

# *Superintendent Communications –*

## *Shaping a Positive Message for your District*

Presented by  
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- **Staff Document Folder**
- **Weekly email to school board and staff**
- **Weekly column in the local newspaper**
- **Friday Report to School Board**
- **District Status Report**

*2009 MASA Fall Conference*

*September 27 - 29*

**Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (DECC)**

*Leading the Promise ~ Our Students, Our Future*

## **Staff Document Folder**

- Sent via email before the fall workshop
- Requested staff to save the folder to their desktop
- Contents:
  - 📖 Strategic Plan
  - 📖 District Goals
  - 📖 Evaluation Spreadsheet– A Framework of Teaching by Charlotte Danielson
  - 📖 Staff Development Worksheet for 2009-10
  - 📖 Employee Purchasing
  - 📖 District Calendar
  - 📖 District Meeting Calendar

## *Supt. Weekly E-News*

- Framework Saved as a Draft
- Sent out every Friday to school board and staff
- Purpose:
  - 📖 Information
  - 📖 Vision – Big Picture of Education
  - 📖 Staff Development
  - 📖 Motivation

### **SB and Staff,**

*The mission of the Fergus Falls Public Schools is to prepare productive citizens through academic excellence in partnership with families and community.*

### **Current items....**

**H1N1** -- The highest number of students with flu-like symptoms was Tuesday with 55, on Wednesday there was 33 and on Thursday there were 29. Erika Yoney, School Nurse, has been working with public health and we do have a plan. The influenza plan was developed when the bird flu was a concern, the plan will help guide us if the H1N1 takes a more severe turn.

**Otter Pride Night** -- You are welcome to join us in the festivities on Friday night starting at 5 pm in the Maroon Gym. There will be tours of Kennedy and lots of fun games for the kids.

**District Badges** -- Reminder: District badges allow staff to get in free to regular events, but not any type of playoff games. Badges must be shown to the ticket takers to enter with no charge. If you are a coach, your spouse and elementary and middle school (but not high school) children get in free during the season you are coaching.

**Teaching Kids to be Responsible:** Above the Line / Below the Line posters are being made for teachers who want to use them in their classroom. (Fall inservice followup)

### **Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework of Teaching by Charlotte Danielson**

The intent of these brief summaries of the components is to give you a flavor of the text. In the text there is a detailed rubric for each component that defines the level of performance for each element. The levels of performance are labeled distinguished, proficient, basic, and unsatisfactory. I would anticipate that most staff members are proficient in most areas with a few areas in which they are distinguished and a few areas in which they need improvement. The goal would be to be at a level of performance where you are distinguished or proficient in all elements.

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation -- Component 1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy (p. 62-64)

There are three elements in Component 1a:

- Knowledge of Content -- "A person cannot teach what he or she does not know." This statement captures the essence of why content knowledge is important in teaching.
- Prerequisite Relationships -- Students need to learn concepts or skills before they can tackle others.
- Content Related Pedagogy -- Teachers use pedagogical techniques particular to the different disciplines to help convey information and teach skills. Approaches in writing, for example, may be very different from those in science.

### **Green Thought of the Week**

The committee met for the first time this year on Wednesday. Our focus will be to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Renee Erickson's 8th grade Leadership class will be helping with the project.

Notes and brainstorming from the meeting:

All are invited to attend and participate.

We have to get teachers to model for the students.

Two websites to check out: [www.schoolscuttingcarbon.org/schools](http://www.schoolscuttingcarbon.org/schools) [www.upongreen.com](http://www.upongreen.com)

Reduce: print copies back to back or even better don't print unless absolutely necessary, send parent letters home with the oldest child not every child

Reuse: share resources

Recycle: We are working on getting three boxes for each classroom: newspaper, plastic and white/pastel paper

Only order recyclable paper

We will look at doing a "waste audit" to give us data on how much more we could be doing

Make announcements at each game to pick up and recycle

Other items email to me:

fragrance free products

solar panels

shred white paper separate from colored

recycle bins at all events

Reps from the group are going to work with principals to get Jess Steinbrenner, Public Information Education Officer at Otter Tail County Solid Waste to do a presentation at upcoming faculty meetings.

### **Superintendent Schedule and Quotes for the Week (Quotes from Franklin Planner)**

**Monday**                    **Everywhere I have sought rest and not found it, except sitting in a corner by myself with a little book. – Thomas a' Kempis**

9 am                        Principal's Meeting @ Dean's Office

12:30 pm                Special Ed. Coop mtg.

5 pm                        SB mtg. @ City Hall

**Tuesday**                   **Great dancers are not great because of their technique; they're great because of their passion. – Martha Graham**

9 am                        Levy Workshop @ LCSC

11:30 am                Community Watch

12:30 pm                LCSC Supt. Mtg.

**Wednesday**      **I found that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy and enthusiasm and hard work. – Harry S. Truman**

9 am                  History Day mtg.  
10 am                United Way Board mtg.  
Noon                 544 Education Foundation mtg.  
4 pm                 Forward Fergus Falls

**Thursday**        **The silence that accepts merit as the most natural thing in the world is the highest applause. – Ralph Waldo Emerson**

7 am                  Dollars for Scholars  
8:30 am              Speak @ Ministerial Association mtg. @  
                                 Hilltop Celebrations Church

**Friday**            **For what human ill does dawn not seem to be an alleviation? – Thornton Wilder**

9 pm                 Kiwanis Project mtg.  
1 pm                 Presentation to the Veden Trust @ Mill Street Residence

**I hope you have a great week!!**

Partners in Education,

**Jerry Ness, Superintendent**

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*"Fergus Falls Public Schools...  
Where Excellence is Expected" (new slogan from strategic plan)*

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**SB and Staff,**

**District Notes:**

Attached you will again find the folder I sent to you on Tuesday....

**Another Reminder:** Flex Forms are due Monday, August 31 -- Contact Laurie Hansen if you have questions.

**Thank you** for your patience with our gym sound system. We are all frustrated by it and will look to make it more functional without spending too much. We all look forward to using our auditorium again.

**H1N1**

1. A letter from Erika Yoney, School Nurse, will be available to handout today at our open houses.
2. Mark Masten has ordered hand sanitizer and should be available in your building's office early next week.

**Crisis Response Plan**

All staff should have a copy of the -- All Staff - Quick Reference Crisis Response Plan. If you do not, please contact your building principal or Marcy Clausen.

## **Teaching Kids to be Responsible (summarized C. K.'s presentation)**

I have heard many positive comments about Corwin Kroenberg's presentation. Its always fun to hear a quality speaker who comes to us as a teacher. A big thank you goes to Elaine for organizing the cookie break and lunch with Sherri's help. THANK YOU!!

The workshop will only be a success if we put into practice what we heard yesterday. The key message to me that wasn't stated yesterday was the increased class time that will be available to you by managing students more efficiently. This will certainly lead to higher achievement.

### **Build your relationship bank early using:**

1. Eye contact
2. Shaking hands
3. Spend time with them
4. Smile
5. Listen

### **Three Rules for your classroom:**

1. Be Respectful
2. Be Responsible
3. Be Safe

Remember to work with staff/building to BE CONSISTENT on the Above the line, Below the line and Bottom line behaviors.

### **When managing conflict:**

1. Don't skin the skunk when they are upset
2. Don't skin the skunk when you are upset
3. Never get into a peeing contest with a skunk

### **When disciplining:**

Use **your** above the line BODY PART = **Your Brain** and not the heart or gut. ASK = Do you want to FIX IT OR TAKE THE CONSEQUENCE?

### **Make sure your consequence is:**

Related  
Respectful  
Reasonable

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## **First Day of School –**

Staff;

The students arriving today and tomorrow are expecting our best. Remember to take control of your classroom by setting the rules and procedures, but most of all have fun with your students! We all make a difference to these students by being a consistent and stable influence in their lives. I look forward to working with you to provide an excellent education for students and community. Good luck and enjoy the year!

## Weekly Column

- Fergus Falls Daily Journal - Every Wednesday
- Sent home every Friday with students in grades K-6
- Column – 600 words and typically 2-3 topics
- Purpose:
  - 📖 Information on education issues and #544
  - 📖 Promote ISD #544 and recognize students and staff
  - 📖 Reframing Issues
  - 📖 Personal stories – building trust

### **Supt. Column 10-23-06 – 1<sup>st</sup> Column**

This column is the first in what will become a weekly routine. It is my intent to write a weekly column about current topics in education focusing on the Fergus Falls Public Schools. I will also try to bring in topics affecting education from the state, nation and international perspectives.....

First, I would like to introduce myself to you.....

