

**4/25/14**

**Greetings Governing Board Members:**

Here is my weekly update to try to keep you informed of district happenings...

Congratulations to **Eric Banuelos** for being selected as **Yavapai County's First Year Teacher of the Year!** And, congratulations to **James Ball** for being selected as **runner up** for **Yavapai County's High School Teacher of the Year!**

**VVREO Education Forum:** **Dave Lykins** (Sedona JUSD Superintendent) and I represented **Verde Valley districts** at the **Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization's Education Forum** earlier this week. There was a presentation from ASU's **Morrison Institute** and the **AZ Commerce Authority** on the state of **education and workforce development in AZ**, followed by a panel discussion and then Q&A's. The business leaders promoted the need for more vocational programs rather than just college preparation.

**Technology Update:** Now that the **wi-fi** project is nearly finished, with **wi-fi in all classrooms**, our **IT staff is focusing on software**. We are moving to a **new licensing program with Microsoft** that will **save us money and expand access**. Our email exchange server will move to the **cloud** and **students and staff** will have expanded access to **MS Office** programs. **Students** will be able to save their work and access files from any location with internet access. They will also be able to download Office onto up to 5 devices. We are preparing for full implementation with the start of the school year.

**Land:** After our meeting earlier this week, I have contacted **Yavapai College** and the **AZ Winegrowers Association** about possibly leasing our land for vineyards. I will keep you informed of the response(s) I receive. **Kirk** is researching the past plans for **road realignment** and **SFB** recommendations.

**Chinese Administrator Exchange:** Thank you for supporting my participation in the **Chinese Administrator Exchange program**. As noted in the agenda item, participation means we will **host a Chinese school administrator** for a week in **November** (he/she will shadow me) and then I will **shadow a Chinese school administrator** in **March** of 2015. There will be **no direct cost to the District** (I will pay for the expenses personally). I believe this will be mutually beneficial and will hopefully allow us to develop a partnership for ongoing collaboration across the Pacific.

**Capital Needs for Override:** **Kirk** and I will be presenting **information** about the possible **capital override** to **staff** and to the **Site Council** within the next few weeks and will **solicit input** to develop a **prioritized list of capital needs**. We will report the findings at the **May** meeting, along with an action item for you to consider a call for the election.

**Northern AZ Watercolor Society Art Show:** Our students performed very well at this competitive art show, placing in the top 3 in every category! Our students swept the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Utilitarian Ceramics and Christina Bourne was awarded a \$750 scholarship.

**VV Joint Board Meeting:** Many thanks to Brenda and Anthony for participating in the Verde Valley joint board meeting. It was indeed unique to have seven governing boards together! If you would like further information about topics discussed, please contact me so we can chat – or I can add an informational item to our May meeting agenda. I would like your feedback on a couple of topics – mainly your support (or not) for empowering the superintendents to try to develop a regional school calendar and your thoughts about hiring a lobbyist for Verde Valley and/or Yavapai County school districts.

**CMS Track Meet:** On Thursday evening, we hosted a track meet for Cottonwood Middle School. The meet went well and parents/staff were appreciative of the great facilities and the ability to host the meet here. CMS did charge for admission and a few parents were upset with this. There was some misinformation that we charged for the admission or that it was needed to pay us for use of the facility. We did not charge COCSD and in fact we incurred expenses with set up, clean up, and lighting. Our students also helped run the meet.

**ASBAIT Insurance Premiums:** We are quite pleased that our insurance premiums reflect a very modest increase. While the District will still be paying an amount much higher than the state average (\$6480 vs. \$5100), the increase is well below what we anticipated. My colleagues in Sedona and COCSD are struggling to fund premium increases that are close to 10%. This is good news as it will allow us to fund salary advancements for a handful of teachers who earned professional growth stipends and increases, without making cuts elsewhere in the budget. One other noteworthy change is the collection of premiums will be over 20 pays instead of 18, which may help employees with budgeting (lower deductions spread of more pay periods).

**Proficiency-Based Learning:** A former colleague of mine shared a link to an interesting newscast about a high school in Vermont that is implementing proficiency-based learning (click link below for details). The teacher featured, Garrett MacCurtain, used to teach at my school when I was a principal in VT). In the beginning of the newscast, they showed information about the school. They have almost exactly the same number of students as Mingus (1267). Just the school – not including their district offices – has 240 employees (vs. our 108) and has an annual budget of \$21.1 million (vs. our \$6.9 million, including district office). Vermont is near the top in educational spending and AZ is at the bottom, so you are seeing the two extremes. I can only imagine what we could do if we tripled our funding... <http://www.wcax.com/story/25300307/vt-moves-toward-proficiency-based-learning>

**Instructional Coaching:** In light of challenges with the current instructional coaching model (6 teachers paid stipends to coach during the preps) and the reductions in Title I and II funding (due to federal sequestration and AZ's allocation), we are consolidating the stipends to have

**one coach** who teaches 3 periods and coaches 3 periods per day. We think this will be **more effective**, although ideally we would like the coach to be full-time.

**City Council Recognition:** One of our students, **Lucas Hamilton** (a junior this year), is going to be presented an **award** by the **Cottonwood City Council** for his volunteer work on the **Verde Valley SciTech Festival website** ([www.vvscitech.org](http://www.vvscitech.org)). As you may know, **Lucas** shadowed **Dennis Zimmer** last summer and did such a great job that we have hired him for part-time assistance in IT. **Lucas** gladly accepted this request and has done a great job with the website. **Lucas** will be recognized on **May 6<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM**.

Please let me know if you have any questions/concerns, but please **do not reply to all**. Have a great weekend!

#### **Upcoming Events:**

- **Scholarship & Academic Honors Night:** May 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 PM in the Auditorium
- **Last Day of School:** May 22<sup>nd</sup>
- **Graduation:** May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 PM on the Football Field
- **Memorial Day:** May 26<sup>th</sup> – District Closed
- **Regular Board Meeting:** May 27<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM in the MUHS Cafeteria