

REPORT OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Jeff Evaul, Chair, Term Expires 2011
Jeanine Cunniff, Vice Chair, Term Expires 2013
Susan Archer, Term Expires 2011
Rosemarie Lucey, Term Expires 2012
Gordon Spater, Term Expires 2013
Rebecca Brockelman, Term Expired 2010

School Superintendent: Bernard F. Creeden

Director of Finance and
Human Resources: Steven Greenberg

Director of Special Education: Sharon Lyons

Director of Facilities and
School Operations: Steven Clifford

Milestones

Rebecca Brockelman completed three years of service on the School Committee. The committee and the town wish to thank her for her service.

New staff joining the Topsfield Elementary Schools in September 2010 included Anala Guertin (Kindergarten Partner Teacher), Lauren Creamer (Grade 3) , Kathleen Dwomoh (Grade 2),and Ellen Niceiewsky (Moderate Special Needs)

Staff Anniversaries

Seventeen staff members celebrated five-year anniversaries of service in our schools. Five-year service pins were presented to Clare Baczewski, Diane DePlacido, Lisa Levasseur, Lindsay Grenert, Charlene O'Leary, and Timothy Hogan. Ten year pins were presented to Katherine DeFrank, Emily Gatchell, Paula Klipfel, Diane McCarthy, Jane Conley, and Michelle Costa. Fifteen year pins were presented to Donna Sewall. Helen Dukehart and Doreen Kelleher. Mary Ellen Dunsmore was honored for twenty-five years of service to the Topsfield Elementary Schools. Bernard Creeden was also recognized for thirty years of service to schools in the Boxford, Middleton and Topsfield.

Highlights of the 2009-2010 School Year

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy Development and Implementation:

In response to legislation enacted in May 2010, the Tri-Town School Union Committee began a review of the existing anti-bullying policies and undertook a review to enhance our prevention strategy. After several discussions at open meetings, the Topsfield School Committee approved implementation of the Olweus Program, and adopted an expanded Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy for use in both Topsfield elementary schools. The Plan was filed with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in advance of the December 31, 2010 submission deadline, as required by the legislation.

ARRA Grant Funding: With the financial assistance of Federal ARRA stimulus funds to supplement the federal grant for special education students, we were able to create and implement a new model at the Steward School for students in grades 1 and 2 beginning in the 2009-2010 school year. This program is a multi-age classroom with two teachers, one of whom is a part-time special education teacher, who work collaboratively to provide a high quality program for both typical and special needs students. The program provides all students special education teaching within the general education classroom. As the ARRA grant program will end on June 30, 2011, the Topsfield Schools will lose about \$82,000 in funding. The multi-age program has not only benefitted students with disabilities, it has also provided a much needed and cost-efficient means to absorb an overflow of students in grades 1 and 2 for the past 2 years. All students have benefitted from this multi-age, co-taught classroom. The Topsfield School Committee, educators, and administrators hope to see it continue in spite of the anticipated funding challenges.

School Committee Implements Regionalization Readiness Study Committee Recommendations: The Regional Readiness Study Committee, formed in 2009, recommended that the existing School Union be strengthened to improve its ability to serve the three elementary districts and assist with a reasonable succession plan. The Boxford, Middleton and Topsfield Elementary School Committees approved initiatives in four areas of school district operation for the 2010-2011 school year including

- Modification of the existing governance structure and meeting schedule
- Adjustments to the existing leadership structure at the Central Office to be implemented no later than July 1, 2012.
- Continuous review of existing educational programs and best practices to achieve greater consistency across the elementary school offerings in the three towns.
- Implementation of the Town of Boxford to serve as the fiscal agent for Central Office expenses as of July, 2010.

The Tri-Town School Union continues to excel in delivering comprehensive support and leadership to the educational process of the three elementary school districts and the towns. The leadership has worked hard to engage in collaborative efforts that are productive and cost-effective while maintaining the identity of each of the member towns.

