

Superintendent's Update
For the period: August 10, 2016 through September 13, 2016

Maintaining an Instructional Focus

- During our 2016-17 School Year “Kick Off” session on August 25th, we communicated our expectations for the upcoming school year in terms of continuing our focus on authentic literacy as well as a special push in the area of mathematics. We emphasized the role that family and community can play in supporting our efforts to provide the best possible learning experiences for our children. To that end, we have begun a new round of home visits during which we will stress the importance of literacy in the home. We will remind parents and grandparents of the positive impact that taking a few minutes each day to ask their students what they learned that day at school and to set aside some time every evening to turn off the TV (and other devices) and spend time reading with the children or listening to them read.
- We are planning to purchase books that we will deliver to the families during our home visits. We will not have enough funds to provide books every visit, so we will focus on those students with the greatest identified needs.

Construction Progress

- Construction on the vocational technical building at the high school, the wrestling area, and the new locker room facilities continues. We are expecting to be able to “accept” the new facilities at BHS before our next board regular board meeting.
- The start up for the new BES boiler system is scheduled for September 20th. Following the start up, they go through a testing and balancing as well as calibrating the thermostats.
- William Buffalo Hide remodel project is scheduled to be complete by mid-September.
- The K-3 playground project Phase One should be completed by early October.
- The next Facilities Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 15th at 5:00 pm.

MQEC Update

- On August 25th, the Montana Supreme Court responded to MQEC’s Petition for Writ of Supervisory Control. Per the attached document, the Court issued two orders:
 - Interested parties must respond to our petition within 30 days (by September 24, 2016), and
 - Proceedings in Judge Ortley’s court on the Espinoza case are stayed pending resolution of our Petition.
- MQEC attorneys Jonathan McDonald and Karl Englund provided additional detail on ‘interested parties’:
 - *Any party can respond. For example, the department of revenue may respond to say “we agree with the part about not getting to do any discovery.” It places the Institute for Justice in an odd position, where they have to say “we didn’t oppose when they timely moved ... but we do now.”*
 - *So, anyone can file a response, but the Judge is going to need to do something here because it’s his “discretionary” decision we’ve challenged.*

Negotiations

- The Union negotiations team has requested that our negotiations process move into mediation. At the August 29th meeting, the Union submitted a revised proposal that on the one hand reduced their demands relative to the percentage increase in salary for each year of the agreement, but on the other hand increased the base hourly pay of the more experienced workers. The net effect of the revised proposal is that the Union is asking for what amounts to a 19.31% increase over the three years of agreement at a cost in additional dollars to the district of over \$1.8 million. This compares to the amounts agreed to by the teacher's union of 9.39% over the three years at a cost of around \$1.3 million.
- The classified employee union's proposal included leaving the current contract language in place relative to our insurance program. The current insurance program costs the school district approximately \$4.3 million per year and simply is not sustainable for the future. Our intent has been to provide enough of a salary increase so that no employee would lose income as the district sets a cap on its insurance contribution at \$950 per month for all employees. Capping the insurance contribution at \$950 would mean that the employees would have to contribute \$144 per month for health insurance coverage (currently for the entire family or single employee).
- At our last mediation meeting, the administration submitted a revised proposal that included among other factors the same salary increases that we had proposed on July 6th. This proposal contained enough of an increase to offset the \$144 per month and to take the difference in the cost of covering the employee only and the proposed cap of \$950 per month and add that amount to wages for 2016-17 plus steps. This would likely be about \$200 - \$300 per month.

Upcoming Activities

- Mr. Rouse will be attending the MASS and MQEC meetings in Bozeman on September 19 -20 and he will be travelling with the board to Washington, D.C. on September 22-28.