

12.11.15

Dear Community Members:

Good Friday morning to all of you! It has been an extremely busy week as we head into the end of 2015. I have a couple of important items for you this week, and there is some information below about an appearance of the Jolly Old Elf himself this weekend in the district!

IT IS THAT TIME OF YEAR!!

While the weather certainly has been cooperating this December, we all know that December, January, and February are the tough driving months for everyone. As such, I would like to review our policies for inclement days.

1. You are the parent. Final decisions rest in your hands on whether or not your child attends school, practice, or events should there be inclement weather. If you choose to keep your child home, we will respect that, within reason. Please call us in the morning and let us know.
2. We have to base our decisions on whether or not we need to delay or close on the ability of people to arrive safely at school. That means people need to drive for the conditions. We have had days where the roads are snow covered, but they have been plowed. If a person slowed down and drove for the conditions, they should be able to arrive safely. We cannot wait for dry pavement on every road in the district to have school.
3. Weather is unpredictable. While meteorologists are generally pretty good, the timing of events may be off slightly. In addition, we can have great roads in the morning and the winds pick up during the day causing issues on the way home. If you have students who drive to school, they need to be instructed on how to drive for the conditions. It is not uncommon for there to be dry road for a mile, then snow for 100 feet. Please make sure they understand that in the winter you have to drive for the conditions and SLOW DOWN.
4. Finally, please make sure that your child understands that in the winter, they need to get up earlier to make sure their car is free of snow and frost. It takes time, and accidents happen when people are running late and trying to go too fast. If your child is going to be late, have them call the office and take their time getting in. We would much rather have them be a few minutes late for first period instead of in an accident because they were trying to rush. Obviously, this cannot be an everyday occurrence, and we will work with people within reason.

Please understand that we work extremely hard to balance the need for caution with the reality that we live in Ohio. There is going to be winter weather, and we cannot shut down for every snowflake. However, you are the parent, and we want to empower you to make the call if you feel like it is just not safe enough for your child.

SURVEY RESULTS

During November, we asked you to complete the 2015 Survey. We have used this survey on six occasions since 2007, and we review the data to look for issues or concerns from the community. We pay particular attention to the comments submitted online and on the paper forms, because those lend depth to the number ratings.

As always there are good things to take away, and areas of concern.

POSITIVES

On the positive side, we had over 300 people complete the survey. In that 68.47% gave the district and “A” and 25.08% gave us a “B”. The building numbers were very close to that as well. There were also strong ratings for people who felt they were well informed about the school district. Since mainly people who get this email, and/or are parents took the survey, we would hope that is the case. However, we still have people who feel as though they need more information. We need to do better.

Ratings for our teachers remained very high as they have traditionally. They deserve it because they work hard to provide our students with the best education possible.

AREAS OF CONCERN

While the ratings were similar to those in years past, there are areas that were off slightly which is not where we want to see them. We are reminded that you are our clients, and that you deserve our warm welcome when you call or come into our buildings. We must do everything in our power to help you solve your problems, but there will be times when we see things differently. Parents must know that even in those moments we care about their kids, and respect their opinion, even if we do not share it.

One area that I feel was unjustly criticized by some is Food Service. While the opinions about the food may well be valid, the arrow is missing the mark. Food Service is one of the most highly regulated services in a school district. There are guidelines for salt and fat content that have forced us to cook differently and serve different foods. I have a newsflash...kids do not like veggies, yet they must be served at every meal. We have a mixture of fresh and prepared fruits and vegetables every day. They don't eat them at home, and they don't eat them here. Portion sizes are also regulated. I remember a couple of comments about growing boys in sports being hungry after lunch. I totally agree. Lunches are designed to combat childhood obesity and not to provide the protein/carb levels needed for kids who are burning huge numbers of calories while working out. We do use whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables when we can, and there are strict guidelines for our lunches. I know our ladies work very hard to do the best they can.

Another area that was cited frequently in the comments was the “Common Core” and testing. The first thing we need to understand is that they are not the same thing. The

Common Core provides standards for reading, language arts, and math. There is little doubt that these standards are more rigorous than previous editions. They require higher levels of thinking and application. My guess is that the move against the Common Core has more to do with suggested reading selections and a bias against regulations out of Washington. Ironically, states who have done away with the Common Core and wrote their own standards, ended up with something that looked a lot like....the Common Core.

Testing on the other hand is out of control. We lose a great deal of instructional time to mandated tests for all manner of evaluation including the promotion and retention of 9 year olds. Congress just passed a new education bill that grants far more control of education back to state and local governments. While they still want assessments in reading and math in grades 3-8, it appears like there is more flexibility. In addition, the state passed legislation at the end of last year that will reduce the overall number of tests and the time used to take them. It is marginal, but better. Wherever possible, we are looking to reduce the amount of testing that **we can control**.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Giving quality feedback to students is an important educational strategy. Similarly, feedback from our community is critical to helping us improve the way we operate. Feedback can be tough to read, as there is nothing more personal than criticism. However, there are always lessons to learn and improvements to be made. I am in the process of meeting with principals and people who report directly to me. I am using and reviewing these results with them, because they want the feedback as well...good and bad.

Thanks to all of you who put a positive note in your survey. There were far more positive comments than bad, and we want to make darn sure that those feelings never change.

REMINDER – RETIREMENT OPEN HOUSE FOR DAVE MICHEL

We will hold an Open House for retiring treasurer Dave Michel next Wednesday, December 16th, from 2:30-4:30 in the High School Library.

SANTA AT SAMMIEZ

Come eat Breakfast or Lunch with Santa at SammieZ Restaurant this Saturday, December 12th from 9am-1pm. Bring the kids and have a great morning. It won't feel like winter, but it is time to get into the Christmas Spirit!

EASTWOOD AFTER PROM

There will be a meeting for the Eastwood After Prom Committee on January 6th at 7:00 PM in the HS Library. This is open to parents of junior and senior students. They raise money and plan for the After Prom activities which provides students with a safe, fun

and alcohol free experience. They are in particular need of junior parents this year.
Please make it if you can!

That is it for this week!