

NORTH STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Community Pride and Joy During the Winter Season

As I witnessed community members of all ages, whole families, and school staff enter the Wheeler gymnasium for the Winter Concerts, I was once again struck by how much our schools mean to North Stonington. Their faces displayed pure joy and anticipation of something special that was about to happen. And guess what - their hopes were met. Watching our students give it their all, whether on stage, on the court, or in the classroom, elicits feelings of pride. The schools have many events open to the public this time of year and I hope that you will come to not only support the schools, but to brighten your mood during, what is for many, the gloomiest of seasons.

Here are a few additional tips to have a joyful and productive winter season:

- Write a to-do list, complete each item, and check it off to have a sense of accomplishment. This simple act can provide motivation and clarity.
- Exercise to clear your head and relax your body so you are able to be present for others. Physical activity can significantly improve mental well-being.
- Get outdoors to bask in some natural light and breathe the fresh air. Even a short walk can boost your mood and energy levels.
- Plan something fun in the near future to help you get through daily challenges. Having something to look forward to can provide hope and motivation.
- Check your thoughts about others to ensure you are emphasizing dignity over contempt. Cultivating empathy and understanding is crucial for personal and community growth.

I took this last tip from a recent presentation at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education convention by Dr. Timothy Shriver, International Special Olympics Chairman. He spoke about a dignity index, a continuum from contempt to dignity, related to how we think and talk about people who are different from ourselves. This is relevant since holding onto contempt is neither relaxing nor joyful. Be wary of how some news broadcasts and social media messages can pull you down the continuum. The index is an 8-level scale. While you can read about levels 1-3 if interested, level 4 represents the perspective: "We're better than those people. They don't really belong. They're not one of us." The ideal, level 8, embodies the principle: "Each one of us is born with inherent worth, so we treat everyone with dignity—no matter what." For more information, please visit:

www.dignity.us/index

I hope to see you at an upcoming school and town events. Please feel free to start a conversation, or you can always schedule an appointment by contacting Irma Wilhelm, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent, at (860) 535-2800.

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