

Dear Parents,

I hope all of our families in District 145 had a safe and peaceful summer break. I know the summers can be a busy time with vacations, activities, and family responsibilities. I hope all of you had the opportunity to spend time with family and friends and take advantage of what summer break has to offer.

I would like to take this opportunity to update you on a number of items taking place in our district.

- As you are aware our referendum failed last April. At the time, our school district was dealing with a deficit of approximately 2.2 million dollars. The district decided to confront the issue on multiple fronts. First, increase our revenue with a \$.55 cent increase, which would generate an additional 1.4 million dollars. Second, close our deficit between \$750,000 and \$1,000,000 through expenditure cuts and revenue opportunities. Third, sponsor legislation that will prevent any school district from losing state revenue when local revenue is increased. I am happy to say the district accomplished two of the three objectives proposed during the referendum campaign.
 - While the referendum failed last spring, our district has closed the deficit approximately \$1,000,000 through staff cuts, program changes, and the district's participation in the federal lunch program. Our district has worked hard to keep the impact the expenditure cuts will have on our children to a minimum.
 - The district was also successful with legislation that will not penalize our homeowners. Senate Bill 2051 insures school districts will not lose any state aid (revenue) if local funds increase. The vote on Senate Bill 2051 passed the Senate 56 – 0 and the House 104 – 1. The bill is waiting for the Governor's signature. The importance of this bill cannot be minimized. This bill guarantees the state's obligation to maintain the same level of state aid regardless of any local fund increases.
 - Expenditure cuts are never easy but they are needed and necessary if we are to remain fiscally responsible to our community. The district cut 10 teaching positions, one administrative position and at least four support personnel (custodians, aides, etc.). The elimination of staff will have an impact on class size but as of August 1st, none of our elementary buildings are over 30 in a class. This year, unified arts, music, art, and extra-curricular activities will remain intact throughout the district. The district will see additional revenue with our participation in the federal lunch program and full-day kindergarten. Any future cuts will have a significant impact on our students and their educational programs.

- Considering our spring referendum failed, our district only had one option available that is able to address our current shortfall (1.2 million dollar deficit) and still provide similar programs and class size. The district borrowed against the last two-years available under our debt service extension. While this approach provides some immediate relief it doesn't address the imbalance between our revenues and expenditures. The district estimates the additional funds will expire in two years. The administration will continue to work with the board of education, our financial experts, and our financial committee to determine the best course of action.
- Our district will offer full-day kindergarten for the first time this year. We believe this will provide our students with a meaningful academic opportunity that will only benefit them in the future. As academic expectations increase with NCLB (No Child Left Behind) our students will benefit from a more comprehensive five-hour kindergarten program.
- Three of our buildings will have new starting and ending times this year. The district needed to alter the starting times to include Kimberly Height's full-day schedule. As stated in our correspondence that went out with last year's fourth quarter report card, the school day times are as follows:

Starting Bell Schedule

- ***Arbor Park*** ***8:00 a.m. – 2:27 p.m.***
- ***Kimberly Heights*** ***8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.***
- ***Scarlet Oak*** ***8:55 a.m. – 3:10 p.m.***
- ***Morton Gingerwood*** ***9:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.***

I ask for your patience regarding our bus schedule. Each year it takes a couple of days to "refine" the bus schedule. As you are aware, what works on paper doesn't always translate to the practical. Including a new schedule with the full-day Kindergarten program creates a new challenge. Our transportation department and administration will do everything possible to keep our bus transportation on schedule.

- As many of you are aware, the news has reported the state has cut funding in a number of key areas affecting education. Our district will lose 10% of our early childhood grants and 50% of our reading improvement grant. The loss in state funding will cost the district approximately \$65,000. The district will need to supplement the loss of grant dollars with local funds if the grants are not reinstated. As our district continues to be vigilant with our budget and make the appropriate decisions to address our deficit the state complicates our problem by cutting funding to grants and programs our community has depended on.
- Regarding academics, our district continues to make gains in many areas regarding annual yearly progress. Last year school districts were expected to have 70% of all students and subgroups meet or exceed standards. I am happy to report the majority of our students did well on the ISAT and meets the 70%

expectation. We did have three subgroups from a possible 22 subgroups not meet AYP. The consequences for not making AYP consist of our schools/district asking other districts if they would consider taking out of district students. For this to happen, each district must agree to an intergovernmental agreement. I don't believe there are any intergovernmental agreements between school districts throughout the state of Illinois as of now. Our district has been approached for the past three years to take out of district students from districts that failed to make AYP. We have declined their offer because we have school policy that prohibits the admission to out of district students and we are concerned about utilizing district resources on district students. We will continue to work with our students and subgroups and try and address the challenges of AYP as the standard becomes more difficult and increases to 77.5% next year.

- Our district will continue to use Alert Now in notifying our parents regarding any PTO news, school announcements, or district alerts that notify our parents about school closings or other important information.
- ***Arbor Park, Scarlet Oak, and Morton Gingerwood will be mailing out homeroom and bus stop information the week of August 17th. Kimberly Height will mail out their homeroom information August 14th. If you have not registered, it's imperative you do so as soon as possible. Bus stops, homerooms, and student schedules are being finalized.***

Please enjoy the last few days summer break has to offer you and your family.

Sincerely,

Allen J. Jebens Jr.
Superintendent