## Educational and General Information

The District offices, including Special Education Cooperative, ISD #935, have moved from the RTC to the Heritage Building located at 1519 Pebble Lake Road. This building was the old Pamida building and is now housing four entities. The move has gone well, with just a few details to be completed. We are anticipating hosting an open house in the near future so the public may tour the offices.

Last week the administration requested an early out on Wednesday so we could inservice staff. The purpose of the inservice was to train the teaching staff on a new evaluation method called The Framework for Teaching. The principals and I received this training in late September and wanted to implement the program ASAP.

The Framework for Teaching is outlined in four domains. Domain 1: Planning and Preparation, Domain 2: Class Environment, Domain 3: Instruction, and Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities. Staff will be evaluated in each area..... All of the District support staff was also trained on school safety issues. Officer Kevin Sonsetbo presented information on Code Reds and Yellows relating to building evacuations and procedures during an emergency.

Roger and Kay Worner, Building Consultants and superintendents, have been conducting a facility study for the Fergus Falls Public Schools this fall. A number of community members, school board members, and staff have met with the Worners. I have also toured the buildings with their staff to assess our needs....

You are invited to hear Roger and Kaye Worner, from Worner Consulting, present their facility and organizational study. The presentation can be heard at the **Middle School Auditorium on Monday, November 27, 2006 at 7:00 pm.** There will be ample time to hear the presentation and ask questions. The full report (119 pages) will be available for you to read on our website: [www.fergusfalls.k12.mn.us](http://www.fergusfalls.k12.mn.us)

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Our Math Committee plus all math teachers from grades 6-12 met in all day meeting last Tuesday to decide our future math curriculum. The following recommendations will be made to the District Curriculum Committee. The decision was made to go to a more balance approach in the elementary. By balanced I mean students will be able to compute well and problem solve. The curriculum is titled Every Day Math. There are 115 schools in the state currently using the program, 40 have been named five star schools on recent tests. Highlights of program include more computation, great resources for students, parents and teachers and meeting the needs of all levels of learners.

At the high school level the decision was made to return to a more traditional approach toward math. This curriculum is published by Glencoe and will provide our students with the preparation needed to succeed on our current standardize tests and the college prep requirements. Strengths of the program include materials for students, parents and teachers, meeting the needs of varied ability levels, aligned with standards and technology access. Student and parents will have online access to the text and sample problems worked out for their viewing.

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### **ULA Process**

Unfortunately, due to budget issues and declining enrollment, school board meetings around the state in March and April have been filled with teachers and support staff being laid off from work, or unrequested leave as the process is called in education. Survey results taken by education organizations gathering information from school districts statewide have shown that approximately 1,000 teachers will be placed on unrequested leave this spring..... The first step in the process is for the school board to approve the teaching positions being reduced,.....

### **Prairie Science Class Registration**

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The District is very pleased that we are able to expand the Prairie Science Class to the fourth grade starting this fall. The PSC program began 5 years ago, and has been steadily expanding. Next year, the PSC will double in size with the addition of grade 4, and will then host 240 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students each day. If you are interested in this option for your child please contact Principal Colbeck.....

### **Reading is #1**

After teaching for ten years as a business teacher, I always thought accounting and the other courses I taught were these most important in the school. After taking many graduate courses for my administrative licensure and studying current research, I realize now that reading is far and away the most important skill we teach to our students.

In fact, the research shows students must read well by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or they will struggle to make it through school and find success in life. Last year I attended a function at the McKnight Foundation regarding preschool and early childhood education. One of the speakers stressed the importance of reading by citing that when states are looking to build a prison; one of key indicators they look at are 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores. He shared that if the students aren't reading at an acceptable level, they build them a cell.

As a community, but most importantly as parents, I am requesting that you read to your child and model reading in your daily life. Student entering kindergarten that have been read to each day have a vocabulary of 10,000-12,000 words. On the other hand, students who have not been read to or are placed in front of the TV for extended periods of time, have only 4,000 words in their vocabulary. That is the beginning of the achievement gap, which only gets wider because of the limited vocabulary. Reading is a giving your child a better chance to succeed in life and its fun!

In the past couple of weeks, I have been able to share my passion for reading with our preschool and elementary students. I was one of the readers for the Fathers Read Every Day (FRED) program at both Eisenhower and McKinley Elementary. The focus of this program is for fathers to model reading to their children.

Earlier this month, I held an assembly at each elementary building. I had a lot of fun with the students celebrating their birthdays, playing a game, and teaching them how to properly behave in a large group setting. But, the key to the assembly was to stress reading. I read two books and then talked to them about the importance reading. I tell the students watching a little TV or playing a computer game is OK, but they really need to turn them off and READ.

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The budget cuts announced at the school board meeting on Monday night marks the twelfth straight year of budget cuts for the school district. The key reason for our budget shortfall this year were two changes in special education funding which resulted in a negative one million dollar adjustment in how funds were allocated to our school district.

Also negatively affecting our school fund balance are declining student enrollment, state funding not keeping up with inflation and dollars spent on maintenance of our facilities that exceeds the state allocation. School District #544 is in a financial crisis.

Our goal is to return our school district to solid financial status. We will work with city's economic development staff to increase student enrollment and to provide an excellent education and customer service so families will remain in our district. We will continue working with state legislators for an increase state funding and to improve our school facilities so they do not continue to drain our teaching and learning (general) funds.

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**Activities pay off for students, schools**

As the May 8 date for District 544's bond referendum approaches, I'll take advantage of every opportunity to talk about the referendum with district residents, both in print and through community presentations. This column gives me the chance to expand on the answers to some of the questions I hear during those presentations — questions that might be on the minds of other people, as well.

“Why don't we just cut student activities to save money?” was a question that was asked last week after I outlined the cost savings that would result from the referendum. Cutting activities would be a major mistake for two reasons.

The first reason is based on the decades of research cited by the Minnesota State High School League, which oversees the interscholastic athletic and fine arts programs for more than 200,000 students in the state. That research shows that students who participate in high school activities tend to have....

Second, I believe cutting activities actually would hurt the district's finances. The total cost of all our athletic activities is \$461,109, or 2 percent of the general budget. After you subtract total revenue of \$179,926 generated from admissions and fees, the net cost to the district is \$261,183, which is less than 2 percent.

So how would cutting activities negatively affect the budget? Here is where open enrollment has an impact. Each high school student enrolled in our district generates revenue of \$7,896 each year. As an example, the total cost of our football program is \$46,879, including coach's salaries, transportation and supplies. If you divided the cost by the per pupil revenue, you get 5.94 students.

In other words, it only takes six students to generate the revenue needed to fund the total football program. So if we cut football and six students left our district to play at another school, we would lose enough funding to cover all the costs for the program.

The following list is of the activities, their cost and the number of students needed to generate the revenue necessary to fund the program. High School Alpine skiing: \$868 program cost, 0.11 pupils need to fund the program  
Nordic skiing: \$445, 0.06

**Boy's athletics**

Baseball: \$21,692, 2.75....

**Girls' athletics:** Basketball: \$30,237, 3.83....

The total program cost for Middle School basketball, football, golf, tennis, track, volleyball and wrestling for both boys and girls is \$39,136. The revenue generated by 4.95 students would fund all of these programs. Student activities are a great bargain and help students focus on a positive and healthy activity. Go Otters!!

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**Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Fergus Falls Public Schools are holding P-T Conferences on Thursday, February 26 and Monday, March 1 from 5-8:45 and from 8 am-4 pm on Friday, February 27. The conferences are of great importance to the learning process. Elementary students typically have their parents /guardians attend their conferences at nearly 100 percent attendance rate, and this year we would like to increase the participation of our secondary school parents....

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**Assessments**

Once winter ends, and it might not this year, spring follows, but in schools spring is also known as “testing season”. This column has taken information from the Minnesota Department of Education's website help you understand the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.

The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA-II's) are reading, mathematics, writing, and science tests that help schools and districts measure student progress toward the state's academic standards....

### **Attendance**

January 24<sup>th</sup> marks the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> semester. I would be surprised if your son or daughter's attendance hasn't played a factor in their level of success in this grading period. If you, as a parent, want to increase your child's chance of doing well in school, make sure they attend each day. Students who attend regularly and make up their homework on time when they do have an excused absence are much more likely to receive higher grades.

Employers continually tell me, and other educators, that attendance is one of the most important attributes they are looking for in their employees. Employers review high school transcripts, which lists courses taken, test scores and attendance, when they are hiring new employees.

Absenteeism, including truancy, is one of the most frustrating areas to deal with for teachers. They can't teach the necessary skills to the students if they are not present.

