### **Counseling & Guidance**

- The school year is off to a good start in the Counseling and Guidance Department. Superintendent's Conference Day was an opportunity for all of the district's counselors to take part in enriching professional development. Counselors K-12 attended the "Strengthening Protective Factors" conference that was held at Whitney Point High School. Sessions included topics such as Restorative Justice, Sexting, Substance Abuse and Families, Shawna has a Secret, and LGBTQ Families and Youth.
- High school counselors attended Operation Inform at SUNY Oneonta. Most SUNY campuses were represented at a Counselors Professional Exchange as well as workshops on Understanding the College Application, Support Services for a Successful Transition to College, and Uniting Interests and Aptitude with College Majors and Careers. Tours were also available of the campus. Elementary Counselors attended a webinar on Zones of Regulations along with the Building Principals and School Psychologists this month.
- On October 13<sup>th</sup>, counselors administered the PSAT to almost 200 students. The PSAT is the qualifying test for National Merit Scholarships, so we were all especially committed to providing a quiet and organized atmosphere for the exams. Custodians, teachers, administrators, and the School Counselors worked closely together to make the testing experience a success for all of our students. Students should receive their results in December.
- Counselors took 100 students to College Day on October 17<sup>th</sup>. There were over 100 colleges and universities represented as well as branches of the military and several different trade areas. Our juniors and seniors got a chance to talk to the College Admissions advisors about the schools themselves and what majors are available. Students found it to be a rewarding experience.
- At the high school, we just passed the first Early Decision deadline (November 1<sup>st</sup>) and applications are rolling in quickly! Counselors and our secretary have processed over 250 applications so far. SUNY has increased their fee waivers from 4 to 7 schools. Some students may be taking advantage of this opportunity and applying to more schools. As of October 26<sup>th</sup>, we have had 37 different colleges and universities come to visit our school with 86 students attending those visits. We continue to build relationships with college counselors to help meet the needs of our students.

- “Counselors on Call” began last week and will continue through Winter Break. Students are welcome to drop in during lunch periods one day a week to get any questions answered without making an appointment. Students have found this drop-in time to be extremely helpful with everything from a quick question to creating a Common Application account and starting from scratch.

### Earth Science

- The Earth Science department has been excited to share the experiences and specimens it has collected by teachers who traveled last summer. Ryan Brembs collected many fossils, including amazing trilobite specimens, from locations across New York. Adam Thayer collected rock and soil specimens from the Rocky Mountains and surrounding region. These specimens, and the pictures and stories that accompany these specimens, have been incorporated into the department’s curriculum, enriching and strengthening student experience in the classroom.

### English

- Mr. Malejs is collaborating with our Library Media Specialist, Mrs. Sweeney, on a research-based project for his 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Both are part of a regional group, including representatives from local colleges, who will be meeting three times this year to discuss how we are preparing our students for college-level research. Their project will culminate in a student-created infographic that addresses an enduring issue in our world. The project is expected to be completed in February of 2019.
- Mrs. Yajko’s Pre-IB English 9 classes are working on collaborative research topics for Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. They are responsible for working in self-directed teams in order to become "teachers and experts" in their area of study/topic. Presentations begin this week and extend into the next. They are using Chrome books for research and electronic database work in the classroom. In addition, these classes went to the library in October to work collaboratively with Mrs. Sweeney. She spoke with us about our electronic resources, plagiarism, and the *Grammarly* website. *Grammarly* is an online grammar checking, spell checking, and plagiarism detection platform that the department successfully piloted last spring. The district has since purchased the license for student use.
- The IB English 11 students of Mrs. Drexler-Smith and Mrs. Benjamin are starting a project that enhances students’ international-mindedness as they research social, political, and economic realities that drive real-world perspectives and personal stories around the world.
- Mrs. Drexler-Smith’s English 11 students are crafting analytical and creative presentations that parallel Arthur Miller’s satirical social commentary from the play *The Crucible*, both as they are supported in the text, and as they apply to specific, current events. Each group of students is responsible for one speech from the play and teaching its multi-layered significance to the class.
- In Mrs. Drexler-Smith’s Theory of Knowledge classes, students are beginning to analyze commonalities and differences in inquiry models and evidence analysis between the natural and human sciences. They are delving into modern scientific articles to unpack these processes.
- Mr. Dunham’s IB English 12 students have concluded their study of James Joyce’s *Dubliners* and are now engaged in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. This part of the course focuses on interpreting a work both in terms of content and literary technique. This detailed study is achieved through close reading and in-depth analysis of each work studied. The ultimate aim is for students to develop and articulate personal responses to the works and become familiar with a variety of literary interpretations and critical perspectives. The assessment component for these works, which is unique to IB, is the Individual Oral