Response to Intervention (RTI): In 2008, staff at both Steward and Proctor schools completed a year-long series of research and study meetings in preparation for the implementation of RTI. In September of 2009, the RTI program was launched at both schools. The RTI program uses district and state assessments, as well as teacher recommendations and observations, to identify struggling learners. Each school has been assigned RTI liaisons that work with educators to create a RTI plan that specifically address each student's needs.

Staff Curriculum and Professional Development Projects; Each summer our teachers engage in a number of professional development and curriculum development initiatives designed to enhance the teaching and learning process in our schools. This past summer saw fourteen Steward

and Proctor School teachers and staff enrolled in a graduate course on Differentiated Instruction taught by Diane Carreiro, the principal of the Fuller Meadow School in Middleton. Thirteen teachers also participated in workshops to learn more about Six+1 Traits Writing.

School Nutrition Food Service Program Implements “Nutri-Kids” project: In September 2009, the Topsfield Elementary Schools introduced a point of sale system in each cafeteria. The Nutri-Kids system allows families to fund password-protected accounts for their children’s lunch expenses. This eliminated lunch tickets, provides faster lunch lines, and allows the food service director to collect better data on food sales.

Revised Web Site: The web pages for the Steward and Proctor Schools at www.topsfieldschools.org underwent major restructuring and were launched in time for the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year. The changes have been designed to make access to information about our schools easier and more user friendly.

The School Committee reviewed and updated our Mission Statement, Core Values and setting Goals for 2009-2012. The new plan was approved at a public meeting and is posted at www.tritownschoolunion.com.

Support for the Topsfield Elementary Schools

We are fortunate to live in a town that supports an excellent school system. Two organizations assist in supporting increased educational experiences to our student. The Topsfield Elementary School Parent-Teacher Organization provides funds to support excellent enrichment programs and field trip transportation. The Topsfield Education Foundation supports various enrichment programs including the Proctor School Band, Scientist in Residence Program, the Proctor Science Laboratory and the Lego Robotics League. The School Committee has spent a considerable amount of time identifying system needs and working with these great organizations to ensure continued excellence.

Parent Teacher Organization (TESPTO): Topsfield Elementary School Parent/Teacher Organization (TESPTO) is an independent, non-profit organization comprised of parents, teachers and administrators. Our goal is to maintain quality education and seek new avenues for improving programs offered to the elementary school children of Topsfield. TESPTO raises funds in numerous ways to be used for curriculum enrichment programs, school field trips, special equipment and services, and long range planning initiatives developed in conjunction with our membership and other community groups. TESPTO also provides seed money for fast track implementation of strategic initiatives beyond the scope of the elementary school budget.

TESPTO strives to bring the entire community together by sponsoring community events open to the general public, by participating in other community events, by disseminating information to the elementary school community and other interested parties, and by being responsive to the requests for cooperation and assistance. TESPTO can be located on the Internet at <http://www.topsfieldschools.org/tespto/index.php?id=4> .

TESPTO funds are allocated based on the following Guiding Principles

- Supports school improvement plans developed by the site councils and principals.
- Supports additional enrichment initiatives.
- Affects immediately or seeds a program that eventually will affect a great percentage of the elementary school population. The goal would be to demonstrate a program's success and prove its impact so it will be easier to be adapted and sustained by the school budget.
- Do not wish to support programs on an ongoing basis that should be funded by the school budget.
- Seeds innovative initiatives that may not affect a large number of the elementary school population, but that have the support of the school staffs and are unlikely to receive funding through traditional routes. * Does not exclude scholarship or teacher stipends.