## **Promote ISD 544 – Recognize Students and staff**

### **Reflections on American Education Week....**

This has been a great week for ISD #544. People love our schools, especially when we have special events like the McKinley parade, Cleveland's walk around the schools and grandparents days at Adams. The Veteran's Day program at the Middle School was excellent and the High School pep fest for the girls' swim team was a great way to show the support for our student athletes who are going on to state.

### **Teacher and Support Staff Members of the Year**

Congratulations to **Carol Thorsen** for winning the Support Staff of the Year and to **Dave Ellis** for being named the Fergus Falls Public Schools Teacher of the Year. Mr. Ellis will be nominated for the state teacher of the year award.

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This past week our High School and Adams Elementary School were recognized on the state report card as 5 star sites. Each school gets rated in reading and math, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest rating possible.....

### **SCHOOL BOARD RECOGNITION WEEK**

As citizen leaders, individual school board members face complex and demanding challenges. Members of the Fergus Falls School Board are excited about positioning our district for success for the next generation of students.....

### **Girls' Hockey**

As you read this column on Wednesday afternoon, our girls' hockey team is breaking new ground for its program by playing in the state tournament for the first time. Congratulations to the players, coaches, and parents who have worked so hard to make their dream become a reality. The team will play Red Wing on Wednesday at 1 pm.

Friday night's win was a thrilling one for the Otters. We scored early in the 1<sup>st</sup> period then Alexandria fought back to the take lead early in the second period. The girls regrouped tying the game at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> period and then taking control of the game with two early goals in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period.

The girls were treated to a police and fire department escort through town to the ice arena where they were warmly welcomed home by the pep band and community members. Captains Ericka Magnusson and Devon Clark along with Coach Vatsdahl thanked the crowd for their support throughout the season and you could certainly feel the excitement as they were looking forward to the state tournament.

The girls are not only talented hockey players, but outstanding students as well. This team was announced as the Section 6A Academic Champions, meaning the collective team's grade point average (GPA) was the highest in the section! Congratulations!!

## **Wrestling Atmosphere**

Last Tuesday, February 10, the Otter wrestlers took on the Alexandria Cardinals in the Maroon middle school gym. This match was filled with anticipation, not only did both teams have only one loss in the fight for the conference title, the heavyweight wrestlers were each ranked number in the state in their class.

What was so impressive was how the wrestling community, especially our alumni turned out in force to support the teams. The stands were full, people were standing behind each bench, three sections of additional chairs were all full and the elementary kids were cheering wildly all night for the teams.

When the Otters take the mat, the lights go down low, with only a spot light over the mat focusing on the circle where each wrestler tests their skills against their opponent. The Otters charge through a gauntlet of teammates and fans and circle the mat for their final warm up.

The audience was treated to Everett Jacobson singing the national anthem and the match was ready to begin. The Otters went up early, then they were down, they lost and won some close matches. After Colton Thorsen's win in the second to the last match at 215 lb weight class, the match was all tied at 27-27.

Our heavyweight wrestler, Josh Champion, found out earlier in the day he was suffering with a case of pneumonia, but he battled his outstanding opponent as best he could and came up a little short. The Otters lost the match, but certainly won the hearts and respect of many in attendance.

Congratulations to the Otter Wrestlers on an outstanding season. It is a tribute to Coach Aho, the boosters and all the alumni for creating an outstanding and supportive environment for our young men to compete.

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## **Most Influential Educators**

Last Friday the Class of 2009 surprised the staff at Fergus Falls Public Schools by naming their most influential teachers and support staff member as voted on by the students. Representatives from the class and National Honor Society first served cake and lemonade as the staff gathered for a District inservice in the high school gym.....

## **Reframing an Issue**

The issue has never been about purses as much as large bags, book bags or knapsacks, which students, both boys and girls say is their purse. The large bags do cause an issue in the classroom for clutter and the experts say we should avoid this problem because of the capability of concealing dangerous items as well some sanitary issues.

A common sense approach to this issue will be to allow students, female and male, to be able to carry a small "clutch", purse, or pencil holder, whatever you want to call it. The small bag should have no straps and it must be hand size. Student will not be able to bring large bags to the classroom. They may store them in their lockers. The intent of the small bag is so students may hold feminine products, inhalers, other medical devices, or writing utensils.

In the normal course of school policy review, Mr. Winter will bring in any changes in policy to the board in May. We may want to be consistent with the elementary and middle school where they do not allow purses or bags in the classroom.

When the school board reviews a change in policy they need to make decisions with the students safety in mind. We have more doors closed and security at others to insure the safety of our students. The community and the schools need to do what is in the best interests of the students. If we err, we need to err on the side of providing a safer environment for our students.

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## **Parking Lot Fee**

I have been asked about the parking lot fee a few times in the past couple of weeks and I have tried to provide the follow information in an effort to understand the Board's decision.

The student council was able to raise ample dollars for all their student activities when they received the profits from the soda pop machines. A healthy and wise move from the Board was to remove all soda pop from our schools, but this decision reduced the funds raised by the student council each year.

Wanting to continue The Day of Caring and the Senior Trip to the Twin Cities, the student council came up with the idea of a parking lot fee to raise funds for the student council's activities. When this was presented to the Board, the Board had many questions and thoughts on how the money should be used. They asked the student council for more information so they could make a decision.

The next month the student council came back to the Board with the information requested. The student council took a sample poll of students and 96% said they would pay the \$20 annual fee if the dollars went to The Day of Caring and the senior trip. The Board then passed a motion stating 90% of the revenue would go to the student council and 10% for parking lot maintenance.

I appreciated the student council's effort. They completed the necessary legwork and worked through the required procedures to change a board policy. Like all policies, this one will be reviewed and evaluated.

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## **Grade Level Configuration -- Clarification**

The decision to move forward with grade levels at each site is not contingent on the passage of the bond referendum on May 8. The recommended facility plans from the Task Force and accept by the School Board focuses on the grade levels at each site. Media center (library) materials, playground equipment and other resources can all be tailored to the appropriate age level. The plan also allows for class sizes to be more balanced at each grade level and for staff to be used more efficiently.

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## **NCLB**

If you go the Minnesota Department of Education's website and locate Fergus Falls Public Schools report card you will find the following statement: FFPS has 19 eligible groups and has met 94.7% of the requirements for **Adequate Yearly Progress** under No Child Left Behind. That means our District was successful in 18 of the 19 groups.

Much has been written about the federal education program named No Child Left Behind (NCLB) over the last month in Fergus Falls and around the state and nation. We are not pleased that we are on the not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) list because of one category. And the fact is, whether its this program or NCLB is reauthorized under another name, we need to be accountable our students and community and make every effort to remove our District from the not making AYP list.....

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## **A Different Perspective on Open Enrollment**

After the recent article on open enrollment in the Daily Journal a staff member shared some information with me that made me look at the open enrollment situation in a different light. Open enrollment was created to give parents choices on where to send their children.

The Minnesota Department of Education's website is full of information related to all of the school districts in Minnesota. We looked at data related to all students in area schools that are open enrolling in and out of #544. The website lists ADM, which means the average daily membership of each district for the 2006-07 school year. As you can see from the chart listed below, when you use a percentage of the student body from each school, #544 has a larger percentage entering our District than leaving, with the exception of West Central Area.

	<u>ADM % In to #544</u>	<u>ADM % Out from #544</u>
Ashby	3.98%	1.29%
Battle Lake	1.25%	0.02%
Campbell-Tintah	6.03%	0.08%
Henning	0.72%	0.00%
Pelican Rapids	2.31%	0.26%
Perham	0.18%	0.04%
Rothsay	3.17%	0.25%
Underwood	13.01%	4.85%
WCA	.17%	0.19%

As the superintendent of #544 I'm a very protective and proud of our school system. I'm fully aware that we have strengths and weaknesses as a District. It is our goal to build on our strengths and either improve or eliminate our weaknesses so we can serve our community well.

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**Dress Code News**

Much to the school board's and my surprise, the dress code policy update for next year caused quite a stir last week. At the school board meeting held on October 22 the Board updated many policies.

The dress code policy was updated to reflect current practices being enforced in the schools. We do not allow students' undergarments to be shown such as spaghetti strap tops or boxer shorts showing above low hanging pants. The Board decided, to be clear, it should be placed in writing.

Even though there was no change from our current enforcement of the dress code, just putting the words "student undergarments should not be seen" was newsworthy in some eyes. The Daily Journal, Lakes Radio, WCCO and the StarTribune all had stories on the topic. And I must say I have received many positive calls and emails for putting this in writing.

Fashion trends are continually changing so this is not as big a problem as it has been in the past few years. Overall, our students dress very well with only a few incidents of students testing the boundaries of proper dress. We will continue to have high expectations for students' academic performance, behavior and appearance.

