

The Monti Navigator

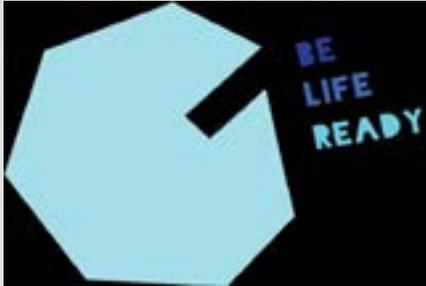
Be Greater than the Average



Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools

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Awareness = Action



We're continuing to move full steam ahead in our quest to create **LIFE-READY** citizens. Our teacher leaders have worked diligently with a group of our high school students in order to identify and define seven key LIFE-READY traits that are essential for success in the world of the 21st century. This entire school year, we are focusing on studying, developing and demonstrating these traits to ensure that our organization is successful at creating students who are graduating **LIFE-READY**.

Yogi Berra was pretty accurate when he said, "if you don't know where you're going, you'll end up somewhere else. Thus, we kicked off our year-long study of our seven **LIFE-READY** traits last month with a focus on goal-setting and goal-getting. The key to a successful life journey begins with knowing exactly where you want to be. Indeed, you must define, and create a vision of, what your life will look like (**GOAL-SETTING**) before you can actually wind up living the life you define through your intentional actions to achieve the goal you have set – or more specifically, to live the life you have defined (**GOAL-GETTING**).

Our actions define our outcomes – there are very few surprises in our world.

For example:

- The action of creating an at-home library creates an environment that leads to heightened learning. Research has shown that whether rich or poor, children who grow up with books in their home have higher educational outcomes than children who grow up without books in their homes. We should not be surprised that our children struggle in reading when we do not build an appreciation for books and reading early on (Visit this link for more information: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/05/100520213116.htm>)

- Teachers who base all instruction centered around reading on research and evidence-based planning have students who **CAN** read on level and achieve reading success, despite their starting points. Specifically, "The majority of children who enter kindergarten and elementary school at risk for reading failure can learn to read at average or above-average levels—if they are identified early and given systematic, intensive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies (Lyon et al., 2001; Torgesen, 2002a). Substantial research carried out and supported by NICHD indicates clearly that without this systematic and intensive approach to early intervention, the majority of at-risk readers rarely catch up.



Failure to read by nine years of age portends a lifetime of illiteracy for at least 70 percent of struggling readers (Shaywitz, 2003).“ We should not, therefore, be surprised when our delayed readers do not succeed if we are not using research-based, systematic and intensive instruction for those who need to catch up (Visit this link for more information: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar04/vol61/num06/The-Science-of-Reading-Research.aspx>).

- People who are well have higher chances of success in life. The health of any given community is intricately linked to its members' LIFE-READINESS. Currently, Sullivan County ranks 61 out of the 62 counties in New York State in terms of health. (For more info, see: http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/state/downloads/CHR2016_NY.pdf)



The Robert Woodcock Foundation measures wellness based on four key factors: Policies and Programs (air and water quality as well as housing and transit opportunities), Social and Economic Factors (education levels, employment, income, family and social supports and community safety), Clinical Care (access to health care and quality of health care) and Health Behaviors (tobacco use, diet, exercise, alcohol use and sexual activity).

If we do not intentionally act to build policies to improve housing opportunities and transit systems that enable folks to get to their colleges, jobs and other important need-based institutions, then we shouldn't be surprised if our community stays stuck as the second-worst county in the state in terms of health. Likewise, we should not be surprised if we stick at 61 if we have not elevated our educational expectations by using research and evidence-based reading instruction as stated above. Indeed, the less literate a community is, the more likely it is to be unwell!

I could go on and on -- in order to be **LIFE-READY**, we must set goals, and actively work on **GETTING** those goals, because surprises that go against the norm are far and few between. Get-rich quick schemes and other gimmicks have never and will never change our world. Work is involved — hard work. The best first step in ensuring success in goal-getting is to intentionally become **AWARE** of where we currently stand. To be clear, we must honestly and openly acknowledge our current baseline if we intend to build a true plan to achieve a goal.

For example:

- The first step in any weight loss plan is to step on the scale.
- The first step in building an at-home library to enhance your family's interaction with books thereby likely enhancing your child's reading outcomes, is to count the number of books you currently have. Research shows that a library of approximately 500 books is beneficial.
- The first step in graduating from high school or college is finding out what the minimum requirements are to graduate and finding out how many of the requirements you have already met.

- The first step in introducing a capital project for facilities improvement is to figure out what needs to be done in a district through a “Building Conditions Survey” which prioritizes projects based on emergency and safety status.



Our goals matter -- we need to know the outcome we seek! But, **AWARENESS** matters too. We must know where we currently stand in order to get where we want to go!

Let's be frank -- we **WANT** a better school system. We **WANT** more literate kiddos. We **WANT** a healthier community. We **WANT** functional facilities. We can keep **TALKING** about it, or we can **DO** something about it. I choose the latter of the two.

