



Blind Brook High School



From the Principal's Desk...

Blind Brook High School – An American High School Today.

In the late 1970's New York City Mayor Edward Koch popularized a saying, "How am I doing?" It is in that vein that the administration of Blind Brook High School has taken a number of steps to assess our success in preparing the student body for the many challenges they face. Ultimately, students and their parents are clients, customers if you will, that have expectations regarding the services that they receive. This is not a bad thing. Automobile manufacturers that ignored J.D. Powers surveys ultimately lost market share. One might think that schools, being public institutions, are not governed by the same market forces. Think again! Quantitative rankings are all around us. Each year the school district compiles data from examinations conducted by the New York State Board of Regents and the College Board. These data are then analyzed in comparison to national, state and local similar school districts.

Recently *U.S. News and World Report* issued its first United States high school rankings. They commissioned none other than Standard and Poor's to develop a protocol to evaluate the more than 18,000 high schools in America. (We were a Gold Medal school at number 75) All of this is dutifully recorded by every real estate agent in America.

That being said, it is the qualitative that is a bit trickier to fathom. This past year the Board of Education commissioned a study of student satisfaction by surveying the class of 2006. This in depth study provided valuable information about how alumni perceived the quality of education that they received after being graduated from Blind Brook High School. Results of these data are available on line through our district website, www.blindbrook.org. This study will be enhanced later this year through focus groups of alumni and creating a student satisfaction survey for present senior class members.

A few weeks ago I conducted my own unscientific quality survey. I will call it *The Lunch with the Principal Survey*. I invited the entire school to stop in during their free or lunch period to have lunch with me and just talk about Blind Brook High School. Although Blind Brook High School offers town meetings that allow students to vent their feelings, each student has only a moment and the number of participants is quite limited by time constraints. I posed two questions to the students that I met with: What is good about Blind Brook High School? What could be better? First, let me note that almost 20 percent of the student body decided to attend. Having been a principal in two other schools I can tell you that this was a terrific response. The number of attendees was evenly spread across grades nine through eleven with a smattering of seniors present. They also represented students serving as elected officers and those who could best be described as the general public.

Continued on page 2



Continued from page 1

So what works and what could work better at Blind Brook High School according to our clients? Here is a synthesis of responses to those two questions. Rather than defining which category the answers fall in I will list them and you can make your own decision. For some of the responses what is positive or negative may not be that clear cut.

- ◆ Blind Brook High School has allowed students to make so many good friends.
- ◆ The teaching staff is really great. They are unique and students will always remember them. There is a close relationship between students and teachers. They encourage you to succeed.
- ◆ The classes are small and the students are smart.
- ◆ (The following comes primarily from freshmen) “Parents are the chief source of pressure and stress followed by ourselves.” I asked what parents say to students that causes this stress? The answer I received was that they don’t say it. You just know it. “You wouldn’t want to disappoint them.” But pressure is not necessarily a bad thing. It makes you do well.
- ◆ Students want a longer activity period.
- ◆ Some want a uniform grading policy across departments, i.e., same value for tests and quizzes as a component of the final grade. Some do not want this.
- ◆ Freshmen, by and large, want tracking of students in all departments for freshman classes so that slower students don’t hold up the class. (I asked the students to identify themselves as “slow” in a subject. No one raised their hand).
- ◆ For most of the students that attended, academics don’t overtake social life at Blind Brook.
- ◆ Students want more choices for classes and to be allowed self placement.
- ◆ Every room has a Smart Board which is a plus.
- ◆ The size of the school is good and bad.
- ◆ The students are great.
- ◆ Traditions such as painting the rock and the Sophomore Circus make Blind Brook High School a wonderful experience.
- ◆ The creativity of the student body is great.
- ◆ Get rid of the college wall. It is scary to be judged in a public fashion.
- ◆ Sophomores are not that concerned about college.
- ◆ Competition forces students to do better to an extent.
- ◆ This is not the real world.
- ◆ “The first impression I gave to students when I entered Blind Brook in early elementary school is what my classmates still think of me.”
- ◆ The community values are a great plus to success.
- ◆ Everyone knows everyone else and that is a good thing.
- ◆ We really should learn something about personal finance. (a freshman comment)
- ◆ When I graduate I know that I will never associate with the friends that I have made here.
- ◆ I wish that I were in a larger school so that I could meet a new person every day.
- ◆ The AP program creates a great deal of pressure but its existence is a fact of life that students must deal with.

