

"From the Marvin" Leidal Education Center

Issue 3

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207 Main Ave W
West Fargo, ND
701-356-2000



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News & Notes from Business Manager Joe Sykora

District enrollment has increased by 900 students over the past three years. This trend is expected to continue. Additional schools in the future are needed to prepare for the expected growth and for managing the numbers that currently exist at the middle school and high school. Without additional schools, an alternative for the district is to have higher average class size across the district. We believe our current class sizes are a benefit for our students and staff.

Therefore, the School Board set a special election for Tuesday, June 9, 2009 for the patrons of West Fargo Public Schools. The ballot question will ask for approving the selling of up to \$65 million in bonds for the following school facility projects: (1)

a second 9-12 high school, (2) a new 1-5 elementary school, (3) renovations to the existing high school, (4) expansion of the Sheyenne 9th Grade center for a second 6-8 middle school, (5) an addition to Horace Elementary School and (6) improvements to physical education and co-curricular fields.

A 60 percent YES vote on June 9, 2009 is needed in order for the school district to move forward with these projects. What is the expected cost to the tax payer? The legislature is currently reviewing Governor Hoeven's proposal for property tax relief. The legislative proposal is to reduce the mill levy of school districts (Fargo and West Fargo Schools) by a minimum of 75



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News & Notes...Cont'd from Page 1

mills. It is estimated that it will take 33 mills per year over 20 years to retire the debt of new bonds. Overall, the taxpayer will see a reduction in the amount of property taxes paid to the school district if the property tax relief bill passes the legislature.

One might say "the school district can build these new schools along with proposed renovations and additions, and I still get property tax relief at the same time," the timing seems perfect! Take some time to attend community forums to learn more about the proposed school projects.

Feel free to contact me via e-mail at jsykora@west-fargo.k12.nd.us or by phone at 356-2002 for more information or to ask questions.

Updates from Human Resources Director Robin Hill

We have now completed our first year on our new payroll system. We have been very pleased so far with the functionality of the system, and we are now ready to move on to phase two of our implementation. We will be opening an "Employee Information Portal" this spring. As we bring different features into the portal, employees will be able to interact with the system to

access various information points. The first feature we will introduce is online access to payroll information. Instead of receiving a paper "pay stub" on payday, you will be able to log in to the system and access your payroll information online, from anywhere you have internet access. We will be piloting this system beginning in May in select locations and will be able to in-

troduce this option district-wide in the fall of 2009. Over time, we will add other features to the portal, allowing employees to make demographic changes, sign up for benefits, make benefit changes, etc. We will contact you with more information and a short introductory session as the new features become available.

Tidbits from Knowledge Management Director Holly Budzinski

Spring MAP Assessments

The spring MAP assessment is upon us. The spring testing window for MAP will open April 14th and close May 15th. Each school sets its own schedule within the window. Here are a few reminders to promote a smooth testing season!

Proctors:

- ◆ The network login for the spring season has been sent to principals
- ◆ Testtaker logins are the same as they were in Fall and Winter and are unique for each school
- ◆ Make sure each student is taking the correct assess-

ment! It is especially important for the Primary MAP test as it is easy for students to accidentally duplicate a portion of a test.

- ◆ Ctrl + Shift + P to pause, terminate, or restart a test
- ◆ Ctrl + Shift + K to enable the Continue button for MAP Primary

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From the Keyboard of Technology Director Rob Kaspari

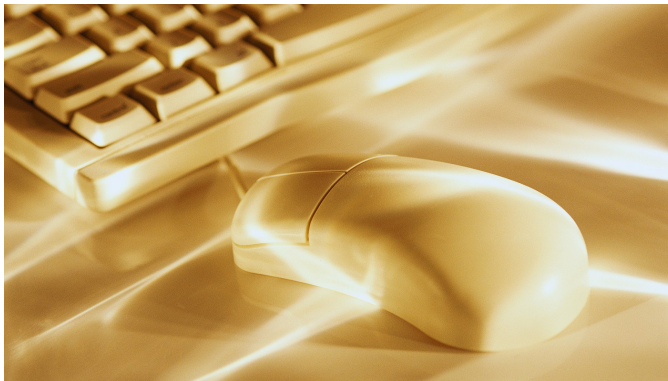
We have all been there. You turn your computer on and you find that you cannot connect to the wireless network, you have checked everything over and it still does not work. It is frustrating and what do you do now?

