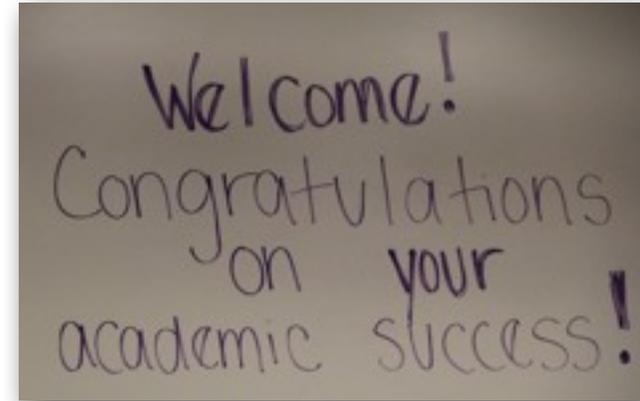




# Winning strategies for success

Setting goals, expecting success and working hard to achieve it in the face of setbacks was the sage advice Newark High School math teacher Jennifer Johnson gave students at the annual Academic Excellence Awards Dinner December 8<sup>th</sup>.

Johnson, whose maiden name was Damick until she married Stephen Johnson, an electrician, in October, graduated from NHS in 2009 and began teaching at NHS in 2015. She spoke at the event where grades 10, 11, and 12 students who earned an average of 90 or better during each quarter of the 2015-16 school year were recognized for their outstanding achievement.



NHS special education teacher Chelsea DeGrootte who coordinated the event commended the math teacher, a Newark native, for setting goals early and not being satisfied until she achieved them.

*"... Mrs. Johnson is the quintessence of accomplishing her ambitions and following her dreams of achievement which have led to her success. She started out in the same way as you, sitting in the same desks you sit in every day! Mrs. Johnson set goals in her life and took charge of how she was going to accomplish them. She is the epitome of personal victory."*

Then Johnson, who earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics from RIT and her master's degree in education at SUNY Brockport, commended the students being recognized.

*"First, I want to say that this night is all about celebrating your success," Johnson, a second year math teacher and co-coordinator of the NHS Capstone graduation program and freshmen mentor program, Link Crew, told students and their guests in the NHS cafeteria.*

*"You are all here because you are successful in the classroom and deserve to be recognized for it. You should be proud of this achievement and continue to strive for it everyday."*



Explaining she'd been invited to share what she thinks success looks like, Johnson shared keys on how to be successful in and outside of school by providing a snapshot of her own experiences.

*"I think of myself as a success," she continued. "I was successful in High School like all of you. I worked hard to achieve good grades while being a three-sport athlete. I participated in many different clubs in high school and made many friends who I am still very close to today. When I went off to college, I continued to work hard to achieve my goals.*

*"I, like many people, had a few setbacks along the way, but I still consider myself a success. Not only because I got a job right out of college. I set a goal very early on in life on becoming a math teacher, I continued to strive for that goal even when I encountered set backs. I was successful because of the friends and family I had supporting me along the way. I chose to not measure success by just receiving good grades. Success is measured by the lifestyle you choose to live.*

Johnson then told students to strive for success outside of academics.

*"It is important to be kind to others," she said. "Be respectful, go above and beyond to help others with their problems. If you can't help them, just listen when they need you to.*

*"Going beyond the classroom will allow you all to find your own journey in life. It is important for you all to see that you are a product of Newark High School. I am a product of Newark High School and I chose a path to come back here to have an impact on student's lives. Eight of my best friends graduated with me in 2009. We are all in different parts of the United States, all on a different path, and I believe we are all being successful.*



*"I hope you all embrace being a part of Newark High School and embrace the quality education you are receiving and have it allow you to set goals and high expectations for creating your own path in life. When we talk about your individual path I want you to remember something. This is YOUR path! This is your chance to choose the path you want to take that will eventually become your lifestyle."*

Then she asked students if they expect to make mistakes and have setbacks along the way.

*"I would be surprised if some of you are answering 'no' to those questions," Johnson continued. "It is not a bad thing to make mistakes. I learned some of the most important lessons in life while I was overcoming obstacles. Mistakes will help you learn and help shape your path in life."*

The math teacher then told students the other important part about creating their path in life is setting goals for themselves.

*"Start setting goals early," she said. "Think about the attending a good college. Maybe think about taking a class that might be out of your comfort zone. Join a new club, attend a new event. Make new friends. Take advantage of the opportunities you have in life and the opportunity to be successful in anything you may choose. We are all products of this community and I hope you all continue to strive to be successful."*



Dinner guests, including Superintendent Matt Cook, Krista Lewis, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Jen Singer, NCSD Director of Pupil Services, Board of Education members Susie Earl and Yvonne MacTaggart, other parents and guests affirmed Johnson's sentiments with hearty applause.

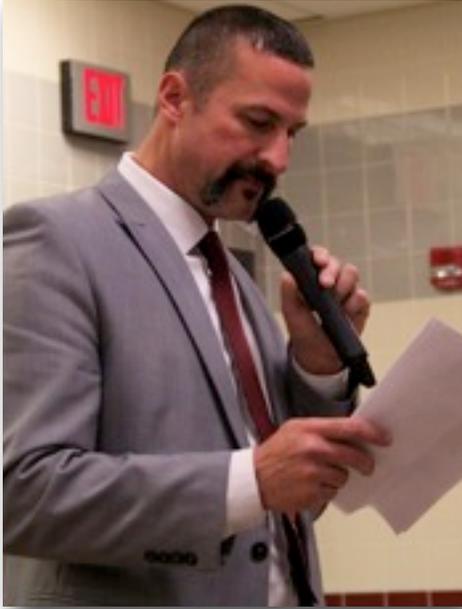
Then NHS principal Tom Roote and Assistant Principal Ryan Wagner presented students with certificates of recognition for their academic achievement. In all, 100 students met the academic requirements for the award, but not all were able to attend.

