

School Improvement Day

December 8 was an early release day for school improvement. The principals organized the time in three groups, PK-4, 5-8 & 9-12. Each group spent some time reviewing the new Common Core Standards and then spent some time working on Common Formative Assessments. The staff will be given some additional time on the January 14 Institute Day to complete the initial CFAs for each grade level (K-6) or department (7-12). Teachers have been told the expectation is that the initial CFAs will be in place for the fourth quarter of this year. Attached are the agendas from the SIP day.

Truancy Issues

One of the issues that has come up in my working with the administrative team regarding discipline is the potential need to obtain a truancy ordinance that would allow the BCSD to issue citations to students who are habitual truants. I have contacted the Boone County State's attorney as to whether or not that is a viable option for the county to consider. We are also working on improving the gang related language in the discipline code.

Changes in State Testing

The "new" version of state testing which will replace the ISAT/PSAE will be computer based and may include three formative and one summative testing phase. The new tests currently plan to be inclusive from K-12 and also include a kindergarten readiness component. It is currently planned to begin in the 2013-2014 school year. That is the same basic time frame in which teacher and principal evaluations will need to be encompassing of student achievement.

Federal & State Funding

At a recent meeting with a couple local state legislators, we have been told the situation continues to be rather confused and grim in Springfield. Most best guess approaches at this point are anticipating no additional state revenue for the next five years with flat but sustained support of GSA looking to be the best case scenario. As the EAV of districts decrease over the next few years, many districts are closing in on reaching their maximum tax rate which would further reduce property tax revenue.

Chris Koch recently warned school boards to be careful about giving out any salary increases as the state legislators are claiming if districts are still able to give raises, then they must have enough money and don't need additional state funding. His comments are summarized in an attached article.

Transportation and athletic programming costs are relatively small portions of the district's budget. Transportation is 6.5% and athletics (excluding the transportation portions) are 1.5% of the total budget. Board members have asked for a review of those areas and whether or not there are additional efficiencies that can be realized in those programs as well as looking to examine the ways in which we fund athletic and extracurricular programming. I am asking the principals to gather volunteers from among teachers, coaches and parents to review the issues in each of those areas. I tentatively anticipate reports from those committees to the Board in February.

Federal Mandate for Breakfast Programming

We will be implementing a breakfast program at Capron beginning in January. Currently, it will not be a warm meal program. It will be a grab and go type program for the students. On the consent agenda, you will notice extending the hours of two non-certified employees by fifteen minutes each. This is to facilitate the breakfast program. We will review how this program is working and will make recommendations as to how to continue for the fall later in the year.

Playground Upgrades

Manchester and Poplar Grove are working on completing the bid process for expansion of their playground equipment. The scope of the work at Manchester will be about \$15,000 and the Poplar Grove work is approximately \$25,000. Both PTOs are working with the same company, so we should save some dollars by bidding the projects together. We hope to bring the bids to the January meeting to approve.

Strategic Planning

Attached are the results from the Strategic Planning survey that the Board members and administrators were asked to fill out. I would be interested in any thoughts Board members have after reviewing the results.

Student Handbooks

One issue that the administrators are working on is combining the current three separate discipline codes into a single code. That makes more sense for a unit district and will create a more progressive discipline environment. The discipline committee will meet in January.

Dental Services

Barb Sager has arranged for a volunteer dentist to visit our schools. The Care Mobil Dentist, Dr. Jason Grinter, will be available for exam/cleaning/sealants and even restorative care if needed. He will be at NBUE January 26th and Capron February 2nd. I have had experience with similar programs in the past and their schedules are usually filled quickly.

Alliance Legislative Report

Attached is the most recent Alliance Legislative Report. The January session of the 96th General Assembly is planned to be longer than usual and may include many items acted on quickly like the TRS reforms that took place last spring.

Regional Office Information

The ROE will be coming to conduct a compliance visit in February 2011. The exact date has yet to be determined. Also included from the ROE are summaries of area district enrollments and the PTELL CPI information. We are anticipating a CPI for 2010 of somewhere in the range of 1.2 to 1.6%.

American Library Association Conference

I will be presenting an all day leadership workshop at the ALA Midwinter Conference in San Diego on January 7. I will be able to attend the rest of the conference, Jan. 8-10, at no cost to the district. ALA is also covering my travel arrangements.