



### Reflecting on Balance—Our Building's Goals

At Skyline, we annually review our building's goals and the data that helps us know if we are achieving them. One goal is academic and the other non-academic and our staff have overwhelmingly affirmed that they feel both the goals are relevant and important.

#### Academic Goal

Our students continue to pass the state tests at rates well over 90% and graduate at a rate of 97%, we have to look closely at a range of academic data to help us determine where to focus our efforts. Recent changes in high school requirements (24 credits to graduate) thus led us to the creation of an academic goal about passing classes, thus earning credits, especially in the early grades. **We aimed to reduce the number of freshmen and sophomore students earning Fs by 50%.** Last year our staff worked very hard to connect with kids, especially those most at risk, to reduce the number of students failing classes and increase the number passing them. We successfully reduced the number of freshmen and sophomores earning Fs by 40%.

#### Our non-academic goal

Our non-academic goal, on the other hand, is about *how our kids are* versus how they perform academically. We were inspired by our keynote speaker at Curriculum Night and our first staff learning Julie Lythcott-Haims this fall and so we revised our non-academic goal a bit to reflect some of the language she shared with parents and staff this fall. (If you missed her, here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eWtUCF7qsA>) Here is the revised building goal!

We promote the development of **whole, balanced people**. In particular, we aim to develop young adults **who thrive personally** and act in the service of humanity.

In the last three years we have assessed how our kids are by having Dr. Suniya Luthar of ASU join us to survey them. It was she who told us our students have rates of anxiety and depression at 6-7x the national average. We have also studied our senior exit survey data, our Healthy Youth Survey data and our Health Room data. Since Dr. Luthar visited, our counseling team has helped us continue to assess our students' well-being and this year, we have a new, shorter assessment called **the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire** that we hope will help us measure our progress in this area. It will be given to our students on November 9<sup>th</sup> (**details below**).

We know, both anecdotally and from the Dr. Luthar data, that there are two big sources of stress and pressure our students face—college admissions and social media. While none of us can control those influences entirely, we can teach our students, provide coping strategies, counter toxic messages and debunk myths. Inviting Julie Lythcott-Haims to inform and inspire us was one of those choices I made as principal to keep us in this good work. I wanted to share a few more resources for all of us to ponder and let you know some of what our building work looks like this year.

1. We continue to educate ourselves about the truth of college rankings, admissions and how "where you go is not who you'll be." Julie Lythcott Haims mentioned Frank Bruni, NY Op-Ed journalist, while she was with us and I am reading his book *Where You Go Is Not Who You'll Be*. If you want a shorter experience you can check out this 45 link that is a really thorough summary of his book

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgN2003VYgQ> (Thank you to the parent who sent me this great link!) I will be sharing excerpts of his work with staff as well.

2. We spent part of the October PSAT Day with our freshmen around the concept of **Digital Dignity** and we had them do some goal setting about *how* they can be on-line. **Many of them committed to downloading rethink, a free app that will prompt them to “re-think” any negative content they might want to post or tweet or text.** You can check it out at <http://www.rethinkwords.com/getrethink> .
3. We will have all students take our new Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; we will continue to be students of our students, to create, monitor and adjust our school-based interventions to meet their needs. MORE DETAIL BELOW.
4. We have interviewed and listened to some of our students of color willing to share how they experience our school. We have asked them about how race plays a role in their adolescence, their peer relations, and their education and how we can support and strengthen a school culture that values all of our students.
5. We are continuing to bring Eastside Fire and Rescue out to serve our sophomores every year. They provide a very powerful education around the risks of impaired and distracted driving. Every other spring they bring a crash simulation to our juniors and seniors. It too communicates a powerful message about impaired and distracted driving.
6. We continue to offer our Swedish Mental Health Professional, Summer Igaz, to our students. She has served approximately 40 students per year in her time with us.
7. We will continue to inform ourselves about the nationwide trend of teenage anxiety and how to support students through it, how to prevent it, reduce it and respond to it. A recent NY Times article has some really wonderful insights and if you'd like to read it, I've linked it here as well <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/magazine/why-are-more-american-teenagers-than-ever-suffering-from-severe-anxiety.html> It captures elements of both the sources of teenage anxiety I mentioned above...

“The college application process was a source of particular anxiety for Jake, and the hope was that he would learn that he could talk about college without shutting down — and that **his value as a person didn’t depend on where he went to school.**”

“When I asked Eken about other common sources of worry among highly anxious kids, she didn’t hesitate: social media. **Anxious teenagers from all backgrounds are relentlessly comparing themselves with their peers,** she said, and the results are almost uniformly distressing.”

Thank you to all of you working with us, sharing with us, echoing us, and conversing with us. The exchange of ideas and hopes, challenges and laughter we get to have with you, our community, helps us to continue to evolve and respond to our changing realities. Thank you!

Warm regards,  
Donna Hood, Principal

### **Details on our Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for All Students**

Dear Parents,

The ISD is continuing in its commitment to supporting our students through a framework called Positive Behavior and Social-Emotional Support, or PBSES. The PBSES framework relies on evidence-based practices and multiple tiers of support to serve students through a continuum of care.

One of our PBSES practices at Skyline has been to identify proactively students who may require intervention. We have done this a number of ways:

- By inviting Dr. Luthar to conduct a study and compare our students’ data to national norms
  - Dr. Luthar shared this data with parents, community and staff

- This effectively gave us a very robust baseline
- Every two years we have Healthy Youth Survey data from grades 10 and 12 to consider
  - I have shared this data with staff and the PTSA Exec Board
  - The ISF has supported efforts to share this data in larger community settings as well
- We also annually review our senior exit survey data
- Our counseling department has conducted surveys of both large and small groups of students
- Our larger counseling and admin team monitor all interventions we provide—adding support where it is needed and editing support when less effective
- Every spring our counseling team, our Grad Specialist and our special ed Department Chair consult with our feeder schools to provide interventions that will help students transition from middle to high school

Now we have a great opportunity to use a new tool, a short 25 item “Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire” during an in-class assembly schedule on November 9th. This tool is comparable to a temperature check as opposed to more robust full physical checkup conducted by Dr. Luthar. The survey has been piloted at other ISD schools, is kid-friendly and used to gain insight about individual students’ emotional and behavioral functioning. It identifies a child’s personal strengths as well as challenges. It should also allow us to confirm and/or question the data we already have. We are excited about this tool because it will be easy to measure growth over time, continue to tailor interventions to students’ needs and allow for short and therefore more frequent monitoring.

If you do not want your student to participate, please let our Graduation Specialist, Mat Taylor, know in writing [taylor@m@issaquah.wednet.edu](mailto:taylor@m@issaquah.wednet.edu) (an email is fine) by November 6<sup>th</sup>. Thank you for your continued support as we explore ways to support the emotional health of our students.

Warm regards,  
Donna Hood, Principal

**What's happening outside of school?**  
**Check out Skyline's Community Fliers** [electronic bulletin board](#).