Commentary and Discussion. This is assessed internally and externally moderated by the IB. It consists of two parts: a formal 10-minute oral analysis and a 10-minute interview/discussion. While challenging for students, this assessment is excellent preparation for college-level thinking and speaking.

### **Health**

- Students in Health Education recently finished presenting their Current Events Projects to their classmates. Working alone or in pairs, students researched a health issue of interest to them and did a 10-minute mini-lesson for their peers. They created a slide presentation along with handouts, posters, games or videos to teach their fellow students about issues as diverse as Bird Flu, vegetarianism, concussions, animal therapy, Ebola, designer babies and GMOs. We are currently in the middle of our unit on Tobacco, vaping, hookahs and cancer. This week we are heading to the library for practice in determining the reliability of health websites with a particular emphasis this time on figuring out which websites offer valid information on cancer and which ones are “quack” sites.

### **IB Honors**

- Juniors and seniors in IB classes just finished registering for the May IB exams. We have 67 students signed up for testing, compared to 56 last year. The course with the most exam-takers is IB English, with a total of 42. It is hard to believe we are already thinking ahead to May!
- The IB Self Study Committee met on October 12 to review all aspects of our IB program and consider action items to improve IB here at Vestal. It was a productive meeting of teachers, administrators, parents, and students, and we had great conversations about the program’s future. The first draft of the study is complete, and we now have until December 1 to make final edits and submit all documents to IB.
- IB teachers in Math and English are beginning to evaluate the major curriculum changes that IB is implementing for first teaching next year. The changes are broad, but we are collaborating in departments to be sure we accommodate the new curriculum.
- Our IB Diploma juniors will be kicking off their Creativity-Activity-Service (CAS) requirement by volunteering for a half-day at CHOW on November 30. It is a great way for the students to bond as an IB class and a great help to CHOW in advance of the holidays. It should be a great day!

### **Math**

- October was a busy month for professional development in the math department. Many teachers attended BOCES workshops on various topics: Regional Collaboration for Algebra, Geometry and Algebra 2, and math leaders/department chairs. We also had successful and informative SCD. The morning consisted of department meetings and team collaboration. In the afternoon, we enjoyed our workshop on Culturally Responsive Practice and Nature and Nurture: Adverse Childhood Experiences, Brain Architecture and Resiliency.

### **Music**

- There were 18 students (grades 7-9) who participated in the NYSSMA Area All-State honors festival at Ithaca High School on Friday, 11/2 & Saturday, 11/3. Students were selected for the ensembles based on their NYSSMA solo scores from May of 2017-2018.

- Students in the VHS Orchestra and Wind Ensemble will be collaborating on a performance of a movement of Beethoven's 6th Symphony to be performed this December.
- The VHS Orchestra is the largest and most diverse ensemble we've had in over 15 years with 91 students.
- Auditions for the VHS musical, Newsies, will be November 7, 8, 13, and 17.
- The District Choral Concert will take place on Thursday, November 15th at VMS. This concert will feature students in our chorus program, grades 4-12, including a combined piece at the end of the night!
- Austin Kiley is currently working with a student teacher from Ithaca College. Alison Melchionna will be with us through the end of December.
- The Vestal Marching Band has finished their competitive season, finishing 6th in New York State in the Small School 2 class. Our parade season will feature the Veteran's Day Parade (Sun 11/11), Holiday Parade (Sat 12/1), and the Memorial Day Parade (Mon 5/27).

