Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked, in which you can walk with love and reverence.  
~ Henry David Thoreau

This Week in Our Schools

- **Monday, January 23** – Town Council Special Meeting in the Middle School Library, 6:30 PM.  This meeting does not have any implications for our schools; however, you may be interested in attending this meeting during which the Town Council will review, score, and take possible action on RFP submissions for property for a proposed new Town Hall and Police Department.

- **Tuesday, January 24** – Town Council Regular Business Meeting in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 6:30 PM.  This meeting does have important implications for the Center School.  On Tuesday, January 17, the Board of Finance approved moving forward with design services for the Center School Boiler Project.  Their recommendation is for an RFP for full design services, which would be prior to the bid and build process.  This project requires a complete heating system replacement for Center School.  This is not just a boiler replacement, but a replacement of all new steam pipes throughout all areas of the building.  This complete project will require electrical, plumbing, construction, demolition, and abatement in areas of the school.  Now that the Board of Finance has approved the plan, it requires the approval of the Town Council to move forward with this $90 - $100 K design project.  It is on the agenda of the Town Council for this coming Tuesday evening.  Interested parents and community members are urged to attend.

- **Wednesday, January 25** – Delayed Start for East Hampton High School – **Note: High school only.**  The high school will have a two-hour delay start to allow staff time to complete the NEASC Self-Study.  This delayed start will be different from our regular two-hour Professional Development mornings as there will be no change in transportation.  Students will be given the option of driving themselves to school two hours later or having parents drop them off two hours later.  Buses will run at the regular time for those students who cannot get a ride to school later.  There will be supervision for those students who will report to the library or the cafeteria.

- **Wednesday, January 25** – Grade 8 Parents Information Night in the East Hampton High School Auditorium, 7:00 PM.  This is a great opportunity for Grade 8 parents to learn about the exciting opportunities and programs at East Hampton High School.  Next year’s parents are urged to attend to learn about East Hampton’s award winning high school, recognized as one of America’s Top High Schools by Newsweek (one of 16 high schools in CT) and placed on the AP District Honor Roll by the College Board (one of 14 high schools in CT).

- **Saturday, January 28** – Chinese New Year.  The Year of the Rooster begins.

- **Saturday, January 28** – Christa McAuliffe Recognition Day.  Christa McAuliffe, a teacher from Concord, New Hampshire, was selected to be one of the seven crew members of the Challenger Space Shuttle (1986) and the first teacher in space.  There are great classroom resources for those interested at [http://christa.org/resources-k12/](http://christa.org/resources-k12/).

Please reserve our budget discussion dates – staff, parent, and community input very much desired.
- Monday, February 6 – Board of Education Meeting at East Hampton High School, 7:00 PM.
- Monday, February 13 – Board of Education Meeting at East Hampton High School, 7:00 PM.
- Thursday, February 16 – Superintendent’s Advisory Council Meeting, at 94 Main Street, 9:00 AM.
- Friday morning coffees:  February 3 and 17 at 94 Main Street, 7:30-9:00 AM.

*Mr. Smith will even drive to your home to meet you and answer budget questions if that is easier!*
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<td>High School Exams</td>
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<td>School Counselors Appreciation Day</td>
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<td>Coffee &amp; Chat w/ Superintendent 94 Main St.</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation Night at Hartford Wolfpack Game</td>
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<td>Center School Convention Invention</td>
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<td>Project Graduation EHHS Library, 6:30 PM</td>
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<td>Random Acts of Kindness Week</td>
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<td>Board of Education Meeting - EHHS T-Bell, 7:00 PM</td>
<td>Elementary PTO Center School Library, 6:30 PM</td>
<td>Superintendent’s Advisory Council 94 Main St. 9:00 AM</td>
<td>Coffee &amp; Chat w/ Superintendent 94 Main St. 7:30-9:00 AM</td>
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Get your 2017 event on the Calendar sent to all East Hampton Public Schools teachers, staff, parents, and families! If you would like a school/community event listed please forward dates and information to Paul Smith: psmith@easthamptonct.org
Administrative changes beginning July 1, 2017 announced by Board of Education.

At the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday evening, January 17, the Board appointed current Principal of the Center School, Mary Clark as the next Director of Curriculum and Instruction replacing Nancy Briere effective July 1. In addition, the Board appointed current Assistant Principal of the Middle School, Chris Sullivan as the next Principal of the Center School, replacing Mary Clark effective July 1.

