

A Fat Bank Account and a Slim Body

Brad Cooley – *Norwalk Reflector* – January 5, 2018

I can always expect a good laugh each year as I receive a Christmas card from one of my friends from back home. She is notorious for sending out cards that are a bit more unique. This year's card read: Dear Santa, This year all I ask for is a BIG FAT Bank Account and a Slim Body. Please, don't mix up the two like you did last year.

How many times do we wish for something and the opposite occurs? How many times do we strive to achieve certain goals, yet the outcome is far different than what we had envisioned? Are we able to laugh and still move on? I guess it probably depends on the situation.

While many of us will use the start of the New Year to proclaim our wishes, goals, and dreams, only a small percentage of us will actually commit ourselves and our available resources to turn those mental pictures and well thought-out resolutions into reality.

Just as individuals set their annual goals, so too, do most successful organizations. Norwalk High School, and the District as a whole, has identified three areas where we wish to concentrate our efforts in the coming year. We plan to deconstruct our curriculum standards, increase content area literacy, and promote a vibrant and healthy learning environment for all who step foot in our building.

Do those very broad goals make any sense? Are they attainable? Does this sound just like more educational gobbledeygook?

By deconstructing learning standards, our staff will be able to clarify all of the content within the standard that should be taught and assessed as well as devote the appropriate level of rigor and instructional time to each standard. By increasing content area literacy strategies within the classroom, students will have greater practice with reading, writing, and speaking – and, there is no better preparation for future success than knowing how to communicate to others and how to apply relevant facts. Lastly, by promoting a positive culture through opportunity, innovation, and togetherness, our students will learn the soft skills and teamwork that is required beyond these high school walls.

As with most things in life, the work and attention to detail is what makes the realization of each goal possible. The teachers, administrators, and support staff in each one of our buildings are prepared to attack these three goals in 2018 because it will produce the greatest dividends for our students – the ones who will walk across our stage and earn a high school diploma.

So, while many of our goals will be driven by data and analytics, some of our wishes will be based upon something far simpler – the human element. Did our students have a great experience as a Trucker? Did they appreciate their roots, their teachers, and their friends? Judging by the number of graduates who have returned to Norwalk High School over the past month, the qualitative evidence would suggest the affirmative. We have been inundated with familiar faces – young adults asking to visit a certain teacher, a coach, a counselor, or believe it or not, an administrator. There is no better reward for any educator than having a former student show up to your classroom or office wanting to share new stories and to reminisce on some from the past. It validates your work and lets you know that you mattered, be it in a small or large way.

Regardless if you set personal or professional goals for yourself or are simply hoping that your wishes come true....here's to you all getting skinny and leading a rich life.