

Back to School

The weather is getting cooler, the "Back to School" sales flyers are filling up the mailbox, and the days are getting shorter...all signs that the school year is about to begin. It brings to mind a time, many years ago, when my husband and I were accompanying our five-year old son to his kindergarten open house. He was so excited on the way in, that he talked non-stop of school, his teacher, the bus, and his new friends. As we walked into the school and headed to his classroom, he announced that he really wanted to show us something. I thought he meant in his classroom, so I said we would be there soon and then he could show us. We were greeted by his teacher who began to give us the tour of the different areas in the room and tell us about his program. The whole time, he kept pulling on our hands and telling us he had to show us something.

After taking a "speed tour" of the classroom, we were practically dragged out of the room and down the hall. Our boy stopped in front of a big shiny metal refrigerator jumping up and down with excitement and shouted "This is where the chocolate milk comes from." I had been a teacher and a principal, but this was probably the first moment that I really understood what it takes to truly provide an "education." It is an on-going process, yet follows a calendar, much like the seasons. It takes many different people in many different roles, each uniquely important. I wonder if the person stocking the milk cooler knew how important they were in making my son's day at school that much happier.

As each of my children reached that all important age, I also remember watching from the driveway as the bus pulled up. They were hardly big enough to take that first step...physically and emotionally. As the door closed and the bus pulled away, I would stand there with a big smile on my face, waving frantically, only to turn around and tear up, knowing that they were heading off on a journey where many would take over the job of caring for them, guiding them, and supporting them. The amount of trust that it required was almost overwhelming.

Starting up the next school year begins almost as soon as the first days of the present school year are underway. The process of planning, scheduling, budgeting, preparing the curriculum, ordering supplies, planning for building projects and summer cleaning goes on over several months preceding September. The number of committed people involved, from the bus driver to the teacher, food service staff to clerical staff, custodians to principals, parents to coaches, taxpayers to community business owners, crossing guards to computer technicians, is inspiring.

We will formally begin the school year with the 2011-12 Annual Meeting, Monday August 22nd, at the Platteville High School Auditorium. The budget hearing will be at 7:30 p.m., and the annual meeting begins at 8:00 p.m. We will be presenting a \$15,056,935.00 budget which reflects a 6.38% decrease from the 2010-11 budget. Much of the reduction is due to a significant decrease in state equalization aid, voluntary concessions in benefit contributions from staff, decreases in staff due to attrition, and cuts in the supply budgets. Although the mill rate will increase from 11.11 to 11.12, the actual property tax levy will decrease by .24%. We invite you to attend and be a part of the decision-making process

that goes into educating our community's youth, maintaining your investment in great schools, and ensuring the future of the greater Platteville Community.

Later in the week, our eight new members of the teaching staff will be engaging in orientation activities for three days beginning on the 24th of August. As difficult as it is to say goodbye to last year's retirees, it is also fun to welcome the new staff members. I am always taken aback by the excitement that is clearly visible on their faces as they anticipate meeting new students, parents, and colleagues.

The full teaching staff rejoins us on Monday, August 29th, with a flurry of classroom organization, technology training, curriculum planning, and quick conversation of a summer well-spent. The doors fly open and the students pour in on Thursday, September 1st. Thank you to all of you who will help us open those doors and welcome in another exciting and successful school year.