### **Physical Education**

- Physical Education classes have moved inside with the colder weather moving in. Classes during this month included Pickleball, Weight Training, Swimming, Floor Hockey and the ever popular, Archery. Classes worked on skills and drills in these units often times ending in some spirited competition with small tournaments for those interested. As we move into December, Swimming & Archery will continue for the older students while the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> graders work on team-oriented sports like Volleyball and Basketball.

### **Physics**

### **Social Studies**

- The Social Studies Department once again set up "Election Central" in the Social Studies wing. The display features candidates, polls, current news articles and sample ballots.
- Social Studies 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers met on Superintendent's Day to discuss changes to the Global History & Geography II Regents Exam. Team collaboration will take place throughout the year to work on changes to the curriculum and the new assessments.

### **Special Education**

- The Special Education Department has participated in a number of workshops and long-range planning meetings this month. Workshops attended at BOCES included "Making Word Problems More Accessible through Instructional Scaffolding" (Lisa Sienkiewicz, with Amanda Reid of the Math Department, and Ben Greene), and "Guide to Quality IEPs" (Lisa Sienkiewicz, Ben Greene, Vanessa Ewing). Rosalie Sullivan led two sessions on NYS Alternate Assessment that were attended by all the teachers, both General Education and Special Education, that are working with our student who is being alternately assessed. At our second Secondary Special Education department meeting, led by Barbara Brown, we worked at improving our understanding of, and implementation of, specially designed instruction.

- Ben Greene and Bernice Thompson continue to be our representatives with the Transition Support Group at BOCES. This month the group focused on Indicator 13: writing quality transition IEPs; and Indicator 14: how successful are former students, who had an IEP in high school, in achieving their post-secondary goals, as measured one year after graduating from high school.
- Long range planning work also included participation in the Continuum Task Force (Lisa Sienkiewicz, Jen Zindle, Vanessa Ewing). This group is tasked with looking at our current continuum of services for students with disabilities at the high school, and making recommendations for additions so that we have better continuity between high school and middle school programs, and are meeting the state requirements for providing students with disabilities an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment.
- Our focus this year continues to be providing appropriate services and supports for students whose disabilities are more significant, and in years past, would have attended alternative programs at BOCES. We are experiencing the discomfort that comes with any steep learning curve. Our team is committed to including students with disabilities to the largest extent possible; we are making efforts/accommodations that allow these more significantly disabled students to be more fully involved in our school community by facilitating their participation in music groups and sports teams. This is progress in the right direction and our team feels excited about it. We need to continue to expand our knowledge base and programming in order to make sure students' needs are being met, and they are receiving a high quality, appropriate education. We are grateful for the workshops, trainings, and meetings that have been offered through Rosalie Sullivan's leadership.

## Technology

- Introduction to Engineering Design Students are using a dial caliper to obtain measurements on a number of wooden cubes and using statistics to determine the number of usable cubes.
- Principles of Engineering Students worked on machines that create a mechanical advantage using the VEX Kits.
- Digital Electronics Students are creating the circuit of an electronic die simulator.
- Civil Engineering and Architecture Students have just completed a cost analysis and a heat loss analysis on the shed they designed. Students will be beginning to design a house for Habitat for Humanity.
- 12 Engineering students went on a field trip to Manufacturing Day at Raymond Corporation in Greene, NY on Oct.12<sup>th</sup>.
- Michael Evans and Alison Weisel took 16 Students on a field trip to BOCES Engineering Day Competition on October 25<sup>th</sup>. Students had an hour and a half to create a Rube Goldberg machine from various items supplied in a box. *A Rube Goldberg machine* is a machine intentionally designed to perform a simple task in an indirect and overcomplicated fashion. The teams of four competed against 45 other high school teams. One of our teams took home 1<sup>st</sup> Place. The winning team consisted of Catherine Deskur, Jessica Luo, Maya McCollum and Kaimana Lum. They each received a medal and the team received a trophy, which is on display in the main office in the High School.