Topsfield Educational Foundation (TEF): The Topsfield Education Foundation (T.E.F.) is a not for profit group founded to help facilitate the best educational experience possible for both the Proctor and Steward schools. Since 1996, with TEF's vision and funding, the foundation has assisted the Topsfield schools in funding so many great innovative programs. The TEF is supported through generous donations from families, businesses, and foundations. Donations can be made at any time and go directly to school programs. You can make a gift donation to TEF in the name of someone special. Or perhaps volunteer your time in support of our different programs. TEF continues to play a significant role in the enrichment of our elementary students particularly in the area of science, math and music. The TEF has provided a "Scientist in Residence" at Proctor including all necessary materials and textbooks for this program; a science coordinator; Lego league teams and hosted a regional tournament in Topsfield for the 2nd time, science lab materials, music curriculum books, grant for online math league at Steward, purchased clarinets and trumpets for 3rd grade instrumental program and provided funds to keep the instrumental program at Proctor viable for another year. The TEF can be located on the Internet at <http://www.topsed.org/> .

Topsfield Playground Committee (TPC): The Topsfield Playground Committee (TPC) is organized for the charitable and educational purposes of raising funds to provide fun, safe, accessible, and physically challenging play areas for the community of Topsfield, Massachusetts. One half of the new playground is on the property of the Proctor Elementary School. This part of our project was completed in October 2009, a full 6 months ahead of schedule! The previous structure had been closed to students during school hours since September 2008 due to safety concerns. The second half of the project was to replace the existing "Tot Lot", adjacent to the school, with a new Community Park. This part of the project was completed in the fall of 2010. This downtown park area is the only town playground for the 6,200 residents of Topsfield. The Topsfield Playground Committee wishes to thank all of our sponsors and the many volunteers who helped with the installation at Proctor School on Sunday, October 25th, 2009, and of the Community Park on Saturday, October 23rd, 2010. It was truly a community effort with participation by many volunteers. Going forward the TPC will be evaluating the needs of the play structures at the Steward School. The TPC can be located on the internet at <http://www.topsfieldplaygroundcommittee.org/> .

Educational Mission Statement and Core Values

The School Committee is committed to implementing its Mission Statement and Core Values which are: The Topsfield Elementary Schools pursue educational excellence by providing the opportunity for every individual in its community of learners to reach his or her full intellectual, social, moral, creative and physical potential.

In cooperation with family and community, our mission is to guide students in becoming personally responsible, self-motivated, disciplined, respectful, competent, and contributing members of society. It is the belief of the Topsfield School District that all children can learn and be successful. Effective education requires a committed partnership among the schools, home, and community.

Student achievement results from high expectations within an environment that is stimulating and challenging, yet safe and nurturing. A sense of respect for oneself and others promotes belonging and is essential to learning.

School Committee Overview

The committee is comprised of five elected town members. All current members are parents of children enrolled in our schools. The goal of the School Committee is to continue to provide a high quality education within a managed budget.

Fiscal

The budget process begins in late fall with the Finance Committee's presentation to the Elementary School Committee of budget guidelines, and ends in the spring with the School Committee's approval of a budget that is submitted to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen to be voted as part of Topsfield's operating budget at Town Meeting in May. The budget development process is a constant balancing act, weighing the needs of students and teachers against the town's financial constraints. The Committee's goal is to provide the highest quality educational programs with available funding from community tax revenues and limited fiscal support from the state. Increasing costs associated with insurance, school transportation, utilities, special education, building maintenance, and contractual salary increases, must be addressed annually. Our town scores as well or better on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and other measures of achievement as many other communities that spend far more per pupil.

The following general guidelines are used in preparing the budget. These guidelines reflect the Town's desire to provide a first rate education to all students.

Preserve Excellence in Curriculum and Instruction

At the core of our efforts will be preserving the quality of our programs and services that enable all students to reach high standards and expectations. Hiring and retaining the highest quality staff available is the most important factor in accomplishing this goal.

Maintain a Safe and Secure Environment and Infrastructure

The School Department should continue to maintain appropriate levels of safety, security and quality of school environments, while seeking energy conservation and appropriate cost-reduction measures. Due to severe fiscal limitations, many long-term capital programs for the maintenance and management of our facilities have been deferred in the last several budget cycles. Significant consideration of the long-term impact of further deferrals of these programs to the successful operation of our schools should be given in the FY 2012 Budget cycle.

