

August Supt. Message Newspaper

Welcome to August, the best time of the summer. With a summer vacation filled with fireflies, thunderstorms, and plenty of mosquitos in Northern Minnesota, is a joy to be home in the Northwest and Eatonville school district. As we have time in the summer to reflect on the previous schools year and to plan and anticipate the new school year, I find myself wanting to discuss the successes with our community and setting the stage for the year to come. Let me begin by saying that I am extremely proud to be the leader of Eatonville Schools, and consider it a privilege and a responsibility. The task of leading a staff of 120 teachers, a student body of 1850 curious and growing children, providing guidance and voice to political leaders in the state, and maintaining a strong fiscal position remains a job that keeps me quite aware of the awesome leadership role I serve. I take this responsibility and position seriously as I know that Eatonville School District is a superior school district in academics and opportunities for children of all ages.

Last year, we implemented several important initiatives and programs:

All Day Kindergarten for all; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics at Columbia Crest STEM Academy K-8; Robotics in the Middle School and Elementary schools; Enhanced Career and Tech (Career Technology Education) offerings in the High School.; Approved 4 yr. Levy for Maintenance and Operations (Thank you so much Voters!!); Field Trips for all Elementary and Middle School; and much more.

As this new school year nears, we have been working diligently to provide additional supports and opportunities for children. The elementary schools will be piloting a writing program to align with their excellent reading / literacy instruction. Students will have increased opportunity to engage in computers as many additional tablets and computers have been purchased this summer.

In the secondary schools, there are several additions. At Eatonville Middle

School one addition will be the program AVID. Achievement via Individual Determination (AVID) is sponsored by the College Board and will be an additional option for students. This highly regarded program prepares students for success in high school, college, and a career, especially students traditionally underrepresented in higher education. AVID develops students' critical thinking, literacy, and math skills across all content areas throughout the entire campus, in what is called School wide AVID. The program AVID includes opportunities:

Teaches skills and behaviors for academic success

Provides intensive support with tutorials and strong student/teacher relationships

Creates a positive peer group for students

Develops a sense of hope for personal achievement gained through hard work and determination

As a result, policymakers and educators now consider AVID's mission to be an essential strategy for closing the achievement gap, making college access and success available to all students.

In addition Eatonville Middle School and Eatonville High School will be piloting a new math curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The previous math curriculum was not aligned. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to work alongside math studio instructors to increase our teachers' knowledge for increased student achievement. We know that all students must have the opportunity and support to learn rich mathematics that fosters meaning making, empowers decision making, and critiques, challenges and transforms their understanding of mathematics. As we know that Algebra is a gateway or gatekeeper in school, we will be working to support all children in their mathematical understanding. The math teachers are working together in a 6-12 cohort to ensure their student's success. They are a fantastic group of educators and are skilled, we are fortunate to have such a cohort.

Two Eatonville teachers have been hired part time to become instructional coaches rather than filling the Director of Curriculum position at the District Office. These coaches will serve to provide Professional Development,

Curriculum support and will be embedded in the buildings to work hand in hand with teachers. The IC model is best practice for schools involved in improving student achievement. Coaching aligns with our focal areas for system wide school improvement: district redesign, leadership, opportunity and accountability, and community-centered education reform. Indeed, effective coaching incorporates an array of interrelated approaches that is strongly advocated by research that promotes coherence, focus, and alignment at multiple levels of a school system:

- Investment in human capital. Effective coaches and coaching structures build instructional and leadership capacity by applying what is known about adult learning and change theory.
- Sustainability. Coaching supports the systemic improvement efforts of school communities that push beyond individual teacher behavior or even the work of an individual school.
- Equity and internal accountability. Coaching holds the potential to address inequities in opportunities for teacher and student learning by providing differentiated, targeted supports. The structures and culture that well-implemented coaching models promote can increase collective responsibility throughout a school system for students and their learning.
- Connecting school and district. In cases where coaches are effective liaisons between school practice and district initiatives, emerging evidence shows that they can facilitate professional learning that supports system wide initiatives around Literacy and Mathematics.

