



**Newfield High School**  
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Mr. Barry Derfel, Principal  
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5/8/14

Dear students and families,

It is with mixed emotions that I share with you the news that I have accepted the position of Assistant Superintendent for Instruction at TST BOCES, starting July 1<sup>st</sup>. I am quite excited about my new position, but I am also sad to be leaving Newfield. When I first came to Newfield High School I quickly learned that Sue France had served this community in the most profound and significant ways imaginable. I did not know how I would begin to help this school and this community make the transition to working with me as the new Principal. Among the most important foundational elements that Sue established here, three stand out as having been critical in setting me up for success. I came into a school that was, to paraphrase Sue's own words, deeply proud of who it was and what it represented. I came into a school that was physically safe. And, I came into a school where all of the adults liked young people and enjoyed working with each other.

I believe that in the four years that I have been here we have worked together as students, staff, families, and community to build onto this foundation a set of structures, supports, and practices that have allowed each of us to more fully realize our unique and collective human potentials. We created a core goal to be *Responsible for our work and actions: students, staff, families, and community*. We created a vision – *We are Newfield: Conscious, Consistent, and Committed to What is Best for Our Community*. To keep us moving towards achieving this goal and vision we established four ongoing goals committees: Aesthetics, Motivation, Mutually Safe and Respectful Behavior, and Service Projects. We created CCR Labs to provide students with more direct and active academic and career support. Our fifth committee, the CCR Committee, evolved as our staff decided that this innovation was directly in line with our goals and vision and that it is important to focus time and energy on helping CCR Labs fully develop into what we have imagined they could ultimately become.

We have also moved towards more fully including all of our students in the academic, social, and emotional life of our school. The master schedule has been adjusted, special education teachers and general education teachers are collaborating within classrooms, Wilson Reading classes have been started, and special educators continue to teach support classes; all of this done in an effort to ensure that every student has access to the general education curriculum and that every student continues to get the supports she/he needs to be successful. In addition, we began a long-term partnership with Rochester University to implement the Sources of Strength program in our building. Six staff members have taken on the responsibility of serving as program advisors and 15 – 20 students have taken on the responsibility of serving as student

advisors. This program now directly supports our efforts to promote mutually safe and respectful behavior.

Other critical work we have done has been around helping all of us become more disciplined people, learning how to advocate for our needs in the appropriate time, place, and manner. We have operated under the expectation of mutual support, centered on the idea that we share responsibility for creating a safe, healthy, and effective learning environment. And, we have operated under the assumption that we can each meet high and worthy expectations when these are made clear and when we have the full support of our community with us.

In addition, we have navigated the major State and Federal education shifts of the last few years in ways that have been ethical and relevant. We have uncovered the content of the new Common Core Learning Standards and we have been learning how to effectively plan units and lessons that will meet these new standards in ways that are in the best interests of our young people and our community. We have looked deeply into the new observation and evaluation process and learned how to implement these in ways that promote trust, compassion, and genuine professional growth. One of the most exciting outcomes of our work is the courtyard garden that is currently being planted in the center of our building. Our Environmental Science, Sustainable Living, Food Exploration, and High School Tech classes are working together to create a full-cycle garden, from the compost sorted in our own cafeteria to the simple, healthy dishes that will be cooked in class and ultimately served in our cafeteria. Together, these classes are grounded in the critical thinking expectations of the new Common Core Learning Standards and the expectations for engaging students that are central to the new observation and evaluation process.

Finally, there are highly skilled and committed educational leaders who dream of the chance to work in a high school community that looks like, sounds like, and feels like our Newfield High School community. I will do whatever I am asked to do in order to help ensure that this transition goes smoothly. I have been one of the luckiest people in the world to have had the opportunity to work here, and have been humbled by your generosity of mind and spirit. You were appropriately cautious and exceedingly gracious in welcoming me into your community, which has now also become my community. We are Newfield: **Conscious, Consistent, Committed to What is Best for Our Community.**

Thank you,

Mr. Barry Derfel