Maintain the Rate of Budget Growth at a Responsible Level

Due to economic pressures, the School Committee has exercised significant fiscal restraint the past three years. We are now at a crossroads where we feel further restraint could jeopardize our ability to remain a top school system. However, we are also mindful that taxpayers are concerned about the Town's maintenance of fiscal responsibility as their tax bills continue to rise. Therefore, the School Administration will

continue to examine spending carefully to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness, while endeavoring to educate the public of the impact that prior and continued restraint may have on the long-term stability and strength of our school system.

The Town experienced shortfalls in local and state receipts over the past three fiscal years which had an impact on the financial operation of the Elementary Schools. Partway through the 2009-2009 school year, the School Committee implemented a spending freeze and committed \$100,000 to be returned to the Town to address the Town's revenue shortfall. In addition, in mid-May 2009, the Governor and Legislature reduced Chapter 70 Education aid for Topsfield by \$116,300 (which is greater than 10% of our total Chapter 70 funding). In turn, the Governor supplanted this cut with ARRA stimulus funds, available to the Town in the form of a grant, for which we applied and were approved. By using this grant, the School Committee had to move appropriate fourth quarter expenses from the operating budget to the ARRA Grant for FY09.

The School Department operating budgets for the years FY 2008, FY 2009, FY 2010 and FY 2011 approved at the Annual Town Meeting are as shown in the table below. The figures used present the actual local contribution after the application of revenue from State and Federal Grants and Local Revolving Accounts including Pre-School, Kindergarten Tuition, School Food Service and Facility Rental.

Topsfield Elementary Schools Expenditure Summary	FY08 Approved Budget	FY09 Approved Budget	FY10 Approved Budget	FY11 Approved Budget
Total Salaries	4,845,188	5,132,500	5,088,448	5,039,332
Total Supplies/Materials/Textbooks	169,706	163,794	127,956	168,959
Total Equipment	35,257	40,826	36,358	43,306
Total Prof. Dev. (Mem./Work./Conf.)	62,009	62,697	45,732	45,062
Total Special Education (Tuition & Services)	566,556	563,997	400,153	395,338
Total Transportation	329,409	284,575	248,801	246,203
Utilities	213,229	211,394	237,590	225,306
Facilities	171,194	170,453	159,105	164,287
Total Operating Budget	6,392,548	6,630,236	6,344,141	6,327,793
Less: Applied Income Sources	462,608	522,398	559,200	546,200
Total Town Appropriation	5,929,940	6,107,838	5,784,941	5,781,593

School Enrollment

The building grade level organizational structure continues to locate the pre-school through grade three programs at the Steward School and grade four through grade six at the Proctor School.

	Pre School	Kindergarten	Grade One	Grade Two	Grade Three	Grade Four	Grade Five	Grade Six	Students K-6	Classrooms K - 6
October 1, 2004	50	80	99	96	104	97	103	112	691	36
October 1, 2005	47	89	80	99	97	104	95	104	668	35
October 1, 2006	50	73	96	81	99	96	105	97	647	34
October 1, 2007	54	80	80	95	85	103	94	104	641	33
October 1, 2008	50	78	82	79	94	91	103	100	627	33
October 1, 2009	46	78	77	83	80	101	92	107	618	32
October 1, 2010	41	79	89	87	79	84	102	93	613	31

The School Committee has worked for many years to maintain class sizes within the following ranges across each grade span: Kindergarten, 18-20; Grades 1-2, 20-22; Grades 3-4, 20-22; Grades 5-6, 22-24. A study of future enrollment trends completed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) in March 2006 and updated in December 2010 continues to show a trend of anticipated enrollment leveling for the next several years. It is important to note that NESDEC's enrollment projections are based on birthrate, and cannot predict variations based on migration of new families to town, which impacted Topsfield's enrollment over the past year.