## Personal stories – building trust

### **Grief Support Group**

A few parents have called my office about the grief support group mentioned in the newspaper article last weekend. Please call my wife, Karen, at 218-998-3201, or Lakeland Hospice for more information about the grief support for parents who are grieving after the death of a child. They meet on Tuesdays from 6:45-7:45 pm at the Lakeland Hospice building.

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**10-3-07 Supt Column -- Elementary assemblies and humble pie**

Each of my seven years as a superintendent, I have met with elementary students in an assembly to celebrate birthdays, teach them how to act in a large group setting, read to the students and have some fun while they get a chance to know me better. My first assembly of the year was at McKinley School, and it was a memorable one.

First, the kindergarteners and I were playing a basketball shooting game for prizes. The balls were pumped up a little too much, and the one I had set down on a chair because it had a slight bulge EXPLODED! After the initial shock we all had a good laugh, especially when Principal Colbeck wore the split basketball as a helmet.

Next, I asked the teachers to bring some favorite books for me to read to the students. The first one went well, but by the middle of the second book the students were starting to fidget and squirm, so I made the bold statement, "You have to sit still or I'll stop reading, and we'll all go back to class." What a mistake. They all nodded their heads and raised their hands, agreeing they wanted to go back class.

After the teachers and I stopped laughing, I had to beg them to let me finish the book. It was a wonderful learning experience for me. Be careful what you ask kindergarten students because you're going to get the truth.

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**The Bucket List**

*The Bucket List* is popular movie about two men listing all the things they wanted to do before they "kicked the bucket". They chose things like skydiving, trips to see the world along with many relationship items as well. As my son told me, you can't go wrong with a Morgan Freeman narrated movie! Here are the first three items on my "Bucket" list for education...

Make sure kids come to school ready to learn each day. Fed, well rested, and read to since early childhood would make a tremendous difference for all.

Create system where all staff has time built-in to their day, week, and year to accomplish ongoing professional development. This would translate into higher student achievement through improved teaching practices, and, I believe, very high job satisfaction.

Fix the funding formula so Districts can thrive in a stable environment. This will certainly be an item where I will concentrate much of my efforts and will need the help of all who concerned about education.

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**Holidays difficult for some students**

Last week our High School counselors sent a message to staff pertaining to holiday stress. I appreciate our counselors' efforts to recognize student and staff needs during the holiday season. The following is their message:

For some of our students and staff, the holiday season may be a sad time.....

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**10-31-07 Turning 50**

Here are few items I remember growing up, some things were better then, others are better now it all depends on your perspective ... there were gas wars on the Minnesota and North Dakota border where you could fill up your tank for \$.27 per gallon now the fight is to stay under \$3.00. I received a Texas Instrument scientific calculator for graduation. It cost \$74, you could buy it today for less than \$10.

I grew up next to a baseball diamond where all the kids in town organized and umpired their games without any parents help. I could ride my bike all over town or go swim in the river and then have supper with my family most nights. Today, I would be one of the protective parents guarding my child's safety and our lives are way too busy it seems for regular meals together.

The Viet Nam war ended the year I graduated from high school. Another controversial war continues today, but I am very proud these soldiers are welcomed home with honor and prestige.

Sputnik, the Russian spaceship, went into space the year I was born. It is interesting that history is now repeating itself, we are now in a global economy and the rise of China and India is causing another push for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in the United States.

Mini-skirts for girls and boys styling long hair, bib overalls and long sleeved underwear tops were the style of the day. The students today, other than a couple of fashion trends that reveal a little too much, are much better dressed and clean cut.

So why am I reflecting back? Two numbers 5 & 0! For the past six months or so when the topic of age comes up I have been telling people that I'm 50. This has given me a chance to try out the sound of it in preparation for the inevitable milestone birthday. So now that I've turned the big 5-0 I THINK I'm prepared for it and now I have to find ways to use my age to my advantage.

I should be able to use my age as a built in excuse for my physical and mental lapses, especially when I'm working out at the Y in the morning and the 40-year old whippersnappers are trying to give me advice. You would also think my golfing group would let me play from the white (forward) tees with no penalty, but there is a whiner in our group that is almost 60 so I don't think that one will work

Also, I have now joined the 58% of superintendents in Minnesota who are in there 50s; there is another 12% over 60 years old. The education community is faced with the need of developing the next wave of leaders.

In the culture of our new millennium I have been hearing that your 50s is the new 30s and your 60s is the new 40s. I've already lived through my 30s once, so I'll take my chances with moving forward into my 50s.

# Bond Referendum – Series of Columns

## 20-Second Summary of the Referendum:

In the next paragraph I try to summarize the Bond Referendum for you. This is an issue that I do not want to the community to think that it is so complex it can't be stated in a few words. Here is my attempt and remember, I speak fast...

“The Fergus Falls School District is asking for voter approval on a May 8 bond referendum election that will improve its facilities to ensure its funds are spent on teaching and learning. Our district's facilities plan addresses maintenance issues, and it details a long-term maintenance plan for all buildings. At \$32.5 million, it is less than half the cost of the 2005 referendum. It will improve the security and safety of our students with supervised public entries, and with better traffic routing of buses and other vehicles. This plan efficiently uses staff and facilities to ensure a strong financial position for our schools.”

## A Piece of the “Puzzle”

Are we putting too much emphasis on buildings and not enough on our students? I believe the answer to that question is “no”; the task force, school board and administration all understand that teaching and learning—students and teachers—are the most important components in every education system. We understand that buildings are just “a piece of the puzzle” of a successful school system.....

## Band-Aid or Vision for the District?

The school board has a vision, a plan, to align all the pieces to complete the puzzle. The puzzle metaphor represents a successful school district where successful students learn and teachers teach in safe and healthy buildings. The school board does not believe this plan is a band-aid for our buildings. The middle school and the Cleveland buildings are quality facilities that need additions and upgrading to serve our students for the long-term.

In this column I will address how this facility plan meets the five key criteria set by the Task Force.....

Criteria Number 1.	Long-term Master Plan....
Criteria Number 2.	A Plan that will Pass....
Criteria Number 3.	Cost....
Criteria Number 4.	Security and Safety...
Criteria Number 5.	Efficiency...

Personalize -- As I was sitting in the middle school auditorium waiting for the Kingston Trio to begin their concert last Saturday evening, I reflected with pride on how we really do have a “community” school. Our citizens, and others from the region, were able to listen to and enjoy outstanding performers in comfort because of the vision of the community in 1971....

Our community's aging schools are draining the school district's general fund. Dollars that should be spent on teaching, learning, and technology now are being spent to maintain buildings and grounds. This referendum is key to addressing that issue.

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*Voters in the Fergus Falls School District will go to the polls Tuesday, May 8, to vote on a \$32.5 million facilities plan which includes an addition at Cleveland School to accommodate grades 3-5, an addition/renovation at the Middle School to create wings for grades 6-8 and 9-12, and renovation in a portion of the High School to accommodate district offices and programs.*

*This is one in a series of columns explaining the bond referendum and the decisions of the Facilities Task Force that recommended the referendum plan.*

“Vision” is the word I stress when I'm presenting our proposed facility plan to voters in the Fergus Falls School District. Our Facilities Task Force, along with the School Board, developed a comprehensive plan that addresses where students will be located and educated, how staff will be utilized, and how the facilities will be maintained. This long-term plan truly spells out a vision for our district.

During my presentations, I often hear concerns about the maintenance of our facilities, so I'd like to emphasize that that the district has always been *maintaining* its facilities. However, the buildings are in need of major renovations, and the district has no way of financing those renovations other than to ask voters to approve a bond referendum.....

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**Local Contractors**

At one of my presentations this past week, I was asked whether local contractors would be hired for the building project or whether a contractor has already been hired.

At this point, the School District has hired only an architect and construction manager. The architect's role is to design buildings and draw the blueprints, while the construction manager acts as an agent for the School District by managing the process. The construction manager calculates cost estimates, lets and awards bids, and coordinates the contractors during the construction phase for a smooth building process.

One of the reason we chose RA Morton as our construction manager is the company's knowledge of area contractors. We anticipate that local contractors will have very competitive bids for this work. This construction phase of this project is estimated at 18-20 month.

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**Soil Borings at the Middle School – Explanation of a rumor**

Recently, a concern was raised by a few citizens to the school board about building on the north side of the middle school (Friberg Avenue side). The District communications have always been very open about having to adjust for the imperfect soils and have made sound decisions based on data....

Final thoughts before the vote...

No one likes taxes, but everyone likes good schools. This referendum balances the two very well. If you look at this referendum from the perspective of a long-term investment rather than a short-term cost, I believe you'll agree that a reasonable investment now will allow the district to move forward with the vision that has been laid out for the education of our students.

