

Piano Lessons, Podcasts, and Public Engagement

For the last eight years I have been trying to learn to play the piano. Once a week, along with many younger students, my teacher's lessons help me discover the intricacies of this wonderful instrument. Having been a saxophone player much of my life, I understand the coordination required when using two hands to perform a piece of music. The deftness and mental acuity necessary to play the piano, however, is a bit more involved. Navigating the notes and time signatures, melodies, and counterpoints that transcend two different clefs is complex, to say the least.

If you are already a virtuoso of the ivories — or even if you simply appreciate a beautiful song when you hear one — you can respect the coordination and synchronization necessary to perform a musical score in perfect harmony. I enjoy merging diverse chords and beats to create a melodic composition. When played in unison, the keys produce consonance, or groups of pleasant-sounding tones.

Playing the piano is similar to conducting the complex but satisfying concert of engaging residents in the work of our school district. What may sound like a staccato of seemingly detached notes is really a sonata. Various movements can differ in tempo, rhythm, and melody but a common subject and style holds them together. In public education, those diverse movements ideally comprise a larger composition focused on academic responsibility to our students and fiscal responsibility to our stakeholders.

Frequently, you need to tune a piano so its pitch produces the correct tone of a note; similarly, a school district must continually refine its plan for inspiring all learners to achieve excellence. Last August, more than 500 incoming kindergarteners began their journey to the year 2020, when they will presumably become seniors at Barrington High School. We began asking ourselves, “What is

our 2020 vision? What do we believe our schools should look like as we recalibrate an education model to support students through their high school graduation?” These are challenging questions, primarily because our world is changing so rapidly. It is difficult to envision the demands of a society more than 10 years in the distance. Yet, we owe it to our community and its children to be the best we can be as a school system — both today and in the future.

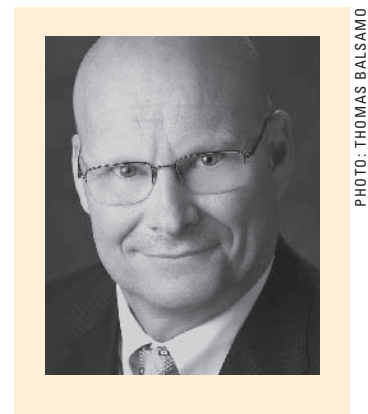
To reprise our most recent strategic plan from 2002, the school district invites all community members — those with and without children in our schools — to discuss how Barrington 220 can be equally accountable and accomplished by the year 2020. These thought-provoking discussions will require a chorus of varied voices and an ensemble of many experiences. We need this conversation to move beyond a monotone, where only a single timbre repeats, to become a polyphony, where multiple tones play simultaneously — some sharp, some flat, some right on key — but all are welcome and important.

In late February you can join these meetings to help us shape the priorities that will guide Barrington 220 to the year 2020. Accompanying



this public engagement effort is a medley of improved communication initiatives designed to increase our dialogue with constituents. Podcasts, blogs, online video magazines, a revised Web site, and e-newsletters are all new tools you can find at <http://barrington220.org>.

We aren't introducing these new measures simply to join the cacophony of social networking



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and instant messaging so popular in today's information-dependent culture. We understand that technology — if misused or overused — can become a hindrance to communication, rather than a tool to enhance conversation. On the contrary, our intent is to integrate these different media to create resonance with our community. Using another music analogy, resonance happens when you tune several strings of an instrument to harmonically related pitches, so all strings vibrate when striking only one of the strings. In our communication, as we accentuate today's achievements and as we attempt to engage our public in a discussion about the future, you can expect to hear a cadence of consistent themes. We know our community values consistency, reliability, transparency, and honesty. Whether you are reading an e-newsletter, listening to a podcast, or enjoying an article in *QUINTESSENTIAL BARRINGTON*, the motif of our message should be the same.

I hope you will consider joining our 2020 Vision initiative. If we all work together, we can develop a strategic plan that provides clarity and substance for the future of Barrington 220's students. Perhaps we will experience what every aspiring pianist desires — to give an encore in response to the audience's enthusiastic reaction and continuous applause. 