

*February 2020*  
*Volume 12*  
*Issue 7*

# *Principal's Newsletter*

*Somers High School*



Dear Parents/Guardians,

Okay, so our outdoor scenes do not look like the one above, these days, but we are getting some frigid air. Is it possible to get through the rest of the winter season without losing another day of school due to weather? Probably not, but it would be nice to graduate students in early June as opposed to much later in the month.

February usually tends to be a slower time for high schools thus allowing us to catch our breath as we await and prepare for the SAT (March 25<sup>th</sup>), AP Exams (May), and Next Generation Science Standards (April/May) testing to begin. Midterms are over and winter sports are winding down. We have been looking at PSAT data so that we can focus on areas of weakness in order perform at our best. Actually, our 9-11<sup>th</sup> grade scores from the fall of 2019 were commendable and overall showed nice improvement.

As we move forward, we have been working on our bell schedule for next year. Previous newsletters have included information on the need for a change. As soon as we have additional information, I will pass it along.

Student registration for next year is underway. The Course Selection Guide is now online and can be found on the main page, as well as the CCC's homepage. Please review the guide with your student. We will be opening the portal on February 13<sup>th</sup>, after Advisory, and it will close at the end of the day on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Students must go in to the portal during this time frame and make their selections.

We will continue to work diligently to improve services to students and parents. This newsletter is a monthly publication that is designed to keep you updated on the latest educational issues. In addition, I always maintain an open-door policy and am here to assist you. Please feel free to contact me if you should have any concerns. I am looking forward to working with each of you and to helping make our school the best it can possibly be.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Cotzin  
Principal  
Somers High School

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## *Assistant Principal's Corner*

### **The Importance of Attendance: *Every day counts!***

Missing a day here and there may seem insignificant, but did you know that missing just two days of school per month can lead to chronic absenteeism?

The state of Connecticut defines chronic absenteeism as “*missing 10 percent or greater of the total number of days enrolled during the school year for any reason. It includes both excused, unexcused, out-of-school suspensions, and in-school suspensions that last more than one-half of the school day.*”

According to state guidelines, a student must be in attendance for at least half of the school day in order to be deemed present. Please take this into consideration when scheduling doctor's appointments and other out of school engagements that may interrupt the school day. If possible, please try to schedule appointments for the afternoon, or if that is not possible, please consider bringing your student into school after routine morning appointments.

Research shows that school attendance has a direct correlation to student academic and social-emotional success. Chronic absenteeism is linked to increased dropout rates, slowed academic progression, and higher levels of anxiety linked to school. If your family is struggling with school attendance, please contact administration or our counseling center as soon as possible so that we can best support your student's needs.

### ***What is Truancy?***

According to the state of Connecticut, a student is considered truant when he or she has had 4 unexcused absences from school in one month (30 consecutive calendar days) or 10 unexcused absences in one school year. Keeping this in mind, it is important to understand how Connecticut

state law directs schools to classify absences as excused or unexcused. To clarify, the Somers Board of Education policy pertaining to excused vs unexcused absences is noted below:

*“A student's absence from school shall be considered "excused" if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school and meets the following criteria:*

***For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered "excused" when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation to school officials.***

***For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:***

- 1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);*
- 2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;*
- 3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;*
- 4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);*
- 5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);*
- 6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance (Somers BOE, 2017).”*

In the event that a student is classified as truant, the school works closely with the family to remedy attendance issues through processes such as parent meetings and home visits. In some circumstances, when these measures are not proving effective, the school may refer to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or Mobile Crisis Intervention Services (2-1-1) for support in improving a student's attendance and to address external factors that may be leading to chronic absenteeism.

## *PE/Health*

The SHS Health and Physical Education Department would like to make one quick announcement about an upcoming unit. At the conclusion of our volleyball/bowling units we will be starting our pickleball unit. Pickleball is quickly becoming a popular “lifetime” game that is finding its way into more and more Physical Education classrooms across the United States. It is a combination of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong and requires very little space and equipment. Mr. Henne has become a pickleball regular and has begun playing tournaments around the state. Anyone can play recreationally; there are websites where you can find locations to play or other enthusiasts of the game!

Last semester, we rolled out our “Walk Across America” challenge with the goal of improving personal fitness outside of the school setting. We are happy to announce that the SHS community was able to make the journey across America in just a 6 week span. The community consisted of staff, students, and parents/guardians. We would like to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication and we can’t wait to accomplish that feat again in Semester 2!

If you would like more information peruse this interesting site; [click on this link.](#)

Below is the letter that will be posted soon.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child is in 9/10 grade Physical Education classes. Our goal is to get parents and youth more involved in their child's fitness. To do this, we are creating a "fitness challenge" where students will be tracking their levels of physical fitness outside of the school environment. The focus of this challenge is for all of our students in all classes combined to complete a "walk across America" which equates to 3,100 miles. Parents will be responsible for ensuring that their child reports their scores weekly on a Google Form. This form will be available in Google Classroom. To get parents more involved, we will also include parent steps if they so choose.

