



November 2019

# Superintendent's Roundtable with Dr. Anthony C. Azar

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"In Dighton and Rehoboth students are the future of our two towns."

## Welcome

Dear Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District:

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you our first Superintendent's Roundtable quarterly report. It is our intent, through this communication, to give you timely updates as to how the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School District is working continuously towards our strategic objectives that lead to our overarching district goals. It is through these objectives and goals that our students are provided opportunities for success in Dighton and Rehoboth. On behalf of our school district, we hope that you have a special Thanksgiving and that our students look forward to returning to school after their Thanksgiving break.. Sincerely,  
Dr. Azar



(LtoR) Cathy Potter, Dr. Anthony Azar, Superintendent of Schools, Devin Parker, Callie Gouveia, Rachel Zankul, and Dr. John Gould, DRRHS Principal

## Spotlight On New Staff

In order to know Mr. Kitchen, DRRSD Business Administrator, he was asked the following questions:



**What are your hobbies?**

Skiing in the winter and hiking in the summer

**What is your favorite children's book?**

The Hungry Caterpillar

**What was your**

**favorite subject in high school?** Physical Education

**Name a food you've never tried:** Liver, never have, never will

**Tell us something about you that is a**

**surprise:** I ran the Mt. Washington road race

## ✓ Social Responsibility:

### Heartfelt Thanks to Our Military Troops

The Dighton Rehoboth Regional School District is showing their debt of gratitude to the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division Sustainment Brigade-Muleskinners out of Fort Bliss- ElPaso, TX. Mrs. Cathy Potter of Rehoboth who is heading up this project recently spoke to a few high school students (Callie Gouveia-10, Rachel Zankul-10 and Derik Parker-9) along with Dr. Anthony Azar, Superintendent of Schools and Dr. John Gould, DRRHS Principal. Her message was to explain to them some history of this unit and how their act of kindness from the students will mean to them. Each of the five schools in the district participated in creating Thanksgiving letters addressed to these service men and women expressing their thanks for their service to our country. This unit is currently stationed in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. For many of the soldiers, this is the first deployment away from home due to the fact many are 18 to 19 years old which is not much older than our own high school students.

✓ Increasing student achievement:  
D-R School's Sponsor Library Card Night

Dr. Anthony C. Azar, Superintendent of Schools, enjoyed a night out at our local libraries recently sponsoring Library Card Night for our two elementary schools. It was a great opportunity for families in Dighton and Rehoboth to bring their children to the library to register for their first library card. Dr. Azar was joined by his own family at the Blanding Library and was proud to see his son, Donny, register for his own library card.



Pictured above (LtoR) Donny Azar, Palmer River Principal Arlene Mlguel and Dr. Azar



Pictured above (L to R) Dr. Azar with DES Principal, Lynn Dessert and DES students Lucas and John.

Many Thanks

Dr. Azar thanked the many families that took advantage of this wonderful opportunity for their child(ren) to experience our local libraries. He also thanked the staff at both libraries, the administrative teams from both schools and his Administrative Assistant, Celeste Sullivan, for scheduling library card night.



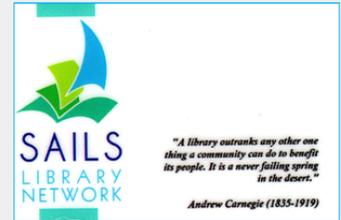
Blanding Library, Rehoboth

✓ partnerships with parents and the community:  
The Success of Library Card Night

Due to the success of Library Card Night, it was announced that the Dighton Rehoboth Regional school district along with staff from both town libraries, will participate in a future "Library Card Night" next school year. Stay tuned and keep reading!



Dighton Library



More Information

If you would like further information in regard to signing your child up for their first library card now please contact your child's school or the library in the town that you reside. Library cards excite youngsters and give them access to books and much more throughout the SAILS system in Southeastern Mass.



1st row (L) Patrick McCann, Zachary Mc Cann, Noelle Blais 2nd row (L) Anne Reed , Sabrina Marsella, Emily Marquis, Haleigh Kelley, Logan Menezes 3rd row (L) Nathan Demoura, Dr. Azar, Principal Dr. Gould, Principal, Mr. Pirraglia, Mason Mello, Richard Curtis, Hayden Bessette, Jane Kostka (not pictured Penny Braga & Bella Decilio)

✓ Continuously Improving Student Achievement:  
MCAS update

The most recent MCAS results yielded proof of the DR difference with 18 students from the DRRSD receiving perfect scores. This is a remarkable achievement considering MCAS is one of the most challenging standardized tests in the country. **ELA scores at the high school were as high as 99.6% proficiency.** We would like to thank each student's parents and teachers for preparing them to achieve their best on the MCAS assessments.

