

Staff Recognition

Deb Torrison was again asked by the College Board to be a reader for the AP Exams. This is both an honor for Ms. Torrison and the district, plus it gives her valuable insight into how the AP exams are scored which is helpful for us in development of our own AP program. Jean Perkins was informed a few days before break that she will be one of the 20 Golden Apple finalists this year. Again, that is an honor both for her and for the district. Ms. Perkins is an extremely strong teacher and has been a real leader in moving our math program forward.

Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

Our ADA is actually up slightly from last year showing an average of 1622.73 students present in the 2011 school year and in 2012 so far, we have 1624.33 for our estimated best three months of attendance. This should have a slightly positive increase on our bottom line. We haven't really heard anything else on the funding front from the state.

NBHS Principal Selection Process

We had about 25 applicants for the NBHS principal position at this point. We will be conducting the first round of interviews shortly and are still planning to have a final candidate to present to the Board at the February 2013 meeting.

What to Anticipate from the ISBE

Chris Koch, the state superintendent, spoke at a superintendent meeting on Friday. As always, he does appear to really be trying to improve the ISBE and its systems. He made a few comments of which you should be aware. The first is that he did confirm there is a desire in Springfield to further reduce or consolidate transportation funding. If this isn't something you want to see, it will be important to provide regular clear direction to the elected representatives in Springfield. I would anticipate an effort to reduce mandated transportation to a three mile limit instead of the current 1.5 miles. That would have minimal impact on our current transportation routing. I anticipate a potential loss of between a third and a half of our current transportation funding. We may keep more of it, but that would probably be offset by other cuts. Koch further anticipates a stable foundation level, but spoke again to the current proration of general state aide (GSA).

The ISBE is planning to apply for the next round of Race to the Top money. However, the federal government is unhappy Illinois doesn't have a more aggressive timeline for implementation of new evaluation standards. Koch then stated we may have to delay the fall 2012 implementation of new principal evaluations based on whether or not the necessary training can be completed. All superintendents and other evaluators of principals are going to need to complete between four and six days of training between now and August 1, but the provider of the training won't be determined until the end of this month.

Regarding NCLB and AYP, the ISBE's plan is to apply for a growth model plan based on the value table design. So schools would get credit for the additional "values" added to the student and not only raw test score data. Koch appears to want to retain the Work Keys and potentially

add the third portion of the test that allows for “career readiness certification” along with looking at adding additional certification program options for career focused students.

In general, he does not anticipate that this year will be a significant one for new legislation from Springfield.

Governor’s Consolidation Efforts

From the *Chicago Tribune*’s January 7 article on consolidation. It looks less like anything impacting our district will happen.

It looked at a hypothetical consolidation — one that is smaller than Quinn's proposal — and calculated that it could cost state government at least \$3.7 billion over four years. That assumes all of Illinois' individual high school districts and elementary districts are forced to merge into unit districts.

The full cost would be even higher because merging districts are also entitled to financial aid related to the schools' budgets and state aid, according to the report by commission member Linda Riley Mitchell, chief financial officer for the State Board of Education. Mitchell did not have the information needed to estimate those expenses.

The report found that if the state went solely to unit districts that governed both high schools and lower grades, the switch would merge 478 separate districts into just 101. Of those, 10 would have fewer than 1,000 students and 29 would have 10,000 or more.

Switching to unit districts isn't the only way to handle a broad consolidation plan, of course.

Other options include merging all districts below a certain size or perhaps requiring individual schools to consolidate if they're small or outdated. But those approaches would carry large price tags of their own.

A recent change to the ROE review committee has their report due April 1 and not August 1 as originally planned. This will allow for some type of action by the legislature this spring.

Governor’s Pension Efforts

Governor Quinn recently announced he is planning on fixing the pension system this year.

According to the State School News Service - *Quinn announced the formation of a pension reform committee to be chaired by his former chief of staff Jerry Stermer, and he invited the four House and Senate caucus leaders to appoint legislators to participate. House Speaker Michael Madigan quickly chose Rep. Elaine Nekritz (D-Des Plaines) as his representative.*

No one has a good idea what this might mean to schools at this point. However, our new contract will somewhat protect the district’s bottom line if employee obligations increase.