Enrichment Opportunities: We are working hard to fund an after school bussing opportunity for all children in Eatonville. We know that studies show that students who engage in after school activities such as Science, Chess, Knowledge Bowl, Drama/Plays; Computers; Robotics as well as Sport and Clubs do better in school, have better self-worth and learn intrinsic character qualities such as Integrity, Perseverance and Teamwork. Engaged children are happier, healthier and better in school as they are a part of something larger than themselves. We will be developing the after school offerings once school starts so please be looking for the information soon.

As the Center of Educational Research Five Dimensions of Teaching and learning (CEL 5D) continues to be our instructional framework, all of our teachers have had multiple opportunities to work hard to understand all of the components. Frameworks allow teachers to have a specific understanding regarding how and what quality teaching looks and sounds like in the classroom. The art of the teacher and their professional practice adds dimension and culture to the classroom. The CEL 5D allows Eatonville schools to be clear about what elements are imperative for students to understand in each classroom.

Lastly, this is our second year providing all-day Kindergarten for all children in Eatonville. Our Kindergarteners first day is September 8 in order for our teachers to meet with parents before school starts. Studies are clear that when students get equitable access to early learning, they experience increased success in school. We have made a purposeful decision to fund this program, as this is our belief that that all children should have access as early as possible to excellent teachers and programs. We have seen incredible gains academically and socially in our all-day Kindergarten students and know that this was a good decision for all.

This year, our central theme is

Eatonville Strong: Strong Schools=Strong Community The next 100 years: To the Top: Working for all Students

We will be focused on meeting the needs of your child. We welcome your children back with excitement and a sense of purpose.

Below are some helpful tips from leading researchers to ensure a positive beginning of school.

1 Make a classroom visit before school starts and meet with the teacher if possible. If your school has a before school event, consider attending as a family.

2 Help your child find his or her locker and walk through what a daily room change will be for your child.

- 3 Get children of all ages into a school sleep schedule with the same bedtime every night.
- 4 Establish or re-establish a routine for bathing, breakfast, lunch, snacks, etc.
- 5 Parents also need to get back into the school routine state of mind.
- 6 Find a designated place in the home for school items.
- 7 Realize a child being nervous about school is normal.
- 8 Read school readiness books to young children in preparation for school. Some good examples are “Berenstain Bears Go Back to School,” “Maisy Goes to School,” “The Kissing Hand” and “Llama, Llama Misses Mama.”
- 9 Keep a positive perspective about school and encourage the child.
- 10 Remind children that they will get to see their friends again, even if they are not in the same classroom.
- 11 Realize that changes in teachers, classrooms, schools or school districts can also create a big adjustment for the students.
- 12 Let the teacher and school officials know if the child has any special needs, such as medication that needs to be administered by the nurse, or check-ins with the guidance counselor.
- 13 Notify the teacher of any major life changes that occurred during the summer, such as divorce or a death in the family.
- 14 Watch for a few stomachaches or headaches in the first week, which is normal. If it continues, consult a professional to find the source of the problem — it may be anxiety or a medical condition.
- 15 Build bridges to communicate with teachers through phone calls or email. Email is a quick way to give an update regarding any issue.
- 16 If you drive your child to school, utilize that time as a positive, relationship-building time with your child.

17 Develop a central calendar for all school-related activities, late starts, early closings and any change in school events.

18 Start a fun new school tradition, such as having a special breakfast for the first day, taking a yearly photo or bringing a surprise to their new teacher.

Eatonville schools have long had a tradition of excellence, caring, and innovation. You see this belief reflected in the school buildings, on the walls and at every well attended school event. We value the community and nurture each child to become an active, knowledgeable and caring young adult ready for the future with 21st Century skills.

Join us this year as we open our schools with a renewed commitment to excellence.

Together we commit to inspiring lifelong learners to create a better future!

Eatonville Strong 2014-15!!

Sincerely,

Superintendent Krestin Bahr