## ✓Infrastructure: D-R school campuses update

### Rehoboth well update:

The failed pump, which led to a well issue presented, at the Rehoboth Campus was similar to what homeowners face. Our insurance carrier covered all additional costs, such as, a new well pump, bottled water, custodians overtime, etc. (Less the deductible). It is important to note that the initial reporting of this incident to the Department of Environmental Protection did not cause the problem. Subsequently, there not any sanctions against the district by the D.E.P or the Rehoboth Board of Health. We thank our students, parents and staff for their patience while this issue was resolved.

### Solar Arrays:

We now have solar arrays at all three of our district campuses. It is important to note that the Solar arrays were constructed at no cost to our tax payers. According to Dr. Azar, "The solar array projects have been utilized to find efficiencies within our budget to offset costs to our taxpayers in our district...it is important to show our citizens that we continue to do our due diligence to keep costs manageable."

In addition, solar arrays at the five (5) campuses continue to provide the following benefits:

- Safety for our parking lots at night providing light well into the evening
- Creating a revenue source for the district through Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SREC's)



## ✓ Using Data & Technology: The partnership with TRANE has provided unique benefits

### Learning:

Students in each of our five (5) schools have access on large flatscreen monitors to Solar-Log Dashboards which are used to teach students about critical energy conservation and renewable energy.

Please visit our Solar-Log Dashboards to see in real time the impact that our Solar Arrays have on our environment while making 75% of the energy used by the district on an annual basis. Overall, there is a 62% reduction in their total energy spent.

<https://trane.solar-log-web.net/trane-plants.html>



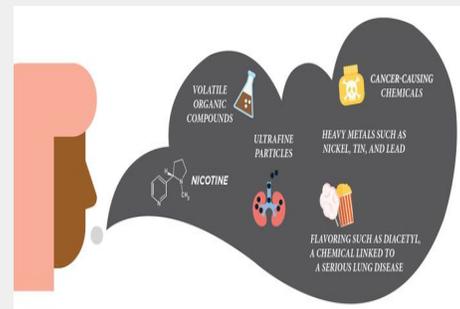
### Operational:

- Comfortable and efficient learning environment
- Precise ventilation control – tied to CO2
- Systems monitored 365/24/7 by Trane
- Facilities Manager can access Trane control systems and controls the facilities from smartphone!
- 75% of electricity used by DRRSD generated on-site, with clean solar power

### Fiscal:

- Annual energy spend reduced by 62%
- Trane Guaranteed Energy Savings \$564K/year
- Over \$620K in utility rebates secured
- Over \$2.73M in solar and biomass incentives from Commonwealth of MA

## Vaping presentations at the high school and both middle schools



In October, presentations were conducted at DR Regional High School, Beckwith Middle and Dighton Middle Schools about the dangers associated with Vaping, an issue that has become a local, state and federal health danger. Students were presented with real-life scenarios and reminded about the importance of making sound decisions when it comes to their health. It is my hope that these presentations remind students that we care about them and their well being. As parents and caregivers, stay vigilant in your student's lives by monitoring and encouraging involvement in positive activities. Reach out to your school's guidance department for creative ideas for student involvement. Middle school and high school is an important time for impressionable and inquisitive minds and there are many positive ways to help your child stay clear from destructive and dangerous decisions.

In addition, one of my goals as superintendent is to introduce a new grade 6 to grade12 curriculum that focuses on best practices on Anti-Vaping. An Anti-Vaping Grant that was received through the National Library of Medicine and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The total is for \$50K over two years. The grant consists of two committees. We expect the Curriculum Committee to meet 5-7 times during the year including conference call meetings. The goal is to provide all interested districts in the Commonwealth, once we have completed the curriculum we will distribute it for implementation and follow up in year two.



### Discover the DR Difference: D-R Regional High School Open House December 5th

"Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School is a high performing accredited high school in the state of Massachusetts and our achievement scores are higher than the national averages in all categories. Last year, we were recognized as one of the top 100 schools in Massachusetts for the percentage of students who scored proficient and advanced on all sections of the Grade Ten MCAS.