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

As Educational Reform in Massachusetts heads into its fourteenth year, school district accountability continues to be at the forefront of the reform effort. The Topsfield School Committee's goal is to increase the number and percentage of our students achieving at the Advanced and Proficient Levels in each grade and in each subject tested year over year. The Department of Education has rated each school district and school in terms of its performance and improvement over the past two years. Detailed information about the School District Accountability System Cycle III ratings, including determinations regarding the requirement to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, can be found on the Massachusetts Department of Education web site, which can be reached through a link on our school district web site (<http://www.tritownschoolunion.com>).

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) now includes the following areas and grades:

Grade Three: Reading and Mathematics

Grade Four: English Language Arts, Writing and Mathematics

Grade Five: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Technology, History and Social Studies

Grade Six: English Language Arts and Mathematics

The School Performance Index was introduced for the 2003 MCAS Administration. Performance points are awarded to a school or district for each student in the MCAS test group during the rating period. The goal is for each school and district to achieve a Composite Performance Index of 100 by the year 2014, (corresponding to all students performing at the Advanced or Proficient levels). Our Composite Performance Index is in the High or Very High Range for all areas tested. Our Overall District Ranking for 2010 continues to be in the top 10-15% out of 373 school districts

participating in the MCAS. Additional information regarding the performance of Topsfield students including historical trends, the Composite Performance Index, and the Student Growth Percentiles can be found on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's web site at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas>.

Grade and Subject	Advanced/ Above Proficient		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Students Included	CPI	SGP	Included in SGP
	Topsfield	STATE	Topsfield	STATE	Topsfield	STATE	Topsfield	STATE				
GRADE 03 - READING	24	14	54	49	20	30	2	8	82	92.7	N/A	N/A
GRADE 03 - MATHEMATICS	21	25	49	40	28	24	2	11	82	88.1	N/A	N/A
GRADE 04 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	22	11	61	43	10	35	7	12	101	90.8	63.0	98
GRADE 04 - MATHEMATICS	17	16	51	32	27	41	5	11	101	88.4	47.0	98
GRADE 05 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	32	16	54	47	14	28	0	10	93	95.7	63.0	89
GRADE 05 - MATHEMATICS	38	25	42	30	19	28	1	17	93	92.5	56.0	91
GRADE 05 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	25	15	53	38	22	36	1	11	93	92.5	N/A	N/A
GRADE 06 - ENGLISH	32	15	61	54	5	21	2	9	109	96.8	48.0	103

LANGUAGE ARTS												
GRADE 06 - MATHEMATICS	40	27	37	32	17	25	6	16	108	89.6	49.0	103
ALL GRADES - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	28	16	58	52	11	24	3	8	385	94.1	60.0	290
ALL GRADES - MATHEMATICS	29	26	45	33	22	27	4	15	384	89.6	49.0	292

Curriculum and Program Development

The Topsfield Elementary Schools maintain web sites which contain detailed information about our ongoing initiatives in curriculum, instruction and professional development. These web pages can be located at www.tritownschoolunion.com and www.topsfieldschools.org.

Special Education

The special education programs in Topsfield have always been outstanding and we continue to assess and modify our program needs each year to ensure we remain flexible enough to meet the growing complexity and numbers of our students with disabilities. School districts are mandated by state and federal laws to provide special education services to those students with disabilities who require specialized instruction in order to make effective educational progress and to ensure that these services occur in the least restrictive environment; we are required to begin providing special education services to eligible students as early as their third birthday. Special Education programs are required to be individually tailored and reasonably calculated to ensure the individual student makes steady progress towards meeting the same curriculum standards as all students in our district. Students with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria for a special education program are entitled by federal statute to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), therefore, this is an area over which the local School Committee has little control in terms of costs, which can have a major impact upon our budget. Clearly, there are diverse student needs that must be addressed through our educational programs and the School Committee asks for your continued support with the local budget to ensure all children's needs are fulfilled to the best of our ability. The Committee is very proud of the extent to which our district has been able to provide education to students within our own district.

