Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Community Learning and Playing Together
Our theme for the month of May is citizenship. I have an important role in creating a paws-itive community for my classroom, school, neighborhood, and town. I show I am a good citizen by following the rules, being kind, and helping others. The following shares just a bit of what has been happening with our citizens:

Kindergarten
Our 4-Day-K (Kindergarten) team has come together and is already working hard to prepare for a great year with our students. Our teammates are Shawna Dawson, Colleen Johnson, Lynette Lindblom, Lola Nordstrom, and Laura Tomberlin. A recent half-day meeting helped them to kick off their effective planning for such things as our upcoming parent orientation, June assessments, monthly themes, balanced daily schedules, and potential lab classroom work. As you may have heard, they are also working to better support the whole child by preparing to act as specialists for their children in the areas of physical education, music, drama and Second Step, and art. Each will develop their skills in an area and support all kindergarten students in their areas of expertise. Our current music and p.e. specialists will support them weekly as coaches/consultants. Each teacher will spend four days of the week without standard specialist supported planning time, which will allow them five hours and five minutes on one day each week to collaborate and plan to better support our students. Our 4-Day-K is passionate and ready to roll.

Our kindergarten orientation will take place on May 19. Incoming parents and kindergarteners will attend and learn more about what to expect next year. This includes learning about the 4-Day-K model, meeting the kindergarten teachers and staff, learning about our PTO, and hearing about childcare possibilities. Parents and future students will also participate in stations which gain them stamps on their cards for prizes at the end. Stations include fun activities in the areas of reading, math, fine motor, life skills, and administration. The activities help participants create a better understanding of where our children are in their journey to be ready for kindergarten with activities to experience such things as recognizing and writing letters, coloring, and tying shoes. It should be enjoyable for all.

Our June assessments will take place on June 8 and 9. All registered students will be signed up for assessments in the areas of math, reading, speech, and social skills. These assessments will help us to better understand where our students are at in their development, share this information with parents, provide ideas to parents so that they may help their children grow over the summer, realize who could use the further support of our pre-kindergarten summer school, and place students into the classes which may best support them in their learning. Our June assessments have been very valuable in helping to get our students off to a great start in their elementary school learning journey.

Students Taking Charge
Our students continue to help us in our efforts to improve our recess and playground experiences. They have shared how they want to give more immediate feedback. Our playground teachers have created colorfully decorated “Seeds for Thought” feedback boxes and sheets which students can utilize at recess to offer advice as to what is going well on the playground and what they feel we can do to help improve the experience.

Numerous ideas have been shared in recent days. They vary from adding a water slide, chocolate fountain, or lemonade stand, to how we can support one another when someone does not treat a person with respect. Idea patterns are beginning to emerge and will help us to better improve conditions for the people they matter most.

Student advice has also motivated our playground teachers to create feedback forms to better understand how we are supporting our substitute playground teachers and how well they are working with our students. These are reminiscent of the feedback forms being used by our certificated staff for substitute information, but with a bit more student input involved. I look forward to experiencing how it helps us out on the playground.

Math and Reading Clubs to Merge Under a New Structure and Name

You may have heard how we are re-organizing our Math and Reading Clubs. Next school year they will be merged into one learning club (new name still in process) under the leadership of Colleen Wing. There are many reasons for doing this. Three of those reasons include improving effectiveness, efficiency, and collaboration. Our learning club will be moved together into the portable currently used by Math Club and Mrs. Klump. Mrs. Klump will be moving into the Round Building and the learning club will be joined by Mr. Hall's special education services. This combined location will allow all three intervention services to work and collaborate together more fluidly. Our current Math Club and Reading Club staff are also currently "cross training" so any member can effectively support students in reading and math. This will add to our flexibility and combine our learned wisdom. We will also be able to do such things as save time by having students potentially transition only once if they previously attended both clubs separately. Both clubs have been working hard together recently and will continue in order to better create a smooth transition to one effective learning group for next year. I look forward to experiencing how much more effective we will be in supporting our students.