Our graduation rate of 96.5% is one of the highest in the state. This high level of preparation is distinguishable as our students are accepted into prestigious colleges and universities. D-R students have been recently accepted into Harvard University, Boston College, Providence College, Emerson College and Tufts University. Also, out of state institutions of higher learning, D-R students were accepted into Rochester Institute of Technology, Towson University, Syracuse University, and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute as well as Prestigious Military Academies. A Dighton-Rehoboth Regional High School diploma carries a reputation of high stature and respect. Students who graduate from our high school have the opportunity to engage in a rigorous academic program as well as exposure to a well-supported and recognized vocational program."

To attend the open house please contact the high school to pre-register. If unable to attend, you may reach out to Dr. Gould directly at (508)252-5025 x5601 or email [JGould@drregional.org](mailto:JGould@drregional.org).

### A Principal's Perspective:

Each DR Regional school principal was asked the following question: *What are you most proud of as principal of our Dighton and Rehoboth schools?*

(DRRHS) Dr. Gould: What makes me most proud is the opportunity to help people. Most of all, I am gratified to help students learn from their teachers while being supported from home. In my role as Principal, I am responsible for maintaining a safe and warm climate that fosters learning.

(BMS) Mr. Pirraglia: Working with all stakeholders to make Beckwith a place where both students and staff want to be every day. Students and staff learn and grow together in a supportive environment. Learning is exciting and interesting.

(DMS) Mr. Wheeler: Our faculty and staff, who are excited about education, and willing to do whatever it takes to help our students in a caring and nurturing manner. Our students, who come to school every day ready to learn, show respect, and strive to become the best they can. Our parent community that regards education so highly, through their support of our budget, active participation in school programs, and their willingness to help on a daily basis.

(PRES) Mrs. Miquel: As much as I enjoy working with amazing elementary teachers, my work at Palmer River is always about the children, who provide a continual flood of joy and pride for me. Our large school multiplies the moments I can help children figure out how to succeed as well as the moments I can help them feel safe and happy. Their smiles make me smile...it's as simple as that.

(DES) Mrs. Dessert: There are so many things I am proud of at Dighton Elementary every day. I am so proud of our students and the gains they showcase socially, emotionally, and academically every day. I am so proud of the support from our parents, community, and most proud of the staff who choose to make the commitment to grow themselves and grow DES every day, every child, whatever it takes!

### ✓ Fiscal Stability of Our Two Towns: Budget Update

I would like to start by saying that both the Town of Rehoboth and the Town of Dighton have been extremely generous when it comes to the funding of our regional school district. Clearly, in the Town of Rehoboth the voters have approved new windows, new roofs and for the first time in the history of Rehoboth voters approved overwhelmingly a 2 1/2 proposition override in fy2019.

In Dighton, the town has supported a fully funded budget year after year and recently voted for 4 modular classrooms to help support an enrollment increase. As a regional school district, both towns supported the construction of a new roof for the high school. Most recently, Dighton has once again supported the budget for fy2020 and has made it clear that education is an absolute priority.

So, what changed this year in Rehoboth?

Since becoming the Superintendent in 2014-15 we have always had open lines of communication. As a school committee and district administration we have always had an opportunity to present our budget/assessments to the finance committee in both districts. That opportunity to meet with the finance committee in Rehoboth for fy20 stopped completely with no warning.

The meetings with the finance committee typically take place in April. It is at these crucial meetings that the finance committee and school committee/administration reviews the financial stability of both the municipality and the school district. Dighton's finance committee meeting was as seamless as can be. They asked questions and we answered and a budget/assessment was then presented and passed at their town meeting.

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**A United Front-No More:**

Unfortunately, this was not the case in Rehoboth. The B.O.S and the finance committee in Rehoboth have, since I became superintendent in 2014-15, always have gone into town meeting with a united front. That united front for fy20 unfortunately crumbled pretty quickly due to the town warrant being written by the Rehoboth BOS and the Finance Committee. The wording of the town warrant painted the school district as one that was seeking another override. This wording of the Rehoboth town warrant absolutely scarred voters into thinking taxes would be increased in Rehoboth. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

In a Taunton Gazette article last year I was quoted as saying that if the proposition 2 1/2 override passed we would be in good financial shape for several years. I absolutely stand by that statement.

**So, what happened?**

Unfortunately, despite attempts to meet with the Rehoboth finance committee beginning with an email exchange with the chair of the committee back in January, no meeting was scheduled. I met with the vice chair of the committee soon after to ascertain why we were not meeting as we had done in the past, to no avail. Even our school/municipal liaison who is also on the finance committee and a school committee member could not explain why we were not invited to the typical finance committee as was done in the past. We had already met with the Dighton Finance Committee.