- STEAM Club had four meetings in October with an average of 22 students per meeting. On October 11<sup>th</sup> some STEAM Club students went to Kopernik Science Center to look at the land where the shed is going to be erected. Students have designed a club t-shirt and are now working on shed designs for Kopernik using the Revit Architectural Program.

### World Languages

- Beth Ait Oumessaoud and French Club celebrated the Moroccan staples of mint tea and henna this month. They also carved pumpkins with French themes (euros, cats, berets, etc.). In class, as Beth teaches levels 1-5IB, the students learned and celebrated La Toussaint and discovered famous French and Francophone people. Also, plans for the French exchange have started.
- Sandy Flesher and the Spanish Club decided to send relief aid to a school in South Carolina. They approached and included the other WL clubs. French club joined us to send a donation to help in the cleanup and rebuild from Hurricane Florence.
- All Spanish classes had Day of the Dead Cultural lessons the week of October 29<sup>th</sup> through November 2<sup>nd</sup>. Students decorated cookies, Calaveras and cooked traditional Mexican and Central American foods. Melissa Restuccia had her students create 3-D prints of Calaveras (decorated skulls) and then transferred them to other artwork, which are featured in the art cases outside the auditorium. Nicole Ewing gave Melissa some authentic Mexican items also used in the display.



- Kelly Zhang and students of the Chinese club along with several parents went to Binghamton University to see the Chinese Warriors of Peking. This traveling group performed acrobatics, martial arts and storytelling.

- A regional consortium of schools have joined to move forward with the NYS Seal of Biliteracy. On October 16<sup>th</sup>, Nicole Ewing, Andrew Blaine and Patrick Clarke went to BOCES to meet with the other area schools and RBERN to develop and finalize requirements and evaluations for our students that will be applying for this special and unique NYS seal on their diploma. The students will need to show literacy, not just speaking and listening comprehension, in English and another language. On a fun note, the WL teachers dressed as dominoes for Halloween. Dominoes are extremely popular in the Caribbean and North Africa.







2	IB Exam Registration Deadline
2	Board Reports due from Dept. Chair
3	SAT's (Vestal)
4	'Fall Back' Clock Change
6	Rtl Period 2-4 Principal's Conf. Rm.
6	Music Boosters Mtg., 6 p.m.
7	Mentoring Committee Mtg., 7:15 a.m. Rm. 181
7	ERT Mtg., Period 4 Principal's Conf. Rm.
7	Dept. Chair Mtg., Rm. 181, 3 p.m.
7	Musical Auditions (Voices Room)
8	Coffee w/ Superintendent, 7 a.m.
9	Make A Difference Day, 5 p.m. Cafeteria
12	No School - Veteran's Day
13	Rtl Period 2-4 Principal's Conf. Rm.
13	BOE Mtg., 6 p.m.
14	Faculty Mtg., Cafeteria, 2:50 p.m.
14	PTO Mtg., Rm. 181, 6 – 8 p.m.
15	Underclassmen Picture Retakes, 8-3 p.m. Pool Gym
15	Administrative Workshop, 8-10:30 a.m.
20	Board Reports due from Dept. Chair
21-23	No School - Thanksgiving Break
26 - 27	VHS Blood Drive Lecture, PE Classes Zero – 9 <sup>th</sup> Period Auditorium
26	BPT Mtg., Rm. 181, 12:30 -3
27	Rtl Period 2-4 Principal's Conf. Rm.
27	TOK Field Trip Rm. 181 (Interfaith Dialogue) 12:30 – 2:40 p.m.
29	VHS Blood Drive, Gym 7 a.m. – 4 p.m.