

Welcome To NH-V Online

*Welcome to NH-V Online,
a publication designed to better acquaint
the community with the people who deliver
the quality education to North Hunterdon-Voorhees
Regional High School District students.*

*Quality education begins with quality teaching,
administrative leadership and support staff commitment.*

*In these pages you will meet these people,
learn about their commitment to students
and gain a greater understanding
of why NH-V is a recognized leader in quality education.*



David Steffan
Principal, VHS

It's not every student who can say his or her principal was once a "stay at home dad." But for over four years, that's exactly what VHS Principal David Steffan was.

When his wife wished to get back to her career as a special education teacher, Mr. Steffan left a busy career in the West Morris School District to be home with his children.

Mr. Steffan graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in Government and Political Science with hopes to go to law school.

"In the interim I took a job at a residential school for children with special needs," he said. "I really loved the work and knew that this was my career. But now I needed credentials."

These he received with a Master's from the Curry School of Education and a second major in School Administration. He moved through a long successful career both in the classroom and as an administrator in West Morris, Ridge and New Providence. This is his eighth year at Voorhees.

"This is a comprehensive, diverse school that is truly reflective of the real world," said Mr. Steffan. "We have all kinds of students, yet all appreciate the opportunities they have here."

Indeed Mr. Steffan has little trouble discoursing on the quality of VHS and its students, stressing its yearly place among the top high schools in *New Jersey Monthly*, the strong student orientation of the school's leadership teams, "world class" faculty, and the "deep affection" returning alumni have for their alma mater.

Right now he sees management of the school's continuing growth as a major challenge. As Voorhees grows in enrollment, the desire to maintain the school's "small school community environment" becomes a priority.

"We're all committed to maintaining the quality and the excellence, and our students are major contributors to that effort," he said. "These students put so much into their school, and that's why they get so much out of it. Honestly, there's not a whole lot I would wish to change about VHS."



Michael Hughes
Principal, NHHS

If all it took were credentials, North Principal Michael Hughes would already be a superstar.

During his career Mr. Hughes has served as a special education teacher, social studies teacher, Supervisor of Special Education, guidance counselor, Supervisor of Guidance, Director of Athletics and Student Activities and Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Staff Development. He has also coached basketball.

Yet with all that behind him, nine years ago he was “honored, privileged and humbled” to be selected for his post at North.

“I still feel humbled to be here in this role,” he said. “I knew this school stood at the top of the heap, and I found out why immediately — dedicated, talented teachers whose high standards are fully supported by a caring community that values education.”

Like so many district leaders, Mr. Hughes sees growing enrollment as the one distraction that threatens to compromise North’s excellence. Needless to say, such a thing is not likely to occur under his watch.

“Our job is to facilitate learning, to continue to provide the opportunities our fine students expect and respond to so well,” he said. “We all buy into that at North. And we have that winning ‘triangle’ of parents, community and teachers working together in a common mission.”

Mr. Hughes obtained his degree in Social Studies from Kutztown University and his Master’s in Administration from East Stroudsburg. Prior to his arrival at North, he worked for 20 years in the Phillipsburg Public Schools.

Among the multitude of things he loves about North is the fact that so many alumni come back to visit, and so many are currently members of the faculty.

“They recognize the positive experience they had here as students,” he said. “Many care enough to come back and share

their growth and accomplishments with us. Others come back to stay and provide that wonderful experience they knew to a new generation of young people.”

He calls his school “the place that never sleeps” and proudly sees it as the true “pulse of the community.”

“Every single day I experience all of the reasons I wished to be a part of this school,” he said. “With all the things I’ve done and all the positions I’ve held, I still see being the principal at North as the greatest of all privileges.”



David Sullivan
Math Teacher, VHS

A teacher seeking a classroom is likely to find one anywhere. One who did is VHS math teacher David Sullivan.

Mr. Sullivan spent the initial 10 years of his career running a mission school in Thailand, working with children whose parents were missionaries.

“I had a strong desire to work with indigenous groups and tribal cultures,” he said. “I also wanted very much to work with teenagers in a ministry setting.”

In embracing his unique early career, Mr. Sullivan utilized a strong religious background. He holds a BA in Bible Education from Florida Bible College and a Master’s in Family Counseling from Philadelphia Bible College. His math degree is from Rowan University.

But as his children approached their college years, he realized it was time to head back to the states. For the past nine years he has been at Voorhees.

“My heart has always been set on working with young people so I was proud to come to Voorhees,” he said. “It was an adjustment at first but not nearly the adjustment one might think.”

Spending seven years coaching soccer opened the door to new teacher/student relationships for Mr. Sullivan. In fact, he considers his coaching career a highlight of his VHS tenure thus far.

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< *David Sullivan*

Of course, his passion now is mathematics, and his goal is to help students achieve the confidence to enjoy its challenge. “So many students come in with a pre-conceived notion of their limited math ability,” he said. “I immediately set to work fixing that since they are generally short-changing themselves.”

He calls it “using their gifts,” and he seeks those special moments when students “step out and accomplish goals they once believed they could never meet.”

And for Mr. Sullivan, it really doesn’t seem so far from a third world country to New Jersey.