Class of 2107 students recognized included: Ekaterina Barrett, Dylan Bianchi, Nina Bishop, Ryan Blair, Jillian Blodgett, Forrest Blondell, Evelyn Childs, Jackson Correia, Bandon Custer, Tiffany Gilligan, Joseph Goodman, Alexandra House, Amanda Hutteman, Thomas Jensen, Emily Johnson, Shaniah Jones, Jacob Lindberg, Ian MacTaggart, Emma Meeks, Diego Mendoza-Romero, Zechariah Nower, Kassidy Paddock, Emily Reinardt, Lauren Shroo, Brian Sharp, Carly Shear, Kalista Swan, Katherine Thoms and Ryan Velte.

Class of 2018 students recognized included: Benjamin Allegretti, Olivia Bailey, Hannah Bates, Kendralee Bell, Landon Berrios, Gregory Bremer, Aleah Buckalew, Bridget Camblin, Alejandro Caraballo, Parker Casselman, Nick Cepulo, Madison Chandler and Benjamin Cowles, Preston Hilfiker, Andrea Hoe, Anna Howell, Michael Hutteman, Grace Kreuser, Elliot Kwaitkowski, Isaiah Lyon, Hannah Mateo, Logan Moynihan, Jacob Napoleon, Angie Otterbein, Nathaniel Payag, Sierra Powers, Megan Rodriguez, Sydney Salone, Emily Schultz, Audrey Smith, Jadan Smith, Ladonia Smith, Nicholas Stalker, Lilie Tang, Ashley Watrous, Mackenzie Westcott, Brianna Wilkie, Amanda Williams and Paige Yon.

Class of 2019 students recognized included: Natalie Acquista, Abigail Belliveau, Jasmine Bueso, Megan Bullock, Nichelle Camp, Liam Childs, Caitlin Chopan, Alexander Collom, Emma Correia, Anabel Darling, Madison Dillion, Jayden Durfee, Amanda DuVall, Jacqueline Furfaro, Timothy Huber, Bryson LaBerge, Joseph Malachi, Bailey McCormick, Miranda Meyer, Alberto Morales, Emma Perrone, Connor Robbins, Zachary Rodrick, Talissa Rodriguez-Ramos, Colin Steiner, William VanDusen, Medina VanDuyne, Alexandra Ventura, Chloe Weichbrodt, Madeline Wetmore, Mallory Williams and Dylan Wong.





After the presentation Roote spoke.

*"If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go with others. Late this summer that African Proverb was splashed across the t-shirt of someone I was sitting behind and ever since I viewed it," he said. "I couldn't get it off my mind. In fact, it is inspiring much of my work in the building helping you be connected to your classmates and the educators in front of you every day. Take for example the mural that met you as you walked into school for the start of classes this school year. On it were words of wisdom such as:*

- *A waterfall begins with just a few drops.*
- *Win the day.*
- *Tomorrow is a day with no mistakes in it yet.*
- *Be yourself, everyone else is taken*
- *Be the best version of yourself*
- *You've always had the power my dear, you just had to learn it for yourself*

*"When considering making connections, ask yourself, what can I do to accept others attempts to connect with me and what can I do to get others to accept a connection from me," continued Roote who then shared a family story to illustrate his point.*

*"Consider what you can do as a young person to better connect with those around you," he continued. "Since you are here because of your academic accomplishments, also consider how you can better connect to your studies. I am going to challenge you to leave here today and to consider an area you have little, if any interest. Spend some time working in this area. I, for one, will sink my teeth into politics a bit more. Mr. Wagner, our assistant principal, inspired me to do so when we compared notes for how we enjoy a quiet weekend morning. I said I watch the "Today Show" and he said 'I watch "Meet the Press." I am going to give it a try! "*

*"I will close with one final passage from the mural hung at the start of the school year. The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The meaning of life is to give your gift away. Thank you and enjoy."*

A highlight of fall at NHS, DeGroot thanked everyone involved in the Academic Excellence Awards Dinner.

"This is the eleventh year that the Rewards and Incentives Committee has hosted the Academic Excellence Awards Dinner," she said. "This Committee relies on the generosity of our colleagues at the High School for their donations, time and talent. This year our staff sponsored student dinners, made financial donations and helped decorate. Tonight's dinner will also be served by members of our faculty: Becky Hauf, Barb Mikler-Crandon, Justin Fladd, Will Bean, Elaine Esan, Tammy Garrett, Amy Austin and even your principals!"

She also thanked Food Service Supervisor Michele Backus and Warren Bushart, Director of Food Service, for preparing the meals, and parents, Board of Education members and administrators for attending and for "being here tonight to celebrate all of these wonderful and deserving individuals." She also noted that students who had been recognized for two or more consecutive years at the Academic Excellence Awards dinner also received a winter sports pass that will allow them to attend all winter sporting events for free.

Thanks to Chelsea DeGroot for providing a photo!