As I have worked with the staff, school board, task force and community, I have found that all have the best interests of the students in mind. The task force listened to diverse opinions, requested and studied data, reviewed past referendums, debated proposals and costs, and presented a final recommendation to the school board. It is hard to find fault with a process that considers the kids first.

We believe we have listened to our community: You asked for a less expensive proposal, for the continued use of our elementary buildings, for blueprints and drawings of proposed renovations. Now the results are in your hands. Please take the time to be an informed voter on May 8. The vote next Tuesday will affect our community and

## SOD – Series of Columns

### **ISD #544 is in Statutory Operating Debt**

Fergus Falls Public Schools has been suffering from declining enrollment for many years. Our revenue is based on student count; if you have fewer students in your District you will have less revenue. With less revenue you obviously need to cut your budget. Even though we have made dramatic cuts, our fund balance is now a negative number.

When your fund balance is over -2.5% of general fund balance you are placed in Statutory Operating Debt by the Minnesota Department of Education. Our fund balance is a negative 6.6%.

Why are we in SOD now? The revenue increase from the state for this year for #544 was 0.8% and next year's increase will total only 0.9% under the current law. Inflation is usually 3-4% per year so it doesn't take too long to spend down your fund balance.

Tom Hiebert, Superintendent at McLeod West in Brownton in Minnesota recently wrote a very informative column on Statutory Operating Debt (SOD). He was very generous in allowing me to use his column to help explain the process to you.

Statutory operating debt is commonly referred to as SOD, which is an acronym that is used to describe a negative financial condition of a Minnesota public school. Minnesota Statute 123B.83 says that a district is not to exceed a negative 2.5 percent unreserved general fund balance. The SOD calculation for the unreserved general fund balance is arrived at by dividing the unreserved fund balance by the yearly-unreserved expenditures. The purpose of this calculation is to prevent over spending by providing a legal guideline, which Minnesota school districts can use to target their budgets.

When a district has been notified by the Minnesota Department of Education that it is in SOD, the district must prepare a board-approved plan to come out of SOD within two to three years. The plan needs to be submitted by January 31 of the school year the district enters into SOD and be approved by the Minnesota Department of Education, Program Finance Division. #544 has been informed and we are currently in the process of developing next year's budget and writing the required plan.

There are three main parts to a SOD plan: a documentation portion that should show the district can be viable, a spreadsheet showing the revenues and expenses, and a board-approved resolution. In developing the plan the district must include information that indicates the district can remain a viable district by maintaining programs that will benefit the students of the district.

In the plan such items as enrollment assumptions, budget reductions, and possible increases in operating levies need to be included. Past fund balances and attributing factors leading up to the SOD status will need to be shown. The spreadsheet needs to show the revenue and expenses along with the reductions that will show how the district will be out of SOD in two to three years.

The resolution will state several items the district must follow but all the items point toward maintaining fiscal health and adopting only a budget that has a positive projected balance.

Last Spring the District made dramatic cuts, \$1.8 million, which will help start the process of returning to a positive fund balance. The passage of the bond referendum will also help with the deferred maintenance of our facilities, which will result in less dollars used from our general fund.

#544 School Board and administration is committed to working towards a solution to our financial issues. We will be working with area legislators to correct the funding formula for all of our schools. There are 99 school districts in the state of Minnesota asking their taxpayers for increase in funding on November 6. It is obvious that the current system has some major flaws in it.

#### **SOD Plan Components:**

Describe the School-District Setting: The setting of the district includes the demographics of the district, a description of businesses, and characteristics of the community.....

#### **Budget Cuts**

A district is considered in statutory operating debt when its general fund balance is negative 2.5 percent or lower. We entered into SOD on July 1, 2007, largely due to a combination of declining enrollment, costly facility conditions and changes in the special education funding received from the state. On Jan. 14, the School Board approved a plan, required by the state, which outlines the district's response to SOD. Board members are committed to the fiscal steps outlined in the plan and, to get out of SOD by the end of the 2010 school year, we will need to cut \$2.36 million from our budget during the 2008-09 school year and another \$1 million in 2009-2010.....

## *Friday Report*

- Weekly Report to School Board
- Sent out every Friday in PDF Format
- I journalize every meeting during the week for the SB and my record.
- Preview of upcoming issues and SB meetings.

### **Friday Reports 9-11-09:**

The end of the week has been much calmer than the first part. Here is my update....

**H1N1--** It appears to be settling down in our schools. On Tuesday we had 55 absent, then 33 on Wednesday and 29 on Thursday. Our new nurse, Erika Yoney, is doing a wonderful job of working with public health. We do have an influenza flu plan completed when the bird flu was a concern. We can glean information from that plan if needed.

**President's Speech** – Whenever, I have a difficult situation, I always reflect back on what could have been done differently. As I stated at faculty meeting on Tuesday, even though we were on a tight time frame, I certainly would have involved more school board and staff in the decision making process. I apologize for putting you and the District in an uncomfortable situation. On Tuesday, Carri T., Melanie, Dean, Scott, Marian, Elaine and I watched the speech together. On Wednesday, 14 students were opted out from watching the message by their parents and one parent came in and watched with their child. There were some technical issues in the elementary school right at 8:30 am, but they were quickly resolved so all could view it.

**Green Team** – As you saw in my weekly email, being “green” is going to be a big push for our school. Reduce, Reuse and Recycling are the key ways to focus on solid waste. The staff sent to a grant-writing workshop will be writing grants for assistance in our efforts. The first one is for recycling bins for each room in the District.

**School Board Meeting:** Melanie will be absent from the meeting because she will be attending a funeral in Crookston. When I talked to her yesterday, she was going to talk to Darrel, who is vice chairperson, about the meeting and comments about the President's message and also call or email the full board.

**FERGUS FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS – ISD #544**  
**TENTATIVE SCHOOL BOARD AGENDA**  
**Monday, September 14, 2009**  
**5 p.m. Council Chambers, City Hall**

<b>School Board</b>	Melanie Cole, Chair Tarma Carlson, Clerk	Darrel Tungseth, Vice Chair Jeff Hohrman	Matt Lemke, Treasurer Steve Stenerson
<b>Administration</b>	Jerry Ness, Supt.	Mark Masten, Bus. Mgr.	Elaine Jahnke, Admin. Asst.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**A. Call to Order**

**B. Establishment of Quorum**

**C. Agenda Approval (with Additions/Modifications)**

**D. Acknowledgements**

**E. Reports:**

- Michael Beach – Construction Update
  - Fall Sports Update – Gary Schuler/Heidi Retzlaff/Vera Carlson
  - Tarma Carlson – Wellness, Policy
  - Melanie Cole – Spec Ed Coop, Region I, Negotiations
  - Jeff Hohrman – Staff Development
  - Matt Lemke – Curriculum Review, Finance
  - Steve Stenerson – Buildings/Grounds, 544 Education Foundation, MSHSL
  - Darrel Tungseth – Meet & Confer, Legislative Liaison
  - Jerry Ness, Superintendent
- Enrollment – I'll give an update with our new numbers from the spreadsheet I sent out last week.

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**F. GENERAL CONSENT ITEMS**

**1. School Board minutes of the regular school board meeting held on August 24, 2009.**

**2. Bills and Treasurer's Report**

**3. Personnel**

Certified Hires:

- Nathaniel Moir – .66 FTE/English – ALC (replaced open position)
- Leah Graff – .729 FTE/P.E. – Elementary (replaced Ryan Johnson)
- Matthew Dahmen – .5 FTE/Science - iQ Academy (hired based on iQ students)
- Daniel Lawson – .416 FTE/Math – HS (hire to do remedial math for the seniors not passing the math test)

Support Staff Hire:

- Matthew Dahmen – .5 FTE/1<sup>st</sup> Semester Learning Coach – iQ Academy (hired based on the number of iQ students)

Coach Resignation:

- Ryan Johnson – Head Girls' Golf (we ask head coaches to resign if they move on)

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**G. OLD BUSINESS**

1.

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#### H. NEW BUSINESS

1. Approve surrogate parents for a student with a disability. Routine requirement
2. Proposed Levy for Taxes Payable 2010 (set at the maximum amount) Approving the levy is an annual SB action in September. Mark will walk through the levy step by step at the meeting. In September, we always set the maximum. In December, after final adjustments are made, we set the actual dollar amount. Health & Safety and Debt Service were lower and market value increased. The net effect is a -3.45% decrease.
3. Agreement with Commerce Bank to allow the school district to pay bills electronically: Much like our paperless payroll, this will save us time and dollars to use the electronic bill pay. Mark will explain the program and how it will actually generate funds for the District.