The ability to provide appropriate programs to children in-district provides significant cost-savings to the Town, and is achieved through many innovative programs (some discussed below) that have been introduced over the past decade.

As of December 1, 2010, there were 115 special education students in the Topsfield Elementary Schools, grades Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6 with 14 of those students being of Pre-School age. The percentage of Topsfield students (Kindergarten through 6th grade) receiving special education services is approximately 15.9% which is the same as a year ago.

In addition to our Inclusion and Resource Room programs, we also have several programs for students with more intensive needs; our Language-based Learning Centers are successful program options and are available at both the Steward and Proctor Schools. We have also operated an Intensive Preschool Program for about 8 years and have accepted students from Boxford and Middleton for a tuition, when those districts' students have needed this type of program. As we look ahead to 2011, Topsfield will again require the majority of spaces within this program. We have also had one student attend one of our Language-based Learning Center Programs from a nearby town for the past 2 years, again paying a tuition to the town for these special education services.

With the financial assistance of Federal ARRA stimulus funds to supplement the federal grant for special education students, we were able to create and implement a new model at the Steward School for students in grades 1 and 2 beginning in the 2009-2010 school year. This program is a multi-age classroom with two teachers, one of whom is a part-time special education teacher, who work collaboratively to provide a high quality program for both typical and special needs students and do so by providing all special education teaching within the general education classroom. As the ARRA grant program will end on June 30, 2011, the Topsfield Schools will lose about \$82,000 in funding. The multi-age program has not only benefitted students with disabilities, it has also provided a much needed and cost-efficient means to absorb an overflow of students in grades 1 and 2 for the past 2 years. All students have benefitted from this multi-age and co-taught classroom and hope to see it continue in spite of the anticipated funding challenges.

In addition to school year programs, we are obligated to provide Extended School Year (summer) programs for about 1/3 of our special education students. In the summer of 2009, we forged a partnership with the Topsfield Recreation Department in order to provide not only the educational program required to prevent substantial regression, but also the social pragmatic language program option some (?) students require. This program was a highly successful partnership and benefitted the students tremendously; we therefore continued this partnership program during the summer of 2010 and will do so again for the summer of 2011.

The District is deeply committed to an inclusion philosophy pursuing effective ways to integrate all our children into regular education settings. We continue to implement an inclusive teaching model in both schools which combines the strengths of a classroom teacher with those of a special

educator to provide intensive instruction in the regular education classroom setting, one of the goals and requirements of the special education regulations. This structure enables us to provide the most appropriate instruction in the least restrictive setting possible. We also recognize that we need to offer a full continuum of services, therefore also have Resource Room and Learning Center Program models in place in order to address the varied needs of students. We also extend our program options beyond the confines of our schools through memberships with two outstanding collaboratives, the Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative and the North Shore Education Consortium. Our affiliation with these two collaboratives enables us to provide more intensive and highly specialized educational programs to low incidence populations of special needs students, to serve as a resource to work collaboratively with member districts to address a variety of special education issues, and to provide professional development opportunities for staff.

Closing Statement

The School Committee has endeavored to maintain a focus on teaching and learning directed towards increased student achievement in a standard-based environment. The economic climate has made this endeavor most challenging. We are fortunate to have the steady leadership provided by our Superintendent, Bernie Creeden, and his central office, along with our dedicated principals and teachers. These professionals have labored to ensure that the quality of education for our children remains at the highest level possible despite the drastic cuts to our 2009/2010 budget, and continued budget restrictions. As members of the community serving on the school committee, we are most grateful for these efforts.

We understand that the Town's budget faces many pressures, including significant increases in health insurance and pension costs, but feel we must advise Town leaders, residents, and taxpayers that continued or increased restrictions on the Elementary School budget will have lasting and potentially far-reaching repercussions.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Evaul, Chair
Jeanine Cunniff, Vice Chair
Susan Archer
Rosemarie Lucey
Gordon Spater