



Bethany Community School

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope you are all having an enjoyable summer so far. At this point I'm sure you have all heard that the Board of Education has reorganized the administrative structure of our school. Subsequently, I was appointed as the Interim Principal by the Board of Education while a search is conducted for the best candidate to fill the position permanently. I feel privileged to have been appointed to the interim position and hope that I have the opportunity to fill the position permanently. Nonetheless, as the Board of Education works on this situation, we at the school level have a lot we are working on; hence, the purpose of this letter. I would like to update everyone on some of the exciting initiatives that we have been working on over the past year(s) and will continue to work on during the summer months.

Response to Intervention (RTI)/ RTI is an initiative that we started implementing about two years ago and things continue to improve as we work toward our goal. Our goal is to implement a systematic process that will:

- identify children that are not performing at expected levels given their grade
- develop intervention plans to address the specific weaknesses of those identified
- monitor the progress of the intervention plans on a weekly basis
- adjust the intervention as needed to ensure academic success

At this point, RTI (often referred to as Scientific Research-Based Interventions /SRBI) is a mandate from the State Department of Education for all districts. We will continue working to improve this process with the intent that no child in the Bethany Community School ever "falls through the cracks" and that every child is provided with appropriate intervention if needed.

Enrichment / This past school year was our first year in quite a long time with an Enrichment Program. We were fortunate to have found Mrs. Schwenger for that position. Program development and implementation progressed very well. Mrs. Schwenger is a very creative and talented individual who was able to work with a number of identified students throughout the year. Also she was able to provide school-wide enrichment ideas and activities for all students by working in all classrooms. We will continue to develop this position so that all students will be afforded the opportunity of an enriched curriculum that will foster their desire for learning.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) / We began to educate ourselves on how to become a PLC more than a year ago and the concept is becoming embedded in our school culture. A PLC is a community that has its focus on learning rather than on teaching, works collaboratively, and holds itself accountable for results. This summer we will be spending more time working with the PLC grade level team leaders to further develop procedures that will enhance our ability to function as a Professional Learning Community and as a result, provide the best learning environment possible for every child.

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) / PBIS can be thought of as the RTI for behaviors. We became involved with PBIS about a year ago and the hope is that, like the RTI process, it will provide us with a systematic process that will help to identify, address and monitor inappropriate student behaviors, while encouraging and celebrating appropriate student behavior. We will continue work this summer on the implementation of PBIS, keeping in mind the concerns expressed by parents and community members. A number of faculty members expressed the desire to explore ways in which the PBIS concepts can be blended with ideas from The Responsive Classroom model. Ryan Murphy and I will be attending a workshop this summer that addresses that concept specifically. I have requested that we move more slowly toward implementation to insure adequate dialogue with all faculty and parents. I am certain that we can make this a process that will work for all students.

Grade six moving to a self contained model /The decision to move the sixth grade to a more traditional elementary school model has been discussed for a number of years. We feel confident that this model will be best for our students as they prepare for the transition from the Bethany Community School. This summer we will be working with faculty members to ensure that each teacher has the materials, support and direction needed to be able to meet the needs of all students. Mrs. Galla will be involved in the continued implementation of Reader's and Writer's Workshop in an integral way.

Technology / This summer we will make further strides with our use of technology and how we integrated it within the curriculum to educate our children. By the end of this summer we will have interactive whiteboards in just about every classroom. An interactive whiteboard is a whiteboard that uses touch detection for user input – e.g. scrolling, right mouse-click – in the same way normal PC input devices, such as a mouse or keyboard, detect input. A projector is used to display a computer's video output on the whiteboard, which then acts as a large touchscreen. The interactive whiteboards comes with digital pens, which use digital ink and replace traditional whiteboard markers. The digital ink operates by using an active digitizer that controls the PC input for writing capabilities such as drawing or handwriting. We began to install interactive whiteboards a few years ago and at this point we have many resident experts who are excited about sharing everything they know with their colleagues. With our eye on the development of 21st Century skills, we anticipate these whiteboards to be a great asset in the education of our students.

As you can see, we are engaged in very important work this summer as we continue to consolidate and expand on our many exciting initiatives that will enable us to provide the best possible education for the children of Bethany. If you have any questions, concerns or comments about what we will be working on over the summer or on any topic please feel free to contact me. With the difference in schedules due to the summer break, the best way to reach me is via email rspino@bethany-ed.org .

I hope you all have a fun and safe summer and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Rob Spino