

Library Grant

Congratulations to Jane Lenser for receiving a \$5000 grant from the Illinois State Library's "Another Opportunity for Back 2 Books." The funds will be used to support library services under the title of *Connecting through Books, Connecting with Others*. These funds will provide books for all six libraries on the topics of friendship, anti-bullying, compassion, etc., to weave into the Rachel's Challenge project and other district-wide PBIS efforts. North Boone won this competitive grant the previous year as well, even though we were warned the ISL rarely funds organizations two years in a row for their competitive grants.

Thanks to the FFA

The FFA at NBHS provided a teacher appreciation breakfast on the February 14, 2014 in-service day. I believe they still have some bacon left over. It was really nice to see the students come in early on their day off to cook for the teachers.

Principal for the Day

Ken Terrinoni, the Boone County Administrator, was the principal for the day at PGE and NBMS on January 31, 2014. He seemed to have a great day and you can see his video out briefing on our blog. One of the PGE teachers told me what a great idea it was to bring him into the building to show the wider community what is going on in our schools.

Regional Office of Education - Technical Assistance Visit

As mentioned in my last Weekly Update, the ROE visit went extremely well due to the efforts of Kelly Holsker and Dianne Mulligan. The principals, secretaries and other administrators were helpful in gathering all of the necessary supporting documentation. Normally, the ROE will spend two or three days at a district our size, but since Kelly was so organized, they were able to complete their review in about 4 hours. They still have to follow up on their final report. They review health records separately, which was done last week. We haven't received any feedback about that visit yet.

In-Service Day

We offered about 20 instructional sessions for teachers on February 14. They ranged in topics from digital resources for primary students through Mental Health First Aid. The mental health first aid training is an eight hour program that I plan to bring back for administrators and secretaries in the early summer. The evaluations were generally positive, but there are always a few teachers who simply want time to work in their rooms, which isn't the purpose of in-service training days.

Governor's Budget Address

As the Governor is planning to move the budget address to later in March, we will have less information about funding from the state as we develop the 2014-2015 Budget. We have been told, and it has been widely reported in the news, that General State Aid will be prorated at no more than 85% of the total. That is a reduction of at least 4%. That is projected to be about a \$672,000 reduction from what we should

receive under the current foundation level of \$6119 per student. This year under the 89% proration, we received \$544,427 fewer dollars than we should have under the state's own formula. It is unclear if the efforts to revise the state funding system will yield any results in this legislative session.

Potential Poplar Grove Development

I attended the Village of Poplar Grove Planning and Zoning meeting to discuss the special use permit for the mobile home park south of the Post Office. The rezoning was approved, but the special use permit was not. I am not sure what that means for the status of the project at this point.

Boone County Special Education Cooperative

The BCSEC Board will meet again in early March. We haven't heard anything from District 100 about the potential sale of the current building. That appears to be the last issue to address in the dissolution of the district. Melissa Geyman and the special education staff have selected a replacement for the IEP software that had been previously provided through the BCSEC. All of the necessary staff will be trained on Power IEP later this spring.

Foundation Board

The Foundation Board has not had a quorum at its last two meetings. They cancelled this year's A+ Run for education. Dr. Belcastro was the key organizer and split building responsibilities this year made it difficult to manage without an active foundation board. Donna Schultz, the Board president, is speaking to a couple of the members about whether or not they wish to continue serving.

NBHS Grade Distributions for First Semester

One of the data points that I review with the NBHS administrators each semester is the grade distribution information for courses, departments and individual teachers. We have done a good job of working to reduce the failure rates in a number of courses, but there is still room for improvement. We had a couple of odd failure spikes this year that Mr. Hubert is investigating. Overall, we have increased to about a 4% failure rate for first semester up from about a 2% failure rate last year for first semester. Below are the NBHS first semester failure rates for the past five years.

SY 2010	SY 2011	SY 2012	SY2013	SY 2014
8%	6%	4%	2%	4%

NBMS failure rates are still higher than we would like to see. NBMS math courses had a 9% failure rate for first semester. This is still lower than it was in 2010 or 2011 (11% and 12% respectively), but we need to figure out how to better support our struggling students at the middle level. I would venture to propose that our RtI pullouts at NBMS have helped to lower the current failure rates, but we need to do better. Computer courses had higher than anticipated failure rates as well.

Student Arrival at Capron

I visited Capron one morning after the last Board meeting to review the concerns raised by a parent at the January 27 Board meeting. The biggest surprise was how early children were being dropped off. The first children were dropped off at about 7:34, more than 15 minutes before the doors are "supposed" to be open. In total, I counted 12 children who walked to school. Most of those crossed at Wooster and North. The children came in four groups:

a group of four without an adult - early about 7:40
a group of five plus an adult
an adult with two students
an adult with a student

Only the third group, the parent with two children, crossed when there were cars in the immediate vicinity of the intersection, and they looked to be waved across by the driver. Since a crossing guard would not start until 7:45 (that is the current schedule at PGE and the 173/Wooster Intersection), on the day of my visit, no children crossed unaccompanied during that time.

The aide assigned to car duty was present about 7:40 although she is scheduled to be there at 7:45. She remained until about 8:04. Twice she had to address students not moving towards the school as they were interested in throwing snow at the apartments. (These were the two larger groups of students who walked.) Three cars dropped students off after 8:00 a.m. (the time school actually starts) with the last vehicle arriving at 8:06. I did notice a couple drivers using cell phones in the car line, so I will remind our parents that is now against the law.

Dr. Belcastro has a plan to revise the supervision assignments of teachers for the fall, to provide a teacher to be assigned as a crossing guard at the beginning and end of the day starting in the fall.

Reconsideration of Materials

As reported to the Board earlier, a NBMS parent requested that the book *Daughter of Smoke and Bone* by Lani Taylor. In fact, the parent wanted the whole three book series removed based upon a review of the book she found on the Internet and her personal perusal of the first few pages of the book. It is a current library book at NBMS and NBHS. It is an Abe Lincoln Award book for 2014 from the Illinois School Library Media Association. It isn't required reading in any course. Per the district's reconsideration procedure, Jane Lenser gathered a committee of students, NBHS students Allison Baxter and Rachel Abraham (who had both previously read the book), community member Harriet Roll (a former librarian), staff and administrators who were then asked to read the entire book and then reviewed it in the context of the district's selection criteria. Attached is the committee's report as well as the parent's original request. A copy will also be sent to the parent who has the right to appeal her request to the Board.