“I love math, but honestly I don’t care what I’m teaching,” he said. “I’m strongly people centered, and as long as I can work with young people and help them to learn, achieve and grow, I’m right where I want to be.”



Mary Loder

Special Education Teacher, NHHS

“I always had two passions — my family and the dream to be a teacher.”

But for a while it was a “dream deferred” for North Special Education teacher Mary Loder. After high school she worked as a secretary for Warner Lambert. But “the desire was always there.”

For a final test she took a drama class at Morris County College to overcome an intense fear of public speaking. She figured, “If I could do that, I was sure I could teach.”

And the famous cliché applies, since the rest is history.

Through “sheer determination” she attained a 4.0 average at Montclair State on the way to a degree in English. After coming on board at North, she sensed a new professional direction.

“I’ve always been fascinated by the power of good instruction to change lives,” she said. “Bringing students to a

new level of understanding and directly assisting them in growing and evolving was an idea that just captured me.”

She felt special education was the field through which she could experience this great professional quest. She obtained a Bachelor’s and a Master’s in the field and has been at it ever since. She loves both her work and the unique talents of her students.

“A good teacher must be able to bend rules when necessary,” she said. “There are children that require it, and there are those that do not. You can’t box in creative thinkers. There’s no comfortable box for those who think out of it.”

Mrs. Loder offers high praise for the efforts of her school to integrate the populations, giving her students a solid place and function amongst their fellow peers.

“As a society we are getting better in that respect, and it’s because of school wide efforts such as this,” she said. “We have a responsibility to members of society who are working harder than most people realize to belong and to achieve.”

It’s been a long journey from her secretary’s desk to a busy career that now includes a Supervisory Certificate, certification as a Learning Disabilities Consultant and a 2001 Teacher of the Year Award.

“Teaching is my life line, and I’ll never rust out,” she said. “I want to be here to see as many of the hopes and dreams I have for my profession come true and hopefully to play a contributing role.”



Jerry DeVisser

Art Teacher, VHS

Art and football, perfect together.

If you don’t think so, ask VHS students about teacher Jerry DeVisser. He’s been proving it for 35 years.

“Coaching is teaching, just a different subject,” said Mr. DeVisser. “I’ve always been a teacher first.”

Graduating from Yankton College in South Dakota as an

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< *Jerry DeVisser*

Art Education major, Mr. DeVisser received his Master's in Art from Kean University. He's been at VHS for 17 years, serving as football coach 10 of those years, and bringing the school a State Championship in '95. He was back this year as an assistant coach, yet one gets the sense that art is his true passion.

"We are fortunate in the great range of our art program," he said. "Our students have an almost unlimited opportunity to explore any area of art media they choose."

According to Mr. DeVisser, art offers perhaps the "finest hands-on opportunity for creative expression anywhere." He likes to point out that there is no fancy software to help you sculpt or create a beautiful ceramic piece. One must "stick your hands in the mud and put your creative mind to work."

"Our job as teachers is to provide opportunities," he said. "Overall, our students are highly motivated and come from families that stress the importance of learning. My goal is to offer the chance to explore, run with an idea and create something personal and beautiful."

He enjoyed his return to coaching this year, admitting to having missed the unique relationship it provides with fellow coaches and students. He feels fortunate to be involved with both a vibrant athletic program and a "top quality, specialized art program with one of the highest enrollments in the school."

"I'm extremely fortunate in getting to work with so many different kinds of students through coaching and art," he said. "It allows the students to see both sides of me, and I get to know them quite well. It's amazing how nicely it all comes together."



Lynne Diehl

English Teacher, NHHS

When you have a passion for literature, a strong passion to pass it on to others is generally part of the mix. For some

it is stronger than for others.

"My first love is learning," said North English teacher Lynne Diehl. "My passion for the classics and their amazing use of language flows naturally through that channel."

Yet she readily admits that reading great classics is not a typical teenage activity in the 21st century. To counteract this she focuses on the "universality of classic literature."

"The lessons from the classics translate across the centuries," she said. "You can make them come to life for today's students by stressing the similarities between ancient realities and those of today."

Mrs. Diehl graduated Eastern College in Philadelphia with a degree in English Literature and received her Master's in English Education from Rutgers. During her 21 years at North, she served for 11 years as advisor to the school newspaper, nine years as a soccer coach, and she also coached fencing. In addition, Mrs. Diehl is a certified National Writing Consultant and has facilitated numerous workshops on Writing Across the Curriculum.

Fortunately for Mrs. Diehl, her fondness for literature is matched by her fondness for her school and her students.

"Being in a system like this is like being rewarded every day you come to work," she said. "We are surrounded by bright, engaging students who appreciate that they've been presented with a quality learning environment not available to students everywhere."

And her "lets do it, let's roll" approach to learning is appreciated by just that type of student.

"I'm demanding, I have high standards, and they know it," she said. "But I'm also their strongest cheerleader. I love my subject, and I want them to love it. So it's hard work sometimes, but being their teacher is a privilege I always cherish."

Mission Statement

The North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District, a district committed to innovation, personal excellence, high achievement and community partnership, provides all students with personalized opportunities through a broad spectrum of exemplary educational experiences to develop their fullest potential, to foster lifelong learning and to become responsible citizens in a continually changing society.