#### COMMERCE BANK COPORATE RESOLUTION TO OBTAIN CREDIT CARD ACCOUNT...

4. Addition of 1 FTE special education paraprofessional position – A thorough review of the Adams Elementary staffing for student IEPs found that we were not meeting the needs of all the students. To correct this issue we need to add a para position.
- 

## Friday Report 9-18-2009

### Monday

#### Principal's Meeting **Agenda Items:**

**Nurse** -- H1N1 – Our numbers this week have dramatically improved, only 2-3 students gone with the flu each day per building.

#### **Curriculum Q & A from Carri T.**

Administrative attendance at LCSC Data Retreat Sept. 22-23 – We are sending 8 adm and staff to this data retreat.

What is the expectation for follow through with C. Kronenberg information? We will be having monthly Otter University classes for staff.....

**FFE** -- Sample Tables/Chairs/Desks – We will be getting samples for students to use and give their input.

## **SB Work Session –**

**Pray Fergus Falls** – they will follow our visitor policy like other groups. A list of people will be given to Elaine and the days they will be at each building.

**Staffing** – Board recommendations from the work session are to increase Marian’s time to .5 FTE from .333; increase vocal music .167 and .083 Social Studies to reduce class size. These will be on the next agenda.

## **Cleveland Playground – from Mark’s notes...**

I received four pricing options for installing the playground at Cleveland.....

## **Tuesday**

**Architects** – On Tuesday, Tammy Magney, Michelle Westberg, Kara Koop from ATSR were in the District. Dean, Mark, and I toured the building thoroughly with them and were able to give them updates and areas that needed their attention....

## **Wednesday**

**544 Education Foundation** – They held their regular monthly meeting and their annual meeting consecutively on Wednesday. They served 300 meals at Otter Pride Night so they were pleased with the outcome. Rich Schara is the new president and they will be discussing a big project to coincide with the opening of the Kennedy building. The next all school reunion is July 15-17, 2011.

## **Thursday**

**Dollars for Scholars** – They held their reorganization meeting for the new school year. The key clarification in their bylaws was to receive a DFS award you must reside in the 544 school district.

**Ministerial Group** – This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time I have met with this group to give an update. They are very supportive of our school system overall. I told them I believe I’m the most prayed for man in Fergus Falls. I updated them on the new building and transition plans for the spring. We will be touring with this group soon.

**Forward Fergus Falls** – The big push for this group right now is getting as many surveys filled out as possible. They have 1,000 completed and would like 1,500 by the end of the month. They will be trying to get a number of high schools in the area to get the student’s input.

## **Friday**

**History Day Presentation** – I will present to the Veden Trust on Friday along with History Day students and their advisors. They want to know if their investment has paid off. This will be a great opportunity to give them an idea of other areas in need as well.

**Financial Data** – Mark and I were really hoping we'd be in the black this year but...the preliminary numbers from the auditors are still in the red but we are out of SOD!....

## *Status Report*

- Report to Community on Goals
- Reviewed quarterly
- Allows community, school board and staff to see our accomplishments

Fergus Falls Public Schools

### **DISTRICT GOALS** *2008-09*

## **Goal # 1 -- During the District's reorganization and remodeling process, educating our students is the District's No. 1 priority.**

### **Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching**

Component 2b: Establishing a Culture of Learning

Importance of the Content

Student Pride in work

Expectations for learning and achievement

### **We are working to reach this goal by:**

- 🌐 Completing the \$32.5 million building renovation by Fall 2010. This will allow our students to be educated in modern, healthy buildings.
- 🌐 SB decision to empty the Kennedy Secondary School for the 2008-09 school year to allow for a safe renovation process.
- 🌐 SB decision to return to the original construction timeline at Kennedy Secondary School to ensure there would be no interruption of the learning process due to moving in mid-year.
- 🌐 **Improving staff through continuing education training in:**
- 🌐 Response to Intervention -- Student data to design instruction to meet state and federal standards.
- 🌐 Response to Intervention (RtI) in grades 1 through 6 has used student data to identify students with needs in reading and math, to design instruction to meet those needs, and to monitor and adjust instruction. RtI has used several data points for multiple reference and reliability: MAP, MCAII, and DIBELS. All students are Universally screened in reading, 3 times a year with DIBELS. MAP was given 3 times this year to RtI and Title 1 students. It was given 2 times to all students. Students in RtI were progress monitored with DIBELS (reading) and MAP Checklists or Number Worlds (math) every 2-4 weeks .

- 🌐 All data is shared with classroom teachers so they can use it to design instruction for their students.

- 🌐 *First grade, this year, used MAP scores- by strand- to design instructional groupings of their students, for a weekly class of math-by strand, in addition to their regular math instruction.*

- 📖 **Bridging Communications with Parents**

- 📖 Smart Board
    - 📖 PowerSchool
    - 📖 Differentiated Instruction
    - 📖 iQ Academy
    - 📖 Technology – Critical Software, Programs and Procedures

- 🌐 Otter University – a monthly staff group study
  - Saturday Technology learning opportunities

- 🌐 Communications with staff, parents, and community
  - Quarterly Newsletter by principals
  - Weekly supt. column sent home with students
  - Weekly emails to staff from superintendent
  - District Newsletters
  - School Board meetings are televised
  - Middle School and High School site councils
  - All schools send calendars
  - PowerSchool – parents have access to student grades and attendance via the web page
  - Radio shows each Monday by principals
  - Web Page – Tremendous amount of information can be found on the District webpage [www.isd544.org](http://www.isd544.org) and you can sign up for instant alerts
  - Video streaming via internet of school events

### **Successful Events/Programs for Students**

- 🌐 Homecoming – Parade, Half-time show and dance for students
- 🌐 Sno-Ball week
- 🌐 Prom
- 🌐 National Honor Society
- 🌐 Student Council – MS and HS
- 🌐 Right Start Programs – concentrating on transitions when moving to a new building
- 🌐 iQ Academy Minnesota – A grade 6-12 online school for students
- 🌐 Orientation – 6-9 grade starting the school year and for incoming parochial students
- 🌐 6 yr Plan for High School Students – A student-teacher advisory program to help with the transition to post-secondary school
- 🌐 Summer 2008 workshop in which 8 FFHS students wrote the play My Head in Butter with a grant from the MN Sesquicentennial Committee. The play then became the FFHS Spring Play.

- 🌐 The Video Productions class produced the five memory videos played at the Sr. Recognition Banquet and produces the monthly OTTER Updates seen on local TV.
- 🌐 Major District #544 events are videotaped and edited by high school students to provide an inexpensive keepsake in DVD format for all students and families to enjoy
- 🌐 Career Day – An opportunity for students to see and hear from area businesses and colleges.
- 🌐 Homework Help before and after school at Cleveland, Eisenhower and the high school buildings
- 🌐 Targeted Services is a new program starting this summer. Its mission is to provide students with the opportunity to learn and succeed in a safe and supportive environment with varied curricular options and support services tailored to each individual student's needs. It will support students in grades K-8.
- 🌐 Stop the Bullying Program
- 🌐 Summer School Programs for students
- 🌐 Prairie Science Class – Students in grades 4-5 have the option to request to receive part of their curriculum delivered at the Prairie Wetland Learning Center. Our school is the only one in the nation that daily teaches science and writing curriculum using the outdoors.
- 🌐 Automotive – AYES program – An elective course for our high school students is in one of the state's four approved Automotive Youth Education Services. Students are educated in automotive repairs through a certified program and complete job shadowing and internships in local stores.
- 🌐 SMART curriculum for PK-Kindergarten (Stimulating Maturity through Accelerated Readiness Training) Each station engages the students to help develop visual eye training, fine motor and large muscle skills. We have also incorporated reading and math readiness into the activities that they are doing. The kindergarten teachers have seen an improvement in the students over the school year in all of these areas.
- 🌐 Diversity Program, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Step curriculum for the elementary students. The focus is how to treat each other in a world where diversity exists.
- 🌐 KVLV Academic Challenge
- 🌐 Future Farmers of America
- 🌐 Student Assistance Teams to ensure students are receiving additional services as necessary
- 🌐 Middle School and High School Site Councils
- 🌐 Youth Health Day
- 🌐 Young Writers Conference
- 🌐 Senior Recognition Banquet honors the current senior's achievements and inducts new members into the Hall of Fame.
- 🌐 Drama Club. It offers a school-year long opportunity for actors, writers and theatre techies to convene, have fun, learn their crafts, and make connections with other theatre lovers.
- 🌐 Scrabble Club
- 🌐 Chess Strategies
- 🌐 3 Chess Tournaments: Fall/Winter/Spring
- 🌐 Economics Challenge

- 🌐 Book Clubs
- 🌐 Math Masters
- 🌐 Promising Young Writers
- 🌐 Geography Bee
- 🌐 Spelling Bee
- 🌐 Lego League
- 🌐 Knowledge Master Open
- 🌐 Cribbage Tournament
- 🌐 Ottetail River Testing - The results were sent up to MSUM for a Water Quality Testing project.
- 🌐 Annual PAC (Parent Advisory Council) for Positively Awesome Character Awards
- 🌐 College Courses in the High School
- 🌐 Knowledge Bowl
- 🌐 Continental Math League
- 🌐 The 544 Education Foundation provided monies for the Cleveland 3rd graders to do science activities at the PWLC one afternoon every month.

