Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Community Learning and Playing Together

School is out for the summer. Students and families are hopefully enjoying their well-deserved time together. Though we are not seeing students, we continue to work toward improvements for next year. The following shares just a bit of what has and will be happening with our staff over the summer months:

4-Day-K Flexibility & Support

Our 4-Day-K team has some more ideas up its sleeves. While the majority of their efforts are directed toward preparing for an incredible 2011-2012 school year for our students, they have also found ways to increase their flexibility and further support the rest of our school. As you know, with our 4-Day-K model, kindergarten students will attend full days, Monday through Thursday. Our kindergarten teachers will act as p.e., music, art, Second Step, and drama specialists each of the four days. This allows them 305 minutes of planning and collaboration time on Fridays. Given this, they will also have two hours and twenty-five minutes of student instructional time on Fridays. We considered many options for this time and unanimously decided on one we feel best supports our students and staff. For an hour, twice each Friday, our kindergarten teachers will push into all classes at two grade levels for an hour per grade level (for example, an hour in second grade and then an hour in third grade). They will do so as art specialists. This will give each grade level an hour each, about every three weeks, to have teachers collaborate and work together to support students and work with our intervention teams specialists. Our kindergarten teachers will also work with each grade level to share what they have learned about students and any other patterns while working with students across our whole elementary span. There are many reasons why we feel this will be such an effective support for our students and staff. To give a small bit of reasoning, let's look back about four years. Our staff had worked to develop a vision of our dream school to support all students. We narrowed our thoughts down to five core ideas. The top three, that many thought we could never accomplish, included every day kindergarten, increased collaboration time, and incorporating an art specialist. This gives a reminder of why it can be so critical to figure out where we are trying to go in our future. When opportunities do arise, we may find we can actually take hold of them and further realize our dreams.

Room Movements

To further support our efforts to effectively help our students in their learning, we are making about ten significant room changes with our staff. The core reasons for these movements have been to make room for two more kindergarten classes, make room for a music class, get staff who collaborate closer together, and help our overall configuration make more sense for the longer term. Some examples of our movements include moving our Math Club, Reading Club (Math & Reading Clubs are currently slated to be called the Learning Club for 2011-2012), and 3-5 special education into one intervention teams portable, moving our two music classes into one music portable, and moving our K-3 special education into what was the Reading Club room so that a kindergarten class can utilize a larger space. Staff have been great about helping us to realize these movements so that we may better support students. One example is that of how so many teachers have worked above and beyond to move a great deal of their furniture and materials to

their new rooms so that the work needed by our maintenance crews over the summer months will be minimized.

Summer PD

There are people who think that teachers work nine months a year and take three months off during the summer to do such things as watch television and eat bonbons. Sure we might watch some television. I will admit, I did eat my first bonbons five summers ago, at a math training. Many choose to work hard at improving their abilities to meet students' needs during the school year. We have many doing just that this summer. Four of our grade level teams will be working to plan how our current math program can better support our students in their learning our math power standards. Some will be participating in the two book studies being led by Dave Holmes. Many will participate in the summer institutes being offered in August and continuing on throughout the school year. Others will be working to develop and implement improved report cards which better communicate with our learning community. And all will most likely be coming into our school way too often over the summer months to plan better ways to meet our students' learning needs. As usual, this will be a busy learning summer for many. Hopefully all will take a little time to sit and eat (maybe smell) the bonbons.