Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Community Learning and Playing Together

Our theme for the month of February is goal setting. Setting goals helps us decide what we want and how to make a plan to make it happen. Setting goals sometimes requires us to think about our areas of strengths and weaknesses and where we need to improve. Some goals are long term and take longer to accomplish. Some goals are short term and can be accomplished more quickly. The following shares just a bit of work towards goals by some in our Paws-itive learning community.

3rd Graders on SOS

Our students want to help make our school a better place. Third grader Amy Chisholm saw an opportunity for improvement at our school and set a goal to act on it. She wanted to find how she could help improve how effectively our S.O.S. (Save Our Scraps) program runs so that we can do such things as better utilize our food scraps at lunchtime and cut down on waste being sent to the landfill. This has included presenting on her ideas, building a team to develop and act on the ideas, and following through with the plan. She and her teammates, Hannah Graham, Kelly Biscieglia, Kassidy Toepper, and Kylie Ballard, are creating a video to help our students better understand how to work with the S.O.S. program. They have created a storyboard, developed and revised scripts, practiced, presented a run-through, scheduled and planned events, found a photographer, and have listed out all props needed. Their scheduled filming date is fast approaching. Editing and production will take place soon after. I look forward to seeing their video, the impact on our students, and the positive effects on our S.O.S. program.

Chess Club, Weaving, and Math with Mrs. Smith

Our teachers want to make our school a better place. Fifth grade teacher Julie Smith saw an opportunity to further support our fifth grade students and set a goal to act on it. She wanted to provide an opportunity that students may not have at school otherwise. She started a chess club after Winter Break. Thursdays, during lunch and recess (about 35 minutes after transitions), the students she works with in math (around 76 students) can join her for chess. So far she has averaged 30 students excited to play chess each meeting. They are consistently quiet and in control when attending. Players have never had a problem that cannot be settled. A Watch D.O.G. and another dad have helped those who have not played before to learn. Dave Holmes has also helped to teach strategies. Students may learn to play on chess club days or have their names put into a drawing for match play. A tournament will start the beginning of March. Though Mrs. Smith is not currently a chess player herself, she says she enjoys the chance to see students beyond the academic setting. Chess club was twice a week, but with weaving on Mondays, and math support other recesses, time was becoming limited. During weaving, students may choose to come in during recess to create lanyards and key chains. This has been going on for some time. To give a little context, Harley Robertson, who attended weaving in kindergarten, is now taking time to lead weaving as a fifth grader. I am proud of the efforts of Mrs. Smith and our many other staff who go above and beyond to provide further opportunities for our students.

New Club

Our parents want to make our school a better place. Two parents, Melissa Flatt and Lisa D'Emilio, saw an opportunity to further support our third through fifth grade students and set a goal to act on it. They have started an after school club (soon to be named by students) to challenge students in such areas as math, science, and chess. Around 24 students have signed up for and have attended the free of charge meetings after school on Thursdays. Our school district is also providing support. Kris Sawyer is adding her care and talents at meetings starting this

week. Other parents are helping out at the meetings by doing such things as supporting chess games and strategies and an egg drop challenge. Math challenges and science experiments are soon to come. I look forward to seeing some of the great opportunities offered for our students through the end of May.

Attendance

We do a great deal to support our students, but our efforts can obviously be impacted if students do not attend. Sherri Birgensmith, our counselor, has headed up efforts to help support our students in getting to school on time. A portion of her efforts has included checking all students' attendance at 90 days and communicating with families to offer support when attendance is a concern. Efforts appear to be paying off. The following shares a bit of attendance data:

Number of Students with 10 or more Absences at 90 Days of School	
January 2010	-85
January 2011	-37
January 2012	-32

I appreciate the positive trend toward better attendance and look forward to further growth.