Let's review where we currently stand so that we can keep moving forward:

- In first grade, we expect a Lexile (reading level) of more than 190 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **8%** of our students above the 190 mark.
- In second grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 420 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **17%** of our students above the 420 mark.
- In third grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 520 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **29%** of our students above the 520 mark.
- In fourth grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 740 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **15%** of our students above the 740 mark.
- In fifth grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 830 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **27%** of our students above the 830 mark.
- In sixth grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 855 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **30%** of our students above the 855 mark.
- In seventh grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 925 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **33%** of our students above the 925 mark.
- In eighth grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 985 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **33%** of our students above the 985 mark.
- In ninth grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 1050 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **63%** of our students above the 1050 mark (88% of students have been tested. Updated numbers will be provided in future Navigators).
- In tenth grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 1080 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **65%** of our students above the 1080 mark. (80% of students have been tested. Updated numbers will be provided in future Navigators).
- In eleventh grade, we expect a Lexile of more than 1185 in order to be considered “on reading level” at the beginning of the year. We currently have **78%** of our students above the 1185 mark (82% of students have been tested. Updated numbers will be provided in future Navigators).

We're AWARE of our goals and our baselines -- what can be done now that we know what we know?



Parents: Instill a love of reading your children. Invest in books. Read often and act as a role model. Go to the library. Talk about books around and with your children. Seek out opportunities to make reading relevant and relatable. Taking a family trip? Have your kiddos read something about the place you are visiting. Upset about something currently occurring in our world? Have your children research, study and read about the issue. Looking for a great “staycation”? Go to the library, pick a book or two and escape via words and discussion – remember, books can take you anywhere!

Teachers: Are students below expectation in reading level? Be intentional about your instruction. Regardless of any lesson plan, give those students what they need – systematic, intensive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. To do otherwise will certainly leave them behind.

Community Members: Invest in what matters--your schools.

WE NEED TO BE WELL!! IF LEARNING IS TO OCCUR, OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF NEED TO BE PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY WELL AND BE AT SCHOOL.

We expect our students and staff to strive for less than five absences. Please note that unlike traditional school grades, an average above 90% doesn't actually mean that the results are stellar. If a grade level has a rate of 92%, you must think of it this way: 8% of the class is missing from instruction on any given day.

Our current attendance rates for staff and students are as follows:

- Kindergarten: 95%
- 1st Grade: 96%
- 2nd Grade: 95%
- 3rd Grade: 95%
- 4th Grade: 95%
- 5th Grade: 96%
- 6th Grade: 95%
- 7th Grade: 94%
- 8th Grade: 95%
- 9th Grade: 93%
- 10th Grade: 91%
- 11th Grade: 92%
- 12th Grade: 93%

To break it down further, we have had 2,521 student absences at the HS in the months of September and October. We have 881 students enrolled. This means that if we average out the absences to the enrolled students it equates to approximately three absences per student. Research suggests that fewer than five days of absence in any given school year can and will **POSITIVELY** impact student outcomes.

At the middle school, there have been 1,343 absences for 700 students. This averages out to 2 days absent per student.

At the elementary level, there have been 2,425 absences for 1,313 students. This averages out to 2 days per student.

If we continue at this pace, our students will average 10 days of absence by the school year's end. We know that this statistic is not acceptable. We know that we want our kiddos to be absent less than 5 times each year, because research shows that students who aren't in school lose out on learning.



We're **AWARE** of our goal and our baseline -- what can be done now that we know?

Parents: Know your child's attendance levels. Consider the reasons for your child's absence. Regular absences from school and, later in life, from work directly correlate with life success. Certainly, illness and catastrophic events exist and should be respected. Only you can decide if your child's absence falls into these categories. But please consider this: school attendance is the key to academic success.

Teachers: If a child is absent from your class, please personally contact the parent **BEFORE** the child misses 5 days. Sometimes that school to home link can really make a difference.

OUR FACILITIES NEED TO BE SAFE AND OCCUPIABLE!

We're **AWARE** of our goal -- to create 21st century learning places and spaces that will enable us to become a district of choice here in Sullivan County and in the Mid-Hudson Region.

Thanks to our most recent Building Conditions survey, we are **AWARE** of our current needs – more than 100 million dollars worth of repairs to our facilities ranging in priority order from immediate health and safety needs as well as long-range tasks to be completed over the next five years.

We are also **AWARE** that for a similar price we can overhaul and renovate our spaces, addressing all of our health and safety needs **AND** creating new places and spaces for 21st-century learning.



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Do you need more information? Please visit our website, attend the upcoming community forum at Monticello High School on Nov. 16 at 5 p.m. Let me know if there is more information you need in order to cast an informed vote on Dec. 19 -- if you have a question that is NOT answered in our FAQs (<http://www.monticelloschools.net/BOE/Capital%20Improvement%20Project%20FAQs.cfm>), please email communications@k12mcsd.net and we will respond to you within 2-4 business days.

This is our moment. We know our goals. We are now aware of our baseline. We must intentionally act if we hope to succeed.

Remember, there are very few surprises.

Be Well,
Tammy Mangus