

Tantasqua Regional Senior High School **Principal's FY 2016 Budget Report**

Tantasqua Regional High School (TRHS) is an institution that is committed to building a community of life-long learners and preparing students for their role as positive and active participants in a democracy. The administration and faculty of Tantasqua are committed to providing quality instruction to our students while maintaining a positive learning community. TRHS continues to have **no user fees**, and has an incredible amount of extracurricular offerings in athletics, performing arts and student groups. Data supports the school's emphasis on student participation in these activities, as students are more likely to connect with a mentor that can assist them as they mature. Students have multiple support systems available to them including the Pathways & Drive programs for special needs students, the academic tracking of students by guidance counselors and teachers, after school hours in the library, academic help sessions and tutoring. The core values, beliefs, curriculum, extracurricular programs, and highly qualified staffing are reflected in this report. Several initiatives that are supported by our learning community are described below, and positively impact students from both the academic and technical schools.

NEASC Preparations:

As Tantasqua Regional High School begins FY16, this year also marks the end of a three year self-study in preparation for NEASC recertification. In the fall of 2015, a visitation committee from NEASC will be with us from Sunday September 27th through Wednesday September 30th. The self-study has required current faculty, staff and administration to take a reflective look at seven different standards established by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. As a part of this initiative, the school has taken on the challenge of using Rubicon Atlas as a tool to help re-write its school wide curriculums in modern templates utilizing the research based and widely acclaimed "universal backward design" model. Tantasqua has created a new template for the school's Core Values and Beliefs (attached to the end of this letter) and modernized its report cards to include the evaluation of eleven important 21st century learning skills. In addition, the self-study has required a significant amount of time and dedication from the staff and administration outside of the normal school day. The responsibilities include collecting data, analyzing surveys, traveling to other schools as part of a NEASC Visiting Team, and writing comprehensive reflective analytical reports. These analytical reports will be finalized and shared with the visiting committee prior to the visit in September.

Advanced Placement Classes:

There is no question that today's competitive colleges and universities expect our students to have enrolled in AP classes. Additional AP courses, including AP Physics this year, have been offered in an effort to challenge students, to provide rigorous academic opportunities, and to help our student body gain admission to more competitive colleges and universities as well as increasing the chances for academic grants and/or scholarships. This budget continues to support this initiative. Over the past five years, the high school staff has successfully promoted increasing the number of AP course offerings as well as increasing the number of students enrolled in AP courses. The results have proved positive as the Class of 2014 was awarded 148 scholarships to 75 students from 80 different organizations. In addition, the qualifying number of AP scores has increased dramatically. According to Mass Insight, our grant partner, Tantasqua has some of the best scores in the state as last year we had 275 qualifying scores! More importantly, students seem more willing to stretch their abilities in more challenging courses knowing that they will receive individualized attention in manageable classes.

	<u>2009-10</u>	<u>2010-11</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>
<u>Total AP Enrollment</u> <u>(# tested)</u>	154 (114)	221 (150)	252 (165)	315 (169)	512 (383)

Extracurricular Activities:

Thanks in large part to our budgetary commitments; Tantasqua Regional High School continues to offer a wide variety of extracurricular offerings in athletics, performing arts and clubs at no cost to families. However, we insist that these extracurricular activities be balanced with the understanding that academics are the priority and civic involvement is encouraged. For example, all staff understand that student-athletes must attend needed academic help sessions before having a team practice. In addition, each team participates in some type of community service activity each year. Some examples of recent community service projects include “Pink Night”, spearheaded by our girls volleyball team, which included participation from all our fall sports teams, this year raised more than \$5,000 for the fight against breast cancer. In addition our baseball and soccer teams hold free community clinics for youngsters and our football team’s annual assistance in the landscaping and clean-up at the senior centers.

Emphasis on Writing across the Curriculum:

The introduction of a comprehensive writing program was aimed at promoting student achievement and enhancing instruction. Improvements to the current writing program are being developed through the English/Language Arts Department. The implementation of this program has included a number of teachers attending Professional Development Writing workshops, the expansion of the student-staffed Writing Center and Internship program, as well as a significant increase in the amount of writing that occurs within English and History/Social Studies classes. The Writing Center, entering its 5th year, is available to all students to receive help with writing, including research papers and college essays. TRHS is committed to ensuring that graduates are properly prepared for the career world or the competitive college atmosphere. This year, the English department in coordination with the guidance department hosted “College Essay” writing seminars after school in the library. The writing initiative is fully supported by the District Improvement Plan 1.b which asks to “elevate student proficiency in writing across all content areas”. In addition there are plans to continue to grow the use of electronic portfolios which is also supported by District Improvement Plan 1.d calling for “new technologies that enhance learning and improve our students’ ability to compete in a global world”.

Freshmen Transition & Academic Support Programs:

The Freshmen Transition Program was created approximately five years ago when it was determined that in-coming freshman did not have the support systems in place to help them succeed, especially the lower performing at-risk freshman. A freshman guidance counselor was hired specifically to help welcome the freshmen and to assist with their adjustment to the high school. In addition to this, from freshmen year on, guidance counselors work with teachers in placing at-risk student on bi-weekly progress reports so that students stay on track for graduation. These efforts, supported in this budget, have resulted in TRHS having one of the lowest dropout rates in the state of Massachusetts, typically below two percent.

Some of the aspects of the Freshman Transition Program that have proved to positively impact our students include:

- Identifying specific teachers in each core academic department to teach primarily freshman curriculum.
- Instituting a mandatory help session program aimed at holding students accountable for incomplete work.
- A freshman guidance counselor who visits classrooms, helps plan freshman class activities, and tracks the progress of at-risk student with weekly electronic progress reports generated by classroom teachers.
- Increased communication with Parents and Guardians including bi-weekly progress reports.
- Student-teacher ratio remains at a manageable level to ensure high quality instruction in a supportive environment.
- Encouraging all freshmen to become invested in the school community by becoming a members of at least one athletic team, music group or club.

Conclusion:

Tantasqua is an academic, civic and social community that thrives on providing all students the opportunity to succeed in an environment that is safe and supportive. With the current initiatives such as increased A.P. enrollment, curriculum re-writes, the Freshman Academy, NEASC preparations, and an emphasis on writing, budget support will allow us to keep moving progressively forward.