Continued on page 3.



Continued from page 2

So what does this all mean? It means that school affects students differently just as life affects adults differently. That being said the message that came to me from this two hour discussion was that students are concerned with a world that can be stressful and that, by and large, they are learning how to deal with the “real world” by honing their coping skills. There are many things that students view as working at Blind Brook and only a few that could work better.

Having had the good fortune of serving as principal of three of the high schools on the *U.S. News* list of the top 100 schools in America I can say, on a comparative basis, that Blind Brook High School can be proud of the education that its students receive both inside and outside of the classroom. Our qualitative and quantitative measures of success are in sync. One day a statistical tool will be developed to demonstrate that relationship. Until then we will only know “how we are doing” by relying upon both charts and tables of assessments as well as by asking our school community that fundamental question. In addressing our concerns to each of these criteria we can continue in our goal of providing our clients with the greatest value. I look forward to your support and insight in this endeavor.

William J. Stark
Interim Principal

MATHEMATICS: NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Over the past few years, the New York State Department of Education has been revising the core curriculum in the area of mathematics. The Blind Brook School district has been adjusting its curriculum accordingly in order to stay aligned with the standards developed by the state. The implementation of the new curriculum has been a gradual one which started at the elementary school level and is trickling up to the middle and high school levels.

The current school year is the first year in which the high school is implementing the new curriculum. The most noteworthy change for high school students will be in the form of the state assessments. Under the outgoing system, there are two Regents exams in mathematics, the Math A exam and the Math B exam. The Math A exam assesses students on the first year and a half of a three-year sequence, and the Math B exam assesses students on the remaining year and a half of the three year sequence. The new system will have three Regents exams, called Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra 2/Trigonometry. These tests will be administered after one, two, and three years of a three-year sequence. Under both systems, only the first Regents exam, Math A and Integrated Algebra, are mandatory for a Regents’ diploma. Traditionally, Blind Brook has only administered Regents exams in mathematics that were required for graduation. (Our students take the Math A exam, but not the Math B exam.)

Continued on page 4



Continued from page 3

There are three tracks in the high school math curriculum: accelerated, regular, and the “A” track which moves at a slower pace and completes the three year sequence in four years. The table below shows which Regents’ exam our students will be taking and when they will be taking the exam, based on their track and current grade. The 8th graders are included because those that are in the accelerated group will take the Integrated Algebra Exam while still in the 8th grade. Students that are currently in the 7th grade or below can expect to take the Integrated Algebra exam with the same timing as the current 8th graders. Students currently in grades 10, 11 and 12 are unaffected by the changes.

HS Graduation Year	Current Grade	Accelerated	Regular	“A” Track
2010	10 th	Took Math A January, 9 th Grade	Math A January, 10 th Grade	Math A June, 10 th Grade
2011	9 th	Math A January, 9 th Grade	Integrated Algebra June, 9 th Grade	Integrated Algebra January, 10 th Grade
2012	8 th	Integrated Algebra June, 8 th Grade	Integrated Algebra June, 9 th Grade	Integrated Algebra January, 10 th Grade**

** There is no “A” Track in the eighth grade. This track starts in the ninth grade and continues through 12th grade.

Michael McCarvill
Mathematics Coordinator, Grades 6 -12

- 01/02 Classes resume
- 01/04 Project Prevention Mtg. 9am
- 01/07 BOE Workshop 8pm
- 01/08 Carol Mann-Cohen 7:30pm
- 01/11-01/12 Homecoming weekend
- 01/15 PTA meeting 8pm
- 01/16 Jr. college planning 7:30pm
- 01/21 Schools closed—Martin Luther King Jr.
- 01/22-01/25 Regents/Mid-terms
- 01/28 BOE meeting 8pm
- 01/29 Adam Raff—”How to talk to your teenagers” 7:30pm

The administration, faculty and staff wish all of our families a happy, healthy holiday season!

