

*Dear Sachem Family,*

*Happy new year! We are off to a fantastic start for 2011. It's hard to believe that we are already beginning the second half of the school year. Our students, staff members and parents have been working tirelessly and accomplishing so much.*

*Hopefully, you were able to enjoy one of our many elementary, middle or high school concerts. They were truly amazing and we congratulate and thank our students and teachers for their talents and performances. Please check your school calendars for the dates of our upcoming high school and middle school musicals. If you have had the good fortune of attending our musicals in the past, I'm sure that you would agree that they are certainly worth attending.*

*We also have so many students competing on various athletic teams during these winter months. On just about every day of the week you are able to catch our middle or high school students competing against other schools from around Suffolk County. Like our many musical performances, these events are terrific forms of family entertainment.*

*Although we certainly provide numerous co-curricular opportunities for our students, our top priority is to prepare our students to become respectful, responsible young men and women who will be well prepared for college or a career. I am very proud to share with you, that for the first time in the history of our wonderful district, we are bringing folks together from kindergarten through grade twelve to share ideas, experiences, research and data on curriculum, instruction, best practices and learning. Our newly organized Curriculum Council, under the leadership of Ms. Jessica DePasquale, has organized many committees to address the academic needs and expectations that will allow our students to meet with success. The level of volunteerism on the part of our administrators and teachers is yet another example that Sachem cares. It would certainly be quite easy to be frustrated by the ever growing list of mandates and changes placed upon us from Washington and Albany, but instead our Sachem Family recognizes the importance of always raising the bar and we continue to choose to lead rather than follow. I look forward to sharing updates with you from our Curriculum Council.*

*Our always supportive Board of Education not only recognizes the academic preparation necessary for our students to meet with success, but they have made it a*

Board Goal to also prepare our students to become effective leaders. There appears to be a growing void of principle centered leaders in our world today. Sachem has decided to use The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Dr. Stephen Covey as a resource in educating our students on effective leadership qualities. Hopefully Dr. Covey's work will afford us the opportunity to make common sense become common practice. It is truly encouraging and motivating to witness how quickly students, staff members and families from all eighteen buildings have embraced and modeled the Seven Habits. Our hope is that this process will further strengthen the mutually respectful and interdependent relationship that the Sachem Family has enjoyed for many years.

We are beginning our yearly budget process. Your thoughts are certainly always respected and appreciated. Although we are facing the most challenging fiscal times in recent years, please know that together we will overcome even the greatest obstacles as we continue to meet the needs of our students while remaining sensitive to our community members. As Dr. Covey tells us, we must always "seek first to understand before we seek to be understood."

In closing, I once again thank you for your continued help and support. May we never forget that the giving of

*our time and talents always benefits our wonderful students.  
Please know that I am always an email or a phone call  
away if I may ever be of any assistance. I wish you and  
your family good health and happiness.*

*Respectfully,*

*Jim Nolan*