Elementary Board Report

A Paws-itive Community Learning and Playing Together
It has been a great start to the school year. This includes some wonderful learning opportunities. The following shares just a bit of what has been happening at the elementary:

4-Day-K, Art Specialists & Intervention Support
Kindergarten is off to a wonderful start. Our students and teachers both appear to be enjoying themselves and learning. It is a great bunch of students with a great group of teachers. We have worked hard to try and anticipate everything possible to help our students have a great year. With that, learning opportunities have arisen. One example is that of lunch. The beginning of any year can be challenging for new kindergarteners. It takes time to learn how everything works in the cafeteria. Now imagine twice as many students as normal going through this learning time. We have learned a lot.

I have enjoyed having opportunities to watch our kindergarten teachers work together. They work very hard with their students for four days, no planning times built in. Then on Fridays they have 305 minutes of planning and collaboration time together. It is incredible. If you ever want to see a living definition of "synergy", watching them work together certainly shows it. They bring up their agenda items. Then it happens. They begin sharing, and almost magically, their shared ideas begin growing to a completely impressive result. Their results are obviously greater than the sum of the parts. Our teachers are truly positive energy together.

This positive energy has led to a wonderful start to their work as art specialists at our school. They strive to develop arts skills with our students, K-5, and in different medias than students may be exposed to otherwise. Each full Friday, our kindergarten teachers spend an hour in each of two grade level's classes teaching art. Furthermore, they are working to integrate mathematics into what they do with each grade level.

As students are gaining experiences in art, the grade level teachers have the opportunity to collaborate. First they work with our intervention support for 20 minutes. This has been well worth the time. I have appreciated seeing our classroom teachers, special education teachers, and Learning Club teacher work together to support our students. To give an example of how our teachers may view it, each team so far has chose to go beyond the expected 20 minutes and meet for the full 60 minutes to learn more. The collaboration has been effective and very worthwhile.

Water Event
You most likely have heard about the unfortunate event we learned of Thursday morning the first week of school. The water supply hose taking water to the toilet in Kim Hollopeter's room split and shot water overnight, leaving a great deal of water damage in Kim's room and the preschool room next door. Luckily, very few teaching materials were damaged. Kim had kept books and much more off the floor.

Unfortunately, both rooms in the portable will be out of commission 3-6 weeks. Insurance will cover damage and the portable will be totally restored, including drywall, flooring, siding, etc.

Many people have shown great efforts to help out. Kim has been a real trooper. Her class spent Thursday and Friday in the library classroom. Kim's classroom was moved to Tonya McCord's portable room and all set up by the end of that Friday. Tonya has been kind to help us out by teaching in the hallway that first Friday and from then on teaching in the library classroom until restoration work is completed. Rita Peterson (our librarian) has been doing much of her teaching in our computer lab (She has wanted to work with students on such ideas as utilizing the internet for research.). The middle school has been kind to let us use the computer lab when they do not have their 2:00 class in the lab. Our preschool was moved up to the home-ec room at the high school. They will soon be moving into the resource room at the middle school for the remainder of the year.

While this is not an event we would ever wish to happen on the second day of school (or any time for that matter), there has been a great deal of positive. Not the least of which includes a great deal of hard work, flexibility, and collaboration by many in our learning community to support our students and staff. I would like to thank all involved for their impressive efforts.

New Third Grade

As I would imagine you know, we grew in third grade over the summer months. Rather than starting school with the projected 25 students per class, we grew to around 28 students per class. This is a concern when considering how we may effectively support student learning. The district has been very supportive and is allowing us to hire a fifth 3rd grade teacher. I am please to share that we have chosen a great teacher, Peter Poppert, to teach third grade through the remainder of the school year.

Our water event was not overly supportive of adding another room. We went into this school year having made quite a few room changes that helped us to compress and create space for such classes as two new kindergarten and a music class. The water event helped us to temporarily lose two more rooms. Peter and his new class will start up in what was previously the preschool room when the portable restoration is complete. Our preschool staff and middle school have been very kind to set up our preschool in a middle school room for the remainder of the school year.

Students Supporting One Another

I have appreciated having the opportunity to experience many students supporting one another so far. They obviously collaborate and support each other in the learning. I have observed students walking others to class before school starts. They walk friends in need to the nurse's office during recess. When a student wants to enter a playground game and one says they may not, others speak up and remind that we need to. I have overheard students reminding to treat others as they would like to be treated. And the vast majority are great about saying "please", "thank you", and holding doors for others. We have so many who realize that we all do our part to contribute to our Paws-itive Community.