Elementary Report Cards

For the first reporting period in Kindergarten, all those teachers utilized Power School to prepare their report cards. Kathy Gustafson worked many man hours on the preparation of a template that could be used easily by teachers. Kindergarten teachers participated in training before the winter break. The teachers, hands down, felt that this new way was much easier and a time saver and felt the trial was successful. There are still a couple of Power School issues that Kathy is addressing centered around attendance reporting. We will use the kindergarten teachers as our guinea pigs for the rest of the year. All teachers K-4 will be utilizing Power School next year to complete report cards. The Power School report card is also offered in Spanish.

Food Service Audit

The ISBE came back to conduct a food service audit this fall after the poor results from last year's audit. This year's audit was much better. We had only one small issue which is that some of students at Capron were not being properly counted at they went through the lunch line, so the meals served were six more than the number of students counted by their lunch cards. Janice Burmeister worked with the cooks to rearrange the serving line to solve that problem and the state inspector seems happy with her modifications. Overall, this was a much better report than last year.

Other Lunch Information

Our free and reduced lunch participation is up over 125 students from last year for a total of 730 students participating. The daily average for number of meals served is up everywhere except NBHS which is down 25 meals per day and Capron which is down nine meals per day on average. Our enrollment is steady, but the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) is actually up slightly. We have served 88,874 meals on 84 days of school this year. Last year at the end of the calendar year, we had served 79,908 meals on 76 school days. A complete summary is attached.

Math Textbook Selection

All of the K-6 teachers were involved on the December SIP Day with reviewing the potential math series for the elementary schools. After the teachers all completed a review of each series, the Math Committee compiled those results and determined to bring back three series for a more complete review and then to potentially pilot one or more of the series yet this spring. Each of those series was presented to all of the K-6 teachers at the January 13 institute day. The Math Committee will shortly be making a recommendation on what series to pilot and then after that, we will bring that recommendation to the Curriculum Committee. Thanks to Kristi Crawford and Jake Hubert for their work leading the Math Committee.

At the 6-8 level, Lindsay Abbeduto is working with the math teachers to determine the scope of resources that they need in order to properly teach the Common Core in those grades. Some of the resources originally recommended for inclusion in the Middle School were not included in what the teachers received.

Special Education Open House

Kim Moore and the special education staff organized an open house for parents to provide information about other community resources. The Open House is on January 19 from 6:00 to 8:00 at NBHS.

Paid Transportation

To clarify, the original materials presented about paid transportation stated we wouldn't prorate the fees; meaning that if someone rode only two or three days a week, they would still pay full ridership, as they would "take a seat" from someone else.

Some have interpreted that to mean no matter when someone applies to start paid transportation; they would pay for the full year. I just want to make sure the Board understands we are charging new riders at semester, only for the second semester and not the full year fee.

Technology

We have started to have some exploratory discussions looking at a potential 1:1 pilot program for the fall of 2013. This came up through conversations with some staff. A number of students have begun bringing Kindles, Nooks, etc. into school particularly at NBMS. Deb Torrison is developing a program for the wider community on how to use eReaders later this month. Randy Porter is working out the pieces to be able to provide guest access to our wireless network for the workshop.

We were able to upgrade the K-4 links over break, but we have been having some problems with our Internet Service Provider in the development of consistent speed and reliability. We had some routing issues as well which impacted e-mail in both directions (inbound and outbound) last week. Those issues have been solved.

Company of Military Historians

I was alerted in the fall that I had been nominated for a seat on the Board of Governors for the Company of Military Historians. I was informed last week that I won that election. Since I did no campaigning at all, I was a little surprised, as to me; it truly was an honor to be nominated. The Company is a fairly active professional organization of historians, professors, curators, museum directors, retired senior military officers, artists and collectors. Its focus is on the military history of the Americas; both North and South. It sponsors a number of writing awards including one for West Point Cadets and another for the Chilean Military Academy. The term for the Board of Governors is for three years.