You press the button on your school desk phone that takes you to your voicemail and you get the message that

your voice mailbox has been locked for security reasons and you now need to contact your administrator. Administrator? Does that mean the building principal? What do you do next? The members of the technology department understand these situations and we are here to do our job of supporting your teaching and the learning of our students.

Technology has become such an important and integral part of our lives it is really hard to imagine life without it. It really does make our lives much more interesting and productive. Many of us that have been around teaching for awhile remember the first Apple 2e's when they

first arrived here! Few of us probably saw the impact technology would ultimately have. It goes without saying that technology has become a very big part of what we do as educators.



So, to answer the question about what you do when you have trouble with your voice mail, computer or software; please send in a technology request. It really helps if you put as much detail as possible into the "description" part of the request. After you submit it, the tech request is evaluated and assigned to the member of the technology department that has the expertise to fix the problem or who works in the particular school building. Many, if not most, requests for service are completed the same day we receive them. The technology request system puts order to an otherwise random way of taking care of problems. This is the quickest and best way

we can get the problem resolved. We also have the ability to track the problem and escalate it if necessary. This system helps us identify problems that may be occurring with hardware or software across the district. Otherwise, we may not recognize situations as quickly. We appreciate your help with this.

In sheer numbers alone, the technology department "closed" 1363 requests for service in August of 2008 and 429 in February of 2009. The other months fell somewhere in between. Thank you for all you do for our students.

File space on our servers is filling up fast. Listen to Rob Kaspari's podcast by selecting the button below.

DANGER!

Ponderings from Special Education Director Mari Bell

Special education programs are growing at a rate that mirrors our student enrollment in West Fargo Schools. Our pre-school program has grown to an all time high of 90 students, and we will continue to add children with identified disabilities into May.

With the advent of our Response to Intervention – Tiered intervention model, we have been successful in providing targeted services in the area of literacy at the kindergarten and first grade levels in our elementary schools, thus preventing early reading failure. This is a priority area for special education, as reading disabilities comprise a large portion of students at risk and require early specialized instruction. Early Intervening funds from our federal grants support these efforts and will be continuing and expanding with the Stimulus dollars that our district will receive through the American Recovery and Rejuvenation Act of 2009.

After participating in the Transition Outcomes Project (TOPS), we have made great strides in preparation and planning for successful post

secondary outcomes for our students upon completion of their education in our school system. Transition planning for our secondary students with disabilities requires involvement with families, community agencies, colleges and the students themselves. In a review of student files to assess the indicators that reflect best practices for



predicting these outcomes, our district achieved 100% compliance. This is due to the teamwork of our staff, families and the community. A follow-up study of our 2008 graduates revealed that all are either employed or pursuing post secondary education.

We are excited about a new partnership with Special Olympics North Dakota (SOND). West Fargo Special Education Unit was selected as a pilot site to be a model for school based programs for Project Unify for the state of

North Dakota. Project Unify promotes inclusion of school aged students with intellectual disabilities and fosters acceptance of students among their peers. As part of the task force, we are participating

"...our district achieved 100% compliance."

in the development of this pilot program and assisting SOND with strategies and ways to replicate a school based program in schools throughout the state. "Be a Fan" and the "R" Word Campaign are initiatives that will be promoted in our district in collaboration with Special Olympics North Dakota.

The week of April 14-17th the **Spread the Word to End the Word** campaign was initiated in West Fargo Schools. The goal of this campaign was the elimination of the "R" word, "retard." Students and staff participated in awareness activities and made pledges to end the use of this word in a derogatory or unacceptable manner.

Developments from Assistant Superintendent Louise Dardis

As staff in school buildings look toward the end of the 2008-09 school year, district office staff is fixated on planning for the 2009-10 school year. At times it is difficult to have my feet in two camps – working in the current school year while projecting all manner of planning for the next school year. In actuality, now is an opportune time to inform you of some of the projected plans for summer 2009 and the 2009-10 school year.

District office is generating ideas on the use of *The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* stimulus dollars to address needs within the district. The dollars are geared toward Title I and special education, but we are waiting (im)patiently for federal guidelines to determine how the 'one-time' funds may be used effectively in our district. The plan will be contingent upon the strings attached and the mandated expenditure guidelines.