The search process is underway for the new Principal of Memorial School effective July 1. The district is currently accepting applications for that position until February 10. Interviews will take place in March and a new Principal will be appointed by the Board of Education in early April.

East Hampton Board of Education Highlights (1/17/17)

- The Board of Education recognized Mr. Richard Storrs, Social Studies Teacher at East Hampton Middle School for his nomination by the National Life Foundation as a Life Changer of the Year.
- The Board announced the appointment of Mary Clark as the next Director of Curriculum and Instruction effective July 1. In addition, the Board appointed Chris Sullivan as the next Principal of the Center School, replacing Mary Clark effective July 1.
- The Board was given an update by Colliers (construction management team for the high school building project) concerning the elevated levels of copper in the water. (Please note that copper in water is very different than having elevated lead levels.) The water coming from the well is clear; however, at certain points throughout the building that are different every testing occurrence, there are copper readings above DPH guidelines. Testing has been done to eliminate stray currents as a cause and one theory is that the new copper piping could be leaching, though that is not a common occurrence in new construction. In the meantime, the building is providing bottle water for drinking. There is a chemical solution system that is being designed if the levels do not come down.
- The Superintendent presented the 2017-18 Budget. Parents and community members are welcome to attend the next two Board meetings on Monday, February 6 and Monday, February 13 to provide commentary and suggestions on the school budget.
- The Board approved Policy 9921-Filling Vacancies. The policy establishes guidelines for replacing members of the Board of Education should a seat be vacated during a member’s term. The Town Charter referendum did not give the Town Council outright permission to appoint replacement members to the Board of Education or other town committees. This new policy identifies the Board of Education as the body that will replace members upon a vacancy. The Town’s attorney sent a version to the Board of Education in which the Town Council would have veto power over an appointment, but the Board of Education voted on a version in which the Town Council is not granted that power.

Budget Materials now available!

The complete budget presentation by the Superintendent is available at [http://ehhs.org/documents/apptegy/district/1718budgetpresexp.pdf](http://ehhs.org/documents/apptegy/district/1718budgetpresexp.pdf). Parents and community members are welcome to a hard copy rather than printing the 44-page document. Call 860-365-4000 to pick up a copy or have one mailed.

In addition, on the school's website, [http://ehhs.org](http://ehhs.org), there are additional documents of interest including an operating budget overview. Look for a detailed, line-by-line budget in the near future.
Change a life with a kind comment.

There’s research that shows that students who do not grow up with positivity in some aspect of their life, end up leading very different lifestyles than the lifestyles that most of us enjoy. Sometimes it only takes one comment by a powerful mentoring adult to set students in a positive direction for life. **Be the person who makes that comment!**

I honestly believe that if I could be the one adult who sets a child on a path toward success simply because of something positive I said to that student, then I will have had a very fulfilling career as an educator.

I can only imagine that if every adult was able to influence just one child in a positive manner, what an incredible world we would have.

Make a commitment to spread “positive regard” to every child.

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**The Power of Positive Regard** by Jeffrey Benson ASCD.org

**Being recognized and affirmed by a powerful adult can be life-changing for a young person.**

"I think if I had to put a finger on what I consider a good education, a good radical education, it wouldn't be anything about methods or techniques. It would be loving people first."

—Myles Horton, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*

There's a tiny scene in the film *Boyhood*: A character off-handedly mentions to a young Latino man that he is smart. Later in the film, the man identifies how that comment, that bit of simple and unsupported praise, was a pivotal moment that changed his life and inspired him to go back to school.

Many voices in the education community question the value of such simple, unearned praise, yet done in the right spirit, it can help an educator change a student’s life. Of course, I also want much of the praise I give students to be based on specific evidence. I support educators who make room for students to evaluate their own work. And I believe praise should never be delivered as a final judgment of character — because such hubris would also allow us to deliver a damning assessment that could haunt a student for years.

But I believe offering praise that’s **not** based on achievement—praise that communicates each person's unassailable right to a unique place in our human community—is important. For many students, such heartfelt and spontaneous praise is invaluable.