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The Rehoboth municipality was facing a deficit of almost \$850,000 in fy18. Instead, they moved their deficit to the school. More importantly, the override for the school district for fy2019 should have only been approximately \$1.35 million not \$2.1 million. Since, the Rehoboth BOS followed the finance committee chairs recommendation the ballot for the override ballooned to \$2.1 million.

Thus, the override that was voted upon for fy19 should have been advertised as a town and school override. However, the Rehoboth Board of Selectman and the Rehoboth Finance Committee portrayed it as an override only for the school district.

The fy2019 Rehoboth Town warrant stated: “Therefore, in order to balance the (municipal) budget, the (Rehoboth) Finance Committee’s difficult recommendation is to decrease the school department’s Above Required Net School Spending line item by the remaining (Rehoboth Municipality) deficit.” The amount specified in the fy 2019 Rehoboth Town Warrant was approximately \$800k.

**A Meager Increase to the Budget:**

Finally, our budget increase on a \$45 million budget is a mere .66% increase. More than likely, one would be hard pressed to find another school district with a lower percent increase. Also, since 2014 there have been no layoffs to the Town of Rehoboth's municipal workers and the town has been in better financial shape over the past five years than ever before.

**Budget Development:**

We present the budget as a collaborative effort through conversations and communications with the Dighton-Rehoboth Regional School Committee and an advisory committee made up of representatives from both towns. In addition, our T.E.A.M. (Together Everyone Achieves More) which consists of central office, principals and assistant principals, as well as staff, created an overall budget that focuses on:

- 1) Student Achievement
- 2) Using Data and Technology
- 3) Strengthening Teaching and Learning
- 4) Creating Safe Schools/Culture and Climate, and
- 5) Infrastructure.

Similarly, through the School Improvement Plan Process, an emerging theme became clear to align the School Improvement Plans in each of the five schools to the five focus areas above. Due to this alignment, as seen in our District Improvement Plan as well, we continue to have a direct line from our budget to the classrooms. There are systems in place to measure the impact the budget has on student achievement as well as the other five focus areas referenced above.

As we work toward continued improvement in these five core areas, we set the foundation of our overarching goal for FY20 as we presented a budget that increases student achievement and maintains the financial stability for our two member towns. We believe that this budget, as presented, will provide our staff with the best opportunity to educate all of our children.

**Enter DESE-Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:**

As you might be aware, we do not have a budget for fy20 due to an impasse between the school committee and the Town of Rehoboth. A school district must have a set budget by July 1st. If a budget is not voted on by the two towns that make up our regional school district, the commissioner of education sets the budget beginning July 1st. Typically the budget set by the commissioner is 1/12th of the previous fy2019 budget. The Town of Dighton fully funded their assessment to school district. However, both towns must fully fund their assessment.

Currently, our school district has been operating on a compromise budget in which the Town of Rehoboth and the School Committee agreed upon with the Commissioner of Education. This compromised budget allowed the school district to call back four administration staff members and put back in place all of our sports and activities. The Rehoboth Board of Selectmen clearly indicated at the most recent Town Meeting that they could reduce certain line items without impacting personnel of town services.

Unfortunately, the compromise budget did not pass the October 29th Town of Rehoboth Special Town Meeting. Although the compromise budget put everything back in place for both the Town of Rehoboth and the D-R School District with no impact to town services or personnel or school programs or staff, it failed.

At this point, since a budget has not been agreed upon, D.E.S.E is now in the process of setting our school district budget for the remainder of fy20. As a school district we have written to DESE that we believe the current budget, with the compromise, should stand since it does not impact the Town of Rehoboth or the School District. The Board of Selectmen and the Town of Rehoboth Finance Committee have written to DESE to underfund our budget which would mean devastating reductions to our programs and thus negatively impacting our students.

Since we are a regional school district these devastating reductions that the Town of Rehoboth's Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee are advocating will impact Dighton as well.

**A Challenge:**

In conclusion, we must challenge our state lawmakers to creatively come up with much needed solutions to the inadequate reimbursement protocols for transportation, circuit breaker, and Chapter 70 monies which do not properly support the promises made to regional districts.

Equally, we must challenge our Rehoboth Board of Selectmen to work with our Economic Development Committee (EDC) to explore and to support an Economic Development Plan for our town so that the taxpayer is not asked to dig deeper into their pockets to provide necessary school and town needs.

Hope you have enjoyed our first issue of the Superintendent's Roundtable. Our next edition will be published in February. Have a great Thanksgiving and I will see you around the district.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Anthony C. Azar