

The Poore Page

September 2011

I hope this letter finds you having a great start to the Fall Season. I so enjoy my new environment and the feel of a true fall. Although I hate to see the warmth and long days of summer go I do have to share that I am anxious to see the beauty of the foliage with all of these wonderful trees. This month's Poore Page will be a little different. Rather than focus on one topic I have three short topics.

I want to honor several people for our recent school board elections. First, what a great slate of candidates we had. As most of you know we had three candidates run for the position being vacated by Marshall Ney. Willie Cowgur, Joe Quinn, and Tony Franke ran a great campaign and put themselves out to the public in an honest and open way. I am not sure anyone realizes that this campaign approach is unique. Do you realize that back in my old District board candidates could spend over \$50,000 to try to win a seat and it became a political campaign that often divided the community? These gentlemen ran with class and we now have a run-off between Mr. Cowgur and Mr. Quinn. Please honor the two candidates by getting out to vote again. Early voting will begin on October 4 and October 11 will serve as the actual election date. Although I am told our vote count doubled this election the overall percent of participation is far too low for a great community such as ours. If you voted this past week challenge yourself to get three other people to vote this time. Finally, congratulations to Kim Mertes who ran against write in candidate Ahmad Kewan and retained her seat and will continue to serve Bentonville Schools on the Board of Education. Finally, I want to thank the PTO organizations in Bentonville for their candidate forums as well as their effort to capture the position statements of each candidate. I also want to thank this newspaper for their coverage of the campaign and election results.

On the second topic, I would like to mention the importance of school/community partnerships. In this day and age partnerships are critical. In public education we realize that we must have partnerships developed to serve and prepare our students for their adult lives. I can tell you as the new guy, partnerships are rich in our District. We have so many partnerships that it is difficult to capture them all but here are five to share the scope of support we are receiving in Bentonville Schools that support our students and our staff:

City of Bentonville and the Chamber of Commerce- This is just a huge partnership that has so many fingers and benefits that they are too innumerable to count. The partnerships are

a reality due to the commitment of the leaders of these two organizations and I can't thank Mayor McCaslin and Mr. Ed Clifford enough for all they do to support our school system.

Walmart- I am sure this comes as no surprise. The outreach of Walmart in this community is a stamp that has no boundaries. What you may not realize is things that have been done behind the scenes to support this District. Did you know that their tech department was at our beck and call this summer when we had issues with our system. Did you know that we have received school supply material even as late as last week which defrays cost for parents as well as our own teaching staff.

Alliance for a Healthier Generation- This organization out of Little Rock has partnered with Bentonville Schools as well as ARAMARK to support our efforts to impact each child and our staff's health through our Wellness Committee (these committees are state mandated). They are providing training for our staff and they are working closely with ARAMARK to continue efforts to provide a quality food service program.

NWACC- We are receiving tremendous support from President Paneitz and all of her staff to enhance and build our partnership between NWACC and Bentonville Public Schools. They will be at the table as we plan a new alternative center that is career path oriented and that we hope to open in fall of 2012. Just as important to the development of a new alternative program is a partnership with our students. We are actually going to our current alternative program students in the Gateway program to help us design our new delivery.

Crystal Bridges- Even though the museum has yet to open we are already receiving materials to support instruction at our sites. These materials are tied to State Standards and correlate with the art that we will all get to enjoy in November when Crystal Bridges opens. The most exciting opportunity with Crystal Bridges is the commitment to making trips to the museum at no cost. The commitment is to not just provide free access but to support the cost of transportation and any student lunches.

My final topic is to share our Leadership Team, both at the sites and in our central administrative unit, has pledged a different level of visibility to be in our buildings. We ask that all administrators plan their week with creating blocks of time to be in the classrooms. I know that some staff probably worry that we are trying to find folks doing the wrong thing. This is not the focus. Through our visibility we can celebrate and grow. We can use the visibility to create support that might be needed to help staff reach the targets that they have set for the year. I share all of this with you as a community so that you can hopefully see that we know the number one factor to have happy children and students that achieve is what goes on in the classroom. We are committed to supporting the efforts and the targets that have been established in our sites. I will end this section by stating that we have a tremendous teaching staff, as well as tremendous site leadership from our principals and assistant principals. This community is truly blessed with a top notch educational team.

As we enjoy moving into the fall season, I hope you also enjoy watching the transition of our newly elected board members, the increase in the depth of our community partnerships, and the continual growth of our Leadership Team.