**The Power of (Unconditional) Positive Regard**

Many of us have had the experience of being buoyed up by adult praise. There was a teacher, grandmother, coach—a trusted adult—who looked at us and communicated in some fashion, "I notice you for who you are, and who you are is worthy." That notion, often called **unconditional positive regard**, is a foundation of the work of psychologist Carl Rogers. Positive regard of your human existence is not an earned status. You don't have to dance a certain way, dress a certain way, talk a certain way, or do anything special to be special.

**People who historically have not experienced receiving unconditional positive regard as a birthright have a harsher life.** Consider how rarely people from minority groups explicitly hear in the dominant mainstream culture, "your life mattered from the moment you were born." Given the recent murders of young black men and women, it’s chilling to consider what W.E.B. Du Bois (1903), writing a century ago about the chronic abuse of black people, asked: "How does it feel to be a problem?"
Among the many outcomes of the U.S. Civil rights movement were two important cultural shifts: Black history became a school subject and "Black is Beautiful" became a slogan. That slogan (echoed in "Black Lives Matter") spoke to the belief that you were born beautiful when you were born black; you didn't have to do anything to your hair or skin to be considered beautiful. It was great to hear it said, loud and proud.

**You Are Not a Test Score**

Our national obsession with achievement testing has made it harder to praise students just for who they are, not for their academic accomplishments. Schools have bent toward the end of the spectrum that identifies and celebrates only one way of being a student—scoring well on mandated tests. Teachers are under tremendous pressure to inch up test scores. My work takes me to a wide range of schools, and I often hear teachers say, "This is how you'll see this question on the test." When high test scores become the main thing policymakers expect, it's easy for us to fall into a school culture that eliminates other avenues of recognition.

This achievement obsession has been countered by Carol Dweck's work (2006) on the importance of instilling growth mindsets and praising effort—because effort is within students' control and observable. Educators are encouraged to say things like, "I see you put in the effort to correct your error, and that helped you get the right answer." Equally important is that praise for effort be delivered with joy and heartfelt appreciation: "The smile on my face now is from watching the effort you put into correcting your error. I hope you too feel good about your work." Students need more than data—they need our emotional connections.

I need to show my hand here: I don't think our schools' goal is to outscore other countries on standardized tests. And I don't think students who emerge from schools should be measured by their capacity to be technicians for big companies. I'd like my students to achieve measurable basic skills and to be happy to learn, to know how to participate in our democracy, to create from their thoughts and with their hands what is uniquely theirs to create—and to believe that they are innately worthy members of our society.

In every school I work in, I tell each of my students individually at some point that I find him or her funny, clever, or creative—a pleasure to have around. I tell students that they have a cool way of thinking, that they make me think about things, that I'm happy to see them walk into my room each day. Very rarely do students ask for evidence. If asked, I'll have it in the form of a story or an observation, because there is something unique and wonderful about every human being. But few have ever asked. I do the same for teachers I work with or lead. They too make me smile, ponder, and grow—and I tell them so.

**Caring Before They Achieve**

Brain research has made clear that humans are as much emotional creatures as cognitive ones. Learning is transactional—not just cognitively, but emotionally. Our thinking is inextricably laced with our feelings. Students—from kindergarteners to high schoolers—look to educators for unconditional acceptance. We hear all the time that our best teachers love their students, regardless of their age or achievement. They love their students before they try, before they achieve.

I've spent a lot of my career working with overlooked, economically exploited, and abused students. Many of them, like the Latino character in *Boyhood*, are from minority groups who need to experience caring communication and supportive expectations early and repeatedly in their relationships in school. I've often looked a young person in the eye and said, "You're capable of great things. I believe in you." I said this before I had rock-solid evidence to support my claims, but the student could hear it only if I truly believed it.

*Neuroscience tells us that humans have mirror neurons, the capacity to engender in another person a strong feeling we ourselves are having.* When I say "I believe in you," I'm not a statistician reciting data; I am working in a far deeper vein of human connectedness. My belief in students, my love for them, becomes part of the very wiring of their existence.

There is a spiritual aspect to teaching if you believe you have the ability to help all students experience their innate, best inner selves. As Deepak Chopra (2011) says,

> Everyone has a purpose in life ... a unique gift or special talent to give to others. And when we blend this unique talent with service to others, we experience the ecstasy and exultation of our own spirit, which is the ultimate goal of all goals.
Chopra’s language is miles away from the imperative to identify students’ worth by measuring incremental growth on objective criteria.

