



# Madrona Elementary School

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Dear Mr. Kantola and Board Members,

I am writing to fill you in on our progress at Madrona and Jerome Prairie Schools. I feel, as a principal, I am beginning to find more productive ways to serve my two schools. It remains difficult, but I think I am doing a better job in serving students, staff and the school community. There are still times when things snowball a bit and it doesn't go as smoothly as I would like, but I am getting strong support from the directors and the superintendent to help me at those times. The two school communities are beginning to realize this isn't an ideal situation, but we all remain as focused on making things as good as possible for our students. I am learning to focus on what I can do for my students rather than on what I can't! That was an important step for me.

Our teachers are adjusting to bigger class sizes with great attitudes. We are pulling together to assist each other in finding new and creative ways to help our kids succeed and to share the responsibilities of running our schools. I have nothing but praise for all of my staff members at both schools. Together in our two schools we represent 77 committed, caring people who are dedicated to doing the best we can to make the learning years we have with our kids important and as rich as we can manage. Our school communities are helping with whatever means they have, too.

Our PTO's have had jog a thons, garage sales and magazine sales already at our schools in an attempt to get funds to support classroom teacher needs, to provide funds for field trip transportation, assemblies, computer programs, etc. They are wonderful parents who have vision and the determination to follow through with fund raising.

I am proud to say that through careful planning and saving, I am able to purchase 10 new computers and got two free for Jerome Prairie's computer lab. We currently have many computers that are around 10 years old. They often fail and cannot successfully run our most important program updates. It is my hope that I will be able to finish replacing all of the old computers within another year. We also started a SMART program this year at Jerome Prairie. This is a program that helps support Kindergarten and first grade students who struggle with beginning reading skills. We have not had SMART at Jerome Prairie for about five years.

Our Life Skills program continues to grow. We are now anticipating our 30<sup>th</sup> student in the next few weeks. I greatly appreciate that the board understands the importance of mainstreaming those students within the regular classes and other settings in our school. This is both the law and what is best for all of our kids. It does take a tremendous amount of planning and coordination between our special needs staff and our regular ed. classroom teachers to make this a good educational experience for everyone. Keeping those classes just a bit smaller than other schools is appropriate in this very unusual setting. Our program has gone from having only nine students just a few years ago to the size it is now. Nearly every regular education room has one or more kiddos coming to their classroom on a regular basis now. In some cases we have as many as three students assigned to a regular ed classroom. That is what makes Madrona different from all of the other elementary schools in the district.

As always, I look forward to any opportunity to have board members visit my schools. Seeing what our classrooms look like, listening to our teachers and knowing a bit about each setting could be very valuable information for you. Please call anytime and set up a time to visit if you wish. Your presence will also be valued by our staff members and parents who volunteer. Consider yourselves invited anytime! Thanks again for all you do to help us do this most important work of educating our precious students! Your many hours of time is recognized and appreciated!

Lise Van Brunt, Principal, Jerome Prairie and Madrona Elementary