### **Academic Achievements:**

- 🌐 Envirothon -- The team of Kara Fisher, Sarah Lyngby, Megan Rasmussen, Hannah Rausch, and Ramsey Vogt finished 1st in the oral presentation and 2<sup>nd</sup> overall. They will now compete at the state Envirothon.
- 🌐 Blondeau Fine Arts Festival – This celebration allows our high school students to showcase their work each May.
- 🌐 Closeup – Washington DC study visit for juniors in Government class
- 🌐 Ms. Enderson’s class competing at a high level in Personal Finance
- 🌐 Tri-College Math (One Fergus Falls team placed 2nd in the large school division and Danielle Schroeder was in the top 10 individuals)
- 🌐 Financial Literacy Challenge -- Brandon Bergerud and Patrick Billodeau finished in the top 1% nationally
- 🌐 Math Counts (One Fergus team placed third and Jason Burns was fourth individually and advanced to state)
- 🌐 History Day (10 of 13 students advanced to state) Andy and Billy Eerdmans won the state title in historical display and will be advancing to the national competition in Washington DC. Eerdmans placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the nation.
- 🌐 Knowledge Bowl – Won the section title – Andrew Banal, Billy Eerdmans, Jordan Rasmussen, Eddie Roberts and Daniel Schneck.
- 🌐 Economics Challenge, 5<sup>th</sup> place finish in state – Patrick Billodeau, Brandon Bergerud, Rose Saul, Hannah Rausch and Dacia Walkup
- 🌐 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Honors Programs recognizing 3.5+ GPA – 7<sup>th</sup> grade program is sponsored by Glende-Nilsen Funeral Homes
- 🌐 J.E.T.S. = Junior Engineering Technical Society; involving the sciences, mathematics, and English concepts and their application.
- 🌐 Members of the Varsity A Team for J.E.T.S. who placed:
  - 🏆 Fifth at the multi regional competition
  - 🏆 First in the state competition for schools our size
  - 🏆 Eighteenth in the nation for schools our size

- Varsity A
- Patrick Billodeau
- Brandon Demuth
- Kara Fisher
- Benjamin Kugler
- Sarah Lyngby
- Christina Masten
- Hannah Rausch
- Erika Sutor

🌐 Members of the Junior Varsity A Team for J.E.T.S. who placed:

- 🏆 First at the multi regional competition
- 🏆 First in the state competition for schools our size
- 🏆 Fifteenth in the nation for schools our size
  - Junior Varsity A
  - Andrew Banal
  - Emma Demartelaere
  - Aaron Demuth
  - Reece Denzel
  - Joseph Moses
  - Danielle Olson
  - Daniel Schneck
  - Ariel Schuelke

#### **Athletic Achievements/Programs:**

- 🌐 The following teams were awarded state academic awards from the Minnesota High School Coaches Association:
  - Gold – Gymnastics, Boys Cross Country
  - Silver -- Girls Swimming, Girls Cross Country, Girls Tennis, Wrestling
- 🌐 Outstanding Otter Sponsors--Gettel Chiropractic, Bremer Bank, Nelson Ford, Dodge, Lincoln, Svingen, Hagstrom, Karkela, Cline & Dirks Law Firm
- 🌐 Added Adapted Bowling for our student
- 🌐 Outstanding Otters Award Program
- 🌐 Three student-athletes sign Division I letters of intent.
- 🌐 AAA Students (Academic, Arts, and Athletics) Chelsey Enderle and Tommy Olson placed high in regional competition.

#### **Team State Entrants:**

- 🌐 Football
- 🌐 Girls' Hockey
- 🌐 Boys' Track
- 🌐 Baseball

#### **Individual State Entrants:**

- 🌐 Girls Swimming -- Kara Fisher, Shannon Johnson, Sarah Monk, Miranda Anderson , Ariel Schuelke, Heidi Busack, Susie Kitzman, Taylor Monk
- 🌐 Wrestling – Josh Champion – 2<sup>nd</sup> place, Colton Thorsen – 3<sup>rd</sup> place, Jordan Ringquist

- 🌐 Boys Swimming – Nick Wiftil, Eben Danielson, Mike Kuske, Erik Money, Jacob Fisher, Mike Hurley-Class A Swimmer of the Year and two championships including the Class A record in the 200 IM
- 🌐 Nordic Ski - Sarah Lyngby
- 🌐 Girls’ Golf – Amber Hovland
- 🌐 Girls’ Track (07-08) Haylie Zenner state champ 800 meter run
- 🌐 Boys’ Track – Simon Erlandson

**Conference Champions:**

- Girls’ Hockey
- Football
- CLC Boys Conference Golf Championship – Connor Lausch, Trevor Gervais, Lucas Gervais, Taylor Schuck, Nick Risbrudt, and Mitch Thoreson.

**Fine Arts:**

- 🌐 Fergus Falls Marching Band being selected for the inaugural parade.
- 🌐 Community supporting the band financially = \$64,000
- 🌐 John Phillip Sousa -- Anthony Iverson and Alyssa Viger
- 🌐 Louis Armstrong Jazz Award -- Brandon Demuth
- 🌐 All-State Band = Megan Tiede, Tia Pederson, Erica Andersen, & Rose Saul
- 🌐 Outstanding Senior Choir Students – Weston Hed and Sarah Monk
- 🌐 Samantha Banal, a 4th grade student who entered a contest through American Girl Company that promoted standing up against bullying & standing up for yourself. She designed a beautiful poster that reads: *UNITE & pledge ~ Stop the bullying! Pass it on!* Samantha's poster was chosen as a first prize winner and she was recognized and presented a copy of her poster at the American Girl Company store in Minneapolis on May 1. With this award Samantha earned literature regarding this topic for her school, a classroom curriculum kit, a DVD promoting standing up for yourself, and \$250 to support an event at her school to promote this important theme. She was one of ten fourth grade students who took part in a performing troupe that presented on *Stop the Bullying* for their classmates at Cleveland Elementary School.
- 🌐 State Speech – two members to state Jordan Rasmusson. 4<sup>th</sup> place in Discussion and Ethan Valentine
- 🌐 Poetry Out Loud – Sarah Bowman 2<sup>nd</sup> place in region competition
- 🌐 Robyn Carlson, Digital Imagery “Best of Show” for “Fragrance” – Superior rating
- 🌐 Sam Busko, “4 for Art” “Best of Show” for “Dandelion” – Superior rating
- 🌐 Ashley Thorsen, “4 for Art” Honorable Mention for “Joe” – Top 15 of 300 pieces in show
- 🌐 Rebecca Wahl, “4 for Art” Honorable Mention for “Zebras” – Top 15 of 300 pieces in show
- 🌐 Ben Graf, “4 for Art” Honorable Mention for “Four Prints” – Top 15 of 300 pieces in show

**Staff:**

- 🌐 Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year – Patrick Ward
- 🌐 American Education Week Honorees:

- 🌐 #544 Teacher of the Year – Amy Beske
- 🌐 Paraprofessionals of the Year named – Sue Thorsen, Nancy Korby and Joan Helgeson
- 🌐 Honored Tom Kummrow for years of service
- 🌐 Class of 2009 Honors the Most Influential Educators:
- 🌐 Mark Boen, Vicki Hanaman, Larry Goos, Chuck Vigen, Richard Risburdt, Jane Schierer
- 🌐 Annual Dedicated to Jerome Holicky
- 🌐 Coach of the Year -- Girls Hockey-Brian Vatnsdal

## ☁ **Goal #2 -- Fiscally responsible practices will be used district-wide to improve the District's financial condition.**