Making It Happen

Let’s consider some practices that help teachers express unconditional positive regard, that recognize the range of human qualities to value in students, and that don’t encourage meaningless repetitions of ‘good job.”

- In your own words, say to every student every day—and frequently to the whole class—"You are capable of learning everything in the lessons. I’ll help you succeed as you try. You are all worthwhile people.

- Make the effort to enjoy every student. Say hello to every one of them first thing every day, with a look in the eye and maybe a handshake or fist bump. Let each of them know that by crossing the threshold of your classroom, in your eyes they are worthy of being part of the class. For students who are wary of adults and push away connections, consistently throw in a quick observation of their uniqueness: "Love that hat" or "Your essay got me thinking."

- End classes with one minute of students acknowledging one another positively. Model and participate: "I saw Darnell make Seth smile"; "I'm going to be thinking all day about Siobhan's theory about the election."

- Let students know you notice and are affected by their special characteristics: "Marie, I was watching you totally focused on your essay. That made my day. I have this image of you hard at work that will make me smile for a long time." "Chen, when I see how often you help other students, I realize again what caring people do in this world. Thanks." There will be occasional students who don’t believe you are sincere. For them, your sincerity must be stronger and deeper than their doubt—and must emerge moment after moment, day after day, to overcome their doubt. Building trust and relationships isn’t a one-time event, but a foundation of best practice.

- Praise students even as you give them critical feedback or a consequence: "Jo, you're going to have to stay after today and clean up that mess you made. I appreciate right now that you’re listening to me calmly and letting me finish my sentence."

- Give choices and options for lessons and assessments. Highlight for students your discoveries about their unique passions: "Sasha, I'm not surprised you wanted to do the painting option. You get great joy in doing art. I love to watch you having so much fun."

- Find opportunities (quick e-mails home, comments on report cards, parent-night conversations) to provide a student and his or her parents with information about that student's unique ways of being. This is for high school teachers, too! The focus on standardized tests doesn’t prevent teachers from sharing other forms of acknowledgement and affirmation.

- Administrators, try this: leave your office when students are in the hallways and say as many positive things as you can in three minutes: "Benjji, glad to see you back in school"; "Connie, your teacher said your joke made the entire class laugh." Do it for staff, too: "Ms. Jones, thanks for coming early to the staff meeting," "Ms. Lee, it’s good to see you today—as it is every day."

Offering unconditional positive regard to students may become your favorite daily activity. And the power you have as a role model for others at school—whether you’re the principal or one teacher among many—will ripple out to every corner of the building, leading to a culture that appreciates everyone.

References


50 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE A CHILD

1. (Thumbs up)
2. You’re on the right track now.
3. You’ve worked so hard on that.
4. I heard you say how you feel, that’s great.
5. Oh, that turned out very well.
6. That’s coming along nicely.
7. I’m proud of the way you worked today.
8. You’ve just about got it.
9. That’s the best you’ve ever done.
10. You stayed so calm during that problem.
11. That’s it!
12. Now you’ve figured it out!
13. That’s quite an improvement.
15. Congratulations!
16. I love hearing your words.
17. What a super star you are.
18. You solved the problem!
19. Keep working on it, you’re almost there!
20. Now you have it!
21. Your brain must be working hard, you figured that out quickly.
22. I’ll bet you are proud of yourself.
23. One more time and you’ll have it.
24. Great idea!
25. You’re amazing!
26. Terrific teamwork!
27. Nothing can stop you now.
28. You have such creative ideas.
29. That’s the way to do it.
30. Sensational!
31. You must have been practicing.
32. You handled that so well.
33. I like how you think.
34. Good remembering.
35. You know just what to do!
36. You are really persisting with this.
37. You expressed yourself so well.
38. You did it!
39. I knew you two could figure it out together.
40. Excellent job saying how you feel.
41. I know it’s hard, but you are almost there.
42. Fantastic problem solving!
43. I love hearing your ideas.
44. I know that was hard for you, but you stayed so calm.
45. Yes!
46. Look at how you helped each other!
47. You finished faster because you worked together.
48. You kept trying!
49. Excellent try.
50. You are a creative thinker.

Have a great week!

Paul Smith