

February 2008

Donna's Dispatch

A message from Donna Bernard
Superintendent of Schools

Greetings to you from this February chill.

This is the season when our school nurses report extra special efforts being made at our schools to have students wash their hands and not pass winter “bugs” from student to student. Your attention to the health and well being of your family members is always appreciated. We know, for sure, that adults and children do their best work when they feel at their best, physically. That can only happen when we minimize the cold and flu season.

Sometimes, when I chat with individual students and they tell me stories, I worry about their habits and patterns influencing their productivity at school. I addressed issues of adequate sleep in this column earlier. Might I just take a moment here, in the middle of this winter season, to encourage a focused attention on two additional components of health and high performance...nutrition and exercise?

Most of the research on student achievement cites that the oxygenation of the brain is an essential and supporting condition related to high performance. It is facilitated by aerobic levels of exercise. Many of our children move their bodies very little. When we watch them in movement situations, we can see the lack of experience and practice in very basic physical tasks. We can see that they are not used to moving their bodies on a regular basis and are increasingly not motivated to do so. Beyond the six hour school day, students need to be moving, strengthening, and stretching their bodies. Might you assist?

In addition, the appropriate quantity and quality of food choices can make all of the difference in how young people function in a school environment. Just the other day, one of the adolescent girls was talking about how she and her friends were proud of not eating each day and that they were only drinking coffee in order to stay thin. On the one hand we have greater levels of obesity in American children than ever (and the related increase in Diabetes type II). On the other hand we have a serious lack of quality live food being ingested by young people. Their growth, development, and exceptional performance depend on the high level of energy attained through sound nutritional practices. Help!

These conversations with our students are always informative to us and should be attended to by those in their sphere of influence. The young people in this community provide us cautionary tales and present opportunities to advise and assist them in making healthier choices.

As always, I appreciate the time and attention you give to Coventry learners. Wise and caring adults, who listen to their stories, are well positioned to help them as they grow and develop. Thanks for being there and caring about their wellness.

Donna

PS – The next session of “Donuts with Donna” is scheduled for Monday, March 17 from 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. at Orchard Hills, 1630 Main Street, in the Front Community Building (next to the main office). Please park in spaces marked “visitor.” Also, please know that Coventry Schools has a variety of flexible employment opportunities available: Special Education Para-Educator Substitutes are

needed for all grade levels, especially for grades 6-12. If you are interested, please contact the Pupil and Staff Support Services Office at 742-7317 ext. 4.