The content standards developed over several years by WFPS staff and posted on the district website will be replaced this summer by links to the North Dakota Content Standards. WFPS developed

local standards beyond those of the state standards in the past. Currently, the state standards are on a cycle of review and revision, and surpass our local standards, thus it is logical to post the most recent and complete standards on our website for your use.

Summer projects will predominantly be limited to district-wide writing of content curriculum and accompanying pacing guides/instructional calendars, and those grade levels or courses that have new textbooks. Teacher input is crucial, so please watch for emails that will provide information and request teacher involvement.

As an aligned K-12 core content curriculum is defined over the next three years and pacing guides/instructional calendars developed, the next natural step is the use benchmark assessments. Standardized benchmark assessments will provide the district a highly defined manner to measure student growth and skill attainment, which will aid classroom teachers in the use of data to drive instruction to meet the needs of all

students. This, too, will require teacher input. Watch for further information as we move forward.

Lastly, the NCA/AdvancEd Team Visit will be rescheduled for early fall 2009. School buildings worked diligently with the school improvement process as each prepared for the AdvanceEd Visitation Team, but all plans and preparation will be used next fall. Every attempt will be made to schedule an early fall school visit in order that the data used in the reports will remain current and applicable.

Lastly, I must express how proud I am of WFPS staff and students for all the work each contributed to the flood relief efforts. As I am out and about, the general public positively responds with kudos to WFPS for all the work and effort with the flood fight. I take my hat off to you!!!

Tidbits...Cont'd from Page 2

- ◆ Monitor students continuously during testing
- ◆ Contact Holly Budzinski (x1022) or Kent Monilaws (x1035) with any issues that arise

Teachers:

- ◆ Prepare students for MAP testing by discussing:
 - ◆ The purpose of MAP testing as a tool to measure each student's instructional level.
 - ◆ The MAP system builds a unique test for each student.
 - ◆ Students are not expected

to know the answer to every question.

- ◆ Students cannot skip items, and they cannot go back.
- ◆ Students may change an answer as many times as they like, but once they have clicked **GoOn** or pressed the **Enter** key, the answer cannot be changed.
- ◆ The tests are not timed, but students should work productively.
- ◆ Students should use their best test-taking skills.
- ◆ Consider setting individ-

ual goals with students for their scores on the MAP test

- ◆ If you are not the proctor, work with the proctor to assist with seating charts, providing lists of modifications, and making sure the testing experience is a positive one for students
- ◆ Access teacher reports 24 hours after students test through <https://reports.nwea.org>
- ◆ Testing data will be uploaded into Viewpoint within one week after the testing window closes for all

From the Pen of Superintendent Dr. Dana Diesel Wallace

As you know, our middle school enrollment has grown quite rapidly and we find ourselves in need of more middle school space just five years after the opening of CMS. CMS works best with 1,200-1,300 students. This year we have 1,520 middle school students and we project we will have just over 1,600 next fall. Thus we will be moving one team from each grade level to new environs next year.

Teams at the 6th and 7th grade will move to the Lodoen building, in the spaces currently occupied by Community High School and the Newcomer

Center. CHS will return to the east side of the LEC, which many of you know as the training rooms, and which still others know, was originally built and did serve as home to CHS for a number of years. The Newcomer Center will move to Westside Elementary. A team of 8th grade students will find their new home at Sheyenne Ninth Grade Center.

The students at Lodoen will be immersed in their studies through the lens of STEM – science, technology, engineering and math. Instead of attacking each subject as a

separate discipline, STEM is taught as a “metadiscipline,” teaching the disciplines as they function in the natural world and engaging students in inquiry to solve problems of practice as they present themselves in reality. Multiple orientation nights were held at the middle school over the past few weeks to present STEM to parents and students. These presentations have yielded an energetic group of 6th and 7th graders who have signed on to spend at least the next two years at Lodoen with a STEM curriculum.

From the Pen...Cont'd from Page 6

Some of our current middle and elementary school teachers have expressed interest in teaching STEM at Lodoen and an able leader has been hired to work with them as they create new curriculum. That leader, Tabatha Joyce, currently a 5th grade teacher at Westside Elementary School, has hit the ground running

and is eager to begin the exciting work that lies ahead.

The group of professionals that work at Lodoen will be trailblazers in our district, creating curriculum, engaging students in STEM, building partnerships within our community to support STEM, and taking on new ways of teaching and learning for the

development of 21st century skills.