After discussions with the students, they have all acknowledged they have some way to track their steps. If a student finds they do not have that capability, it is approximately 3,000 steps per half hour traveled. Your child can use this estimate if they need to.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact your child's Physical Education Teacher. Thank you for your time; and LOOK OUT AMERICA, HERE WE COME!!

Sincerely,

Eric Henne X7152 eric.henne@somers.k12.ct.us

Tammy Gowash X7154 tammy.gowash@somers.k12.ct.us

## *Nursing News: Stop the Bleed*

Somers district is now equipped with multiple “Stop the Bleed kits” through out each of the schools. Stop the Bleed is a plan of response for severe bleeding developed by surgeons right in nearby Hartford CT after reflecting on the Sandy Hook shootings. The White House launched this plan as national awareness campaign in order to empower the public to react in a bleeding emergency situation. More than 1 million people have taken the training course so far, including all of the nurses in district. By taking the one hour course the goal is for the lay person to feel like they are prepared to do something to help, rather than hide back feeling helpless. The course focuses on identifying the bleed, calling for help, applying pressure to the wound, and applying a tourniquet if needed. Controlling the bleed in whatever way possible is the objective, as someone who is severely bleeding can bleed to death in only 5 minutes! Here at Somers High School we have the kits stored with our AED’s, in the office and nursing emergency bags, the metal and woodworking shops, and with our athletic trainer for after school sports events. There are easy to follow 3 step posters by each of the kits in hopes that anyone, even students can react and help potentially save a life in a true emergency situation. The American College of surgeons has the goal of training every American in basic bleeding control. You can learn more or even register to take a course at [www.stopthebleed.org](http://www.stopthebleed.org). This can be an unpleasant subject to think about, and hopefully most people never have to utilize the skills to stop a major bleed, but knowledge is power and this knowledge could help to save a life. To borrow a quote from the campaign “ the only thing worse than a death, is a death that could have been prevented”.

## *Flu News:*

As the school nurse it is part of my job to track and report contagious illnesses to the state. So far this year at SHS there have been 8 reported flu cases, 7 of which occurred in January. There are likely others who did not have it confirmed at the Doctor or whose parents did not call the school to report. As a school we take important steps to prevent the spread of illness such as encouraging washing hands often, using hand sanitizer, disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, and staying home when sick. As parents you can help by keeping your child home if they are displaying flu-like symptoms e.g. fever, chills, body aches, fatigue, sore throat, and or congestion. If your child’s illness persists beyond 3 days it is a good idea to take them to the pediatrician. If they test positive for a contagious illness it is important to call the school to report it as we must report that information. We still have another couple of months of flu season so we must continue to be vigilant with basic Infection control.

## ***T.I.D.E.***

### **The Somers High School Technology Innovation Design and Engineering Department takes on “Go Baby Go” project.**

Submitted by Nicholas Kosloski

A group of volunteer students have taken on the task of modifying a Power Wheels car for a student in the district. The group comprises students who are going off to college and study varying fields of engineering, as well as students interested in manufacturing / welding. This project is part of a grassroots movement called “Go Baby Go,” which is designed to aid in students with disabilities in becoming mobile and active. The Power Wheels was donated by Fisher Price in conjunction with Central Connecticut State University.

This year, the focus is to make the student independently active in a safe and secure power wheels. As such, the group is adding a roll cage, front and rear bumper and side steps so he can climb in and out of the power wheels under his own power. The group is modifying the seat to make it adjustable, which will allow him to sit closer to the wheel and move back as he grows. They are also going to rewire the foot accelerator into a custom made push button accelerator, allowing the student to reach the controls via hand operations as he cannot yet reach the foot pedal.

If successful, the TIDE department plans on doing a build yearly or bi-annually.



## *Courageous Conversations*

Somers High School will be participating in Courageous Conversations around the issues of race this coming month. On February 26th and 27th a group of teachers and students will facilitate small group conversations using the Courageous Conversation model to help deepen understanding around race. This model is a protocol to assist individuals and groups having difficult conversations about critical issues confronting individuals, classrooms, schools and beyond. Teachers have and will continue to participate in training over the course of the school year to help prepare for facilitating these discussions. Students will spend approximately 2 hours doing activities and have discussions around how race impacts our lives, both personally, as a student body, and within our culture. We are excited to see how these activities start a dialogue about race and the impact it has on our students.

**COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE® PROTOCOL**  
Singleton, G., & Linton, C. (2006). *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide to Achieving Equity in Schools*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Courageous Conversation is utilizing the four agreements, six conditions, and compass in order to engage, sustain, and deepen interracial dialogue about race!

