



FRAMINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL

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"Home of the Flyers"

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September 2009

Once again I want to welcome all our incoming ninth graders and their families! I am so excited to work with such a wonderful group of new students! Everyone did a great job as we opened the school. It is not easy pulling off a "grand opening" with 600 students arriving one day and then 2200 the next. All our new students showed patience and maturity as they worked hard to learn their schedule and the building. Thank you and thanks to all the folks behind the scenes (the secretaries, my administrative colleagues, your teachers, the seniors from SHF, and your parents) who helped make this one of the best openings in the history of Framingham High School.

A goal of mine this year is to put out a monthly "grade office" newsletter which I will email and post on our website. I thought in this letter, I would take the opportunity to tell you a little more about myself and then to share some of my thoughts on how together we all can do our best to insure your child succeeds this year and builds a foundation that will allow for success for the rest of high school as well as beyond high school.

I grew up on the "South Coast" and have lived in Massachusetts all of my life. I graduated from New Bedford High School in 1987, and I have a bachelor's degree from UMass, Amherst and a master's degree from George Washington. I have had many opportunities working with students in different ways as I have held several different positions in high schools since '91. For most of those years I was a history teacher and I taught all ages and just about every course that is offered in high school. I have also been an InHouse suspension supervisor, class advisor, teacher mentor, model congress and model UN advisor, grade administrator, and I've coached five different sports. Finally, I spent a little time teaching life skills classes to incarcerated youth. In total, I have around 17 years experience working with adolescents.

Many of us are all too aware that there is an economic recession and a global economic slump. As we are now almost a decade into the 21st century, schools have received a lot of press at the national and state level on reform efforts and how children are educated. A lot has been written about how future graduates will not only need the knowledge based skills that were expected from graduates in the 1970's 80's and 90's, but also today's graduates will need additional *21st Century Skills*. For example, graduates will need to be innovative, critical thinkers, collaborative, adaptable, self-directed with their learning etc. if they are to compete with graduates overseas. Succeeding in school is more important than it has ever been as global competition for jobs is at an all time high.

The high school cannot complete this task alone and it would be difficult for individual families to do it alone as well. But together, I am confident that between the expertise and understanding of the faculty at FHS and the support of parents and families at home, we can accomplish the mission. As you have trusted us with providing your child with their high school education, I am going to share a few patterns and ideas I have that I am hopeful will help enable us to best serve your child as they attend Framingham High School.

Communication

Schools and students perform at their best when students, parents and schools communicate well with each other.

If you are receiving this letter, you have filled in an email on the data sheet that was sent home and returned it to the school or you have logged onto our website and downloaded it from there. With such a large class, you can imagine the difficulty keeping everyone's phone, address, and email accurate all the time. Much of this job falls on Mrs. Dagle. Please call her if any of your contact info changes. Also, please feel free to email or call any of your child's teachers, the guidance counselor or the grade office if you have any questions about anything at any time. We should be able to answer the question or direct you to someone that can. As big as we are, your child is only going to potentially work with a fairly small number of adults in the building each year. That group will include:

- around 7 or so teachers
- 1 guidance counselor
- Mrs. Dagle, the grade secretary (and me!)

The other people that work with freshmen and could work with your child are the school nurse, Ms. Spigel, a social worker, Mr. Fox, and a school psychologist, Ms. Gavrilles. Please note that once a cycle (7 school days) I meet together with the rest of the grade 9 "support team" made up of the guidance counselors, Ms. Spigel, Mr. Fox, Ms. Gavrilles and we review students that are struggling and we brainstorm ideas to try to find them some help. If you have contacted any

one of us about a concern or issue regarding your child we will discuss it in one of those confidential meetings. The goal of those meetings is to identify students that are in need of any additional assistance we may be able to offer.

With all this being said, I need to know if you have made attempts to contact any of us and you are not hearing back. Teachers are in class most of the day and oftentimes are not able to get back until sometime the next school day. Because of the numbers of students we each work with, we ask that you give us 1-2 school days to reply. If there is an urgent matter, your best bet will be to contact Mrs. Dagle or your child's guidance counselor directly. If I am not returning messages in a timely manner, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Mr. Welch.

Get Involved and Stay Involved

We all have to be pulling together to educate children well.

Too often during junior and senior year I have parents tell me that they regretted backing off monitoring their child's academic progress as they did when he/she was in middle school and elementary school. Many parents think high schools don't want or need their involvement and/or their child is maturing to a point where they do not need the parents' involvement. I believe as your children mature, it is important to allow them more responsibility, but I hope that does not mean your interactions with the school and their schooling is limited. We need your input and your help!! The school should represent the community and for it to run effectively, we need the community's input! Whatever you can do to stay involved will be greatly appreciated.

Many parents ask me how they can get involved and help the school. Here are a few volunteering opportunities:

1. Contact the class advisors, Ms. Maffei and Mr. Conklin and volunteer to be a chaperone at the Seniors Welcoming Freshman dance on October 2 at 7pm.
2. Contact Mr. Welch, the principal and volunteer to be on the school council (usually the first Thurs of each month @ 7pm).
3. Contact the PTBO and become an active member; they meet the first Monday of each month @7pm in H100.
4. If you have other ideas about how you would like to get involved, don't hesitate to contact us!

Also, many of you know a lot of your child's classmates. Any support you can give your child and their friends by attending art shows, athletic events, music and drama events, etc. are all GREATLY appreciated!

Students do best with routines

Succeeding in school is more like a marathon than a sprint. Establishing good routines is important!

We have issued every child an agenda book to keep track of their assignments and to note when tests and quizzes are held. Very few adolescents have a good, organized and efficient system to get their work home and completed and then brought back to school. What we have found works best is when students have a set time and a quiet place where they can complete their work each day and parents monitor their organization. Frequently check their backpack to make sure their work is organized and ask them to see their agenda book EACH day. We ask teachers to occasionally check when assigning homework and test dates to make sure students are logging things correctly as well.

Keep a Positive Attitude

Our children draw so many opinions from how we act and sometimes more importantly how we *react* to things. Having had the opportunity to work closely and graduate the last two classes here I can tell you it is not a question of *if* there will be ups and downs, it is a question of *when* there will be ups and downs and in many cases, *how frequently*. Your child might struggle in a class, with a coach, in a relationship, with a friend, or a classmate. Adolescence is rarely without at least some struggles. I find it is important that we work together to positively encourage each student to do his/her best to overcome each of these obstacles and to make good decisions.

When I consequence a student for a transgression, I view the transgression in terms of a student has made a bad choice. The purpose of the consequence is to teach the student that bad choices typically lead to bad consequences. It is not a judgment on the student as a person. After students receive a Saturday school, detention, inhouse suspension or out of school suspension, I am looking for them to have an understanding of what they did and to learn from the mistakes and move forward as positively and quickly as possible. I always appreciate support I receive from home in these situations.

Parents often ask me my advice on consequences at home. Honestly, I think everyone disciplines their children differently, and different children may respond to different techniques. I find that whatever you do choose to do, it is important that you follow through with it. Taking away things that adolescents use for entertainment is something parents share with me as being highly effective such as mobile phone, tv, computer.

I hope you find this, past and future letters helpful. I assure you everyone at FHS wants what is best for your child and each of us greatly appreciate all your support and trust as we all try our best to educate your children.

Regards,

Frank Rothwell

Vice Principal - Class of 2013

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