**We are working to reach this goal by:**

- 🌐 **Providing all the District's financial information on the website**
- 🌐 Budget cut of \$1.8 million in 2007-08
- 🌐 Budget cut of \$2.36 million in 2008-09
- 🌐 Budget cut of \$826,184 in 2009-10
- 🌐 Budget cut reduced from \$1 m to \$826,000 for 2009-2010
- 🌐 Submitted an updated Statutory Operating Debt plan to the state
- 🌐 Paperless payroll
- 🌐 Positive audit, July 1, 2008 – (-\$1.4 million) to (-\$1.1 million)
- 🌐 Emphasized caution in spending to all staff
- 🌐 Instituting an energy saving program at the high school and starting a “Green Task Force”
- 🌐 Grants written and programs approved to offset reduction in staff:
- 🌐 Safe and Drug Free Schools
- 🌐 Federal class size reduction dollars = 2 teachers
- 🌐 Adjusted Diversity Grant dollars =
  - ☰ 0.5 FTE Coordinator
  - ☰ 2.0 FTEs for Diversity Positions including tutoring services
- 🌐 Alternative Delivery Services = \$238,000
  - ☰ Four (4.0) FTEs Reading and Math Teachers
- 🌐 Adjusted Title 1 dollars because of improved AYP status = \$57,000 to hire four paraprofessionals
- 🌐 Magnet School Grant – Prairie Science Class = \$94,000
- 🌐 Carl Perkins vocational
- 🌐 Americorp Promise Fellows (2)
- 🌐 Bill and Melinda Gates for reading
- 🌐 IQ Academy Minnesota has grown to 220 students currently registered
- 🌐 School of Choice partnership with home school parents

- 🌐 Lobbying through MREA, MSBA and MASA for state and federal funding.
- 🌐 Working with booster clubs to raise funds to avoid budget cuts in activities.
- 🌐 Held Truth in Taxation meeting to inform the community about the 2009 levy.
- 🌐 Sharing four staff members with Lakeland Mental Health
- 🌐 #544 has procedures to collect all fees for lunch, Kindergarten, activities...
- 🌐 MSHSL grant to reduce fees for the students who qualify for free and reduced lunch

### **Worner Report – Organizational Analysis Study**

The school district has completed all 10 of the recommendations listed in the Worner Report:

1. Create a task force to study the report – completed February 2007
2. Restructure the all grade levels to enhance cost efficiency – completed September 2007
3. Close Eisenhower Early Childhood Center – completed September 2008. The building is currently being used for 6<sup>th</sup> grade until June 2010.
4. Restructure the elementary schools into grade levels PK-K @ McKinley, Grade 1-2 @ Adams and grades 3-5 @ Cleveland
5. Expand participation in the Prairie Science Class – 4<sup>th</sup> grade was added September 2008
6. Conduct a bond referendum to address facility issues – passed a \$32.5 million bond issue on May 8, 2007
7. Renovate the MS or HS rather than build new – MS was the choice, began remodeling June 2008
8. School district divest itself from leased facilities for Community Education, ALC and District Office – will be completed Summer 2010
9. Reduce the student out-migration through open enrollment – with the addition of the iQ Academy online school #544's now has more open enrollment students into the district
10. The district updates its organizational strategic plan – completed November 2008



## Goal #3 -- Public Relations:

- Implement the “Otters A.R.E. Always Otters” Program to establish a positive atmosphere and a standard for expected behavior.
- The District will work with the community to improve our school system.

### We are working to reach this goal by:

- 🌐 District Newsletter
- 🌐 Radio Ads
- 🌐 PR Committee Meeting
- 🌐 Blandin Lunch for Staff – fall inservice
- 🌐 Blandin and Service Clubs as greeters for students
- 🌐 Otter Pride Night
- 🌐 Homecoming Parade – T. Kummrow, Grand Marshal
- 🌐 Homecoming Halftime Show
- 🌐 Building Tours
- 🌐 Cleveland Dedication
- 🌐 Blandin Lunch for Staff – end of year thank you
- 🌐 The District’s website contains numerous construction related documents, audits, board policies and meeting minutes.
- 🌐 Implemented weather alerts announcement system including text messaging capability
- 🌐 Why 544? Campaign featured on the website

### Otters Are Always Otters

- 🌐 Magnets
- 🌐 Open Houses
- 🌐 OAAO apparel
- 🌐 OAAO Leadership class
- 🌐 School Board recognizing students at regular meetings.
- 🌐 OAAO Mural on Downtown business’ wall

### Community Partnerships

- 🌐 Special Education Cooperative – share staff and programs with 8 area schools
- 🌐 PTO – Parent Teacher Organization – one group of all three elementary schools recognizes and supports students and teachers
- 🌐 School Resource Officer
- 🌐 544 Education Foundation
  - 📅 July 15-17, 2011 Next All-School Reunion
- 🌐 Dollars for Scholars
- 🌐 Booster Clubs
- 🌐 Many staff members are members of service clubs
- 🌐 Safe Routes to School Grant Partnership
- 🌐 FF Math and Science Academy
- 🌐 Prairie Wetlands Learning Center – U.S. Fish and Wildlife, City of FF and 544
- 🌐 Lakes Country Service Cooperative – purchasing of goods and services
- 🌐 Lakeland Mental Health sharing staff
- 🌐 Adopt a class

- 🌐 Veteran's Day program for students and community
- 🌐 Strategic Planning – Completed November (see attachment)
- 🌐 Head Start and Early Childhood program at McKinley School
- 🌐 M State FB team reading to students
- 🌐 Service clubs
- 🌐 Daily Journal – many positive articles and a column written by the superintendent on a weekly basis
- 🌐 Park Region Telephone/Ottertail Telcom of for all the work and equipment they let us use for broadcasting Band Send off/ Grand March/ and athletic games.
- 🌐 School of Choice partnership with home school parents
- 🌐 On Friday May 8th one hundred and seventy five 8th grade students from the Fergus Falls Middle School were treated to a ride of a lifetime through the Young Eagles program sponsored by the local chapter of the EAA, Fergus Falls area EAA 1174.
- 🌐 Career Fair held in November – Area business and colleges presented and had booths at the HS gym for our students to view.
- 🌐 China Trip – China Night @ M State – many positive comments, 400+ attended, presentations at Service Clubs and many classrooms
- 🌐 Working with the library on The Big Read featuring The Maltese Falcon
- 🌐 Working with church groups to host a work camp at Kennedy during Summer 2010.
- 🌐 During construction we are working with The Center for the Arts and Life Church on our large space needs for performances.
- 🌐 Webcasts of games with 544 Education Foundation support
- 🌐 YMCA – the school district uses the Y to provide PE services to Morning Son students
- 🌐 P-14 Committee – This committee meets monthly to discuss the education institutions and how to strengthen the educational offerings to our students.
- 🌐 Starting a “Green Task Force”
- 🌐 Football team with Veterans Home
- 🌐 Interact with Senior Citizen Council
- 🌐 Sandbagging @ Moorhead
- 🌐 Shared social worker with neighboring school in need
- 🌐 Library – Summer AR and Read Naturally
- 🌐 Involvement in the Fergus Falls Reads/THE BIG Read grant program that includes school staff coordinating with community agencies to provide financing for materials and implementation of activities for "Reading for All Ages"
- 🌐 Park and Recreation summer camp
- 🌐 Multi-District Diversity Collaboration
- 🌐 M State – P-14 Committee and many programs
- 🌐 M State Fergus Falls Nursing Students to do vision and hearing screenings per MDH recommendations.
- 🌐 Lake Region Hospital Respiratory Therapists to provide Asthma Assessments and Inhaler training to close to 100 students in K-12 in all of the Fergus Falls Schools (including Parochial)
- 🌐 OTC Public Health for employee Flu Shot clinics and pre-school screenings.
- 🌐 Fergus Falls Medical Group to provide immunization clinics.

## **Goal #4 -- Best practices and standards will drive all curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment. Including utilizing the following:**

- Brain-based research
- Technology integrated into the curriculum and professional tasks.
- The Framework for Teaching for professional growth and evaluations.
- Student data to design instruction to meet state and national standards.

### **We are working to reach this goal by:**

- 🌐 Fall Inservice Breakout Sessions –
- 🌐 Improving staff through continuing education training in
  - 📖 Response to Intervention – use of assessments
  - 📖 **Bridging Communications with Parents**
  - 📖 Smart Board
  - 📖 PowerSchool
  - 📖 Differentiated Instruction – using data to design instruction
  - 📖 iQ Academy – increased student offerings and enrollment
  - 📖 Technology – Critical Software, Programs and Procedures
  - 📖 6 year plan for advisory program

### **Otter University**

- 🌐 October 1 – Creating a culture for learning
- 🌐 November 5 – Review Strategic Planning Documents Excel Classes
- 🌐 January 7 -- Calendar and Mandate discussion
- 🌐 February 4 – Technology class taught by Jesse Thorstad
- 🌐 Department and Grade Level Meetings
- 🌐 District Curriculum Review Committee
- 🌐 Staff Development Committee
- 🌐 AYP Review Committee
- 🌐 School Board attended MSBA for learning