**FOUR AGREEMENTS:**  
Stay **ENGAGED**  
Experience **DISCOMFORT**  
Speak your **TRUTH**  
Expect and Accept **NON-CLOSURE**

**SIX CONDITIONS:**

1. Focus on **PERSONAL**, Local and Immediate
2. **ISOLATE** Race
3. Normalize **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION** and **MULTIPLE RACIAL PERSPECTIVES**
4. Monitor the Agreements and Conditions and **ESTABLISH PARAMETERS**
5. Use a "Working Definition" for **RACE**
6. Examine the Presence and Role of **WHITENESS**

**COMPASS:**

**SOUL BELIEVING MORAL**  
**INTELLECTUAL THINKING**  
**FEELING HEART**  
**RELATIONAL ACTING HANDS & FEET**

**COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION**

**PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL GROUP**

www.pacificedgroup.com

## *Library Media Center Happenings*

It was a six month long project, but the Somers High School LMC has been genrefied! Great! So what does that mean? In 2008, the Urban Dictionary defined the term genrefication as "the process or idea of classifying music, film, literature, or other such mediums into specific genres or categories." Over the past decade, many school and public libraries have been ditching the traditional Dewey Decimal System in favor of more intuitive, user-friendly genres similar to the way Barnes and Noble or other bookstores are set up. Back in September, the process of genrefying the almost 1,700 books in our Fiction collection began. Each book was identified by genre, labeled with the appropriate colored sticker, and updated in our online catalog. Over midterms the books were reshelfed according to their genres. The reasoning behind our move to

a genrefied collection was to make it easier for students to find books that match their interests. For example, if a student loved *Hunger Games* and was looking for something similar to read next, a quick scan of the Fantasy/Science Fiction section would lead them to other dystopian series such as *Divergent*, *Uglies*, *Children of Blood and Bone*, or *Strange the Dreamer*. To find books in the LMC, students can use the colored labels on the shelves to locate the genre they are interested in. Books in that section will have stickers on the spine with the matching color, listed in alphabetical order by the author. In the online catalog the sublocation lists the genre where the book is shelved. Our goal is to make it as easy as possible to connect readers with all of the great books the LMC has to offer.

**Historical Fiction**  
**Graphic Novels**  
**Realistic Fiction**  
**Action + Adventure**  
**Fantasy + Science Fiction**  
**Mystery + Thrillers**  
**Horror + Paranormal**  
**Narrative Nonfiction**  
**Quick Reads**  
**LGBTQ+**

**GENRES**



**IN**

**The hate u give**  
Thomas, Angie, author.  
Book  
Call Number: FIC THO  
Sublocation: Realistic Fiction





## *Social Studies News*

The social studies department has some great things happening this school year. In October the AP US history program took a trip to Boston to tour the Freedom Trail and the Adams House. Students went to the Granary Burying Grounds (where Paul Revere and Sam Adams and many other from the revolution are buried), Old North Church, the site of the Boston Massacre, and Faneuil Hall. They finished the trip at the Adams house touring the homestead where two US Presidents, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, lived. In addition to this trip, the AP US History will be going to Washington, DC on March 21-23.

The social studies department is also excited to offer two new Advanced Placement courses for next year. AP Psychology and AP World History: Modern are among the offerings where student can receive college credit if they do well on the test administered by the College Board. Students will have an opportunity to sign up for these new opportunities during course registration. Please have them see a social studies teacher with any questions.



## *Spartan Sports*

Our winter sports teams will be finishing up their regular seasons in the month of February, followed by the NCCC and state playoffs and tournaments. Our indoor track athletes competed in the NCCC Indoor Track Championships in New Haven this past weekend, where NCCC champions Kylie Raymond winning the 3200 meters and Olivia Suter winning the 55 hurdles. Olivia Suter also finished 2nd in the 300 meters, while Doug Suter placed 2nd in the pole vault. All indoor athletes will be participating in the Class S Indoor Championships in New Haven on February 14th. Senior Nick Mendez continues to participate with the Suffield swimming team, where senior night is scheduled for their February 21st meet vs. South Windsor. Our wrestling team will finish their NCCC regular season this week vs. Rockville, with their last invitational

meet at Stafford this weekend. The wrestling team will then participate in the NCCC Championships on February 15th at Suffield High School. Our Tri-Town hockey team has (6) games remaining in their regular season as they work to secure a berth in the DIII state tournament. The girl's basketball team has won (6) of their last (11) games while striving to improve their ranking for the Class S state tournament. Finally, the boy's basketball team is currently competing for the NCCC league championship with a record of 14-2, and is currently 2nd in DV state rankings. Please visit the Somers High School sports website for updates on weekly schedules and game results, as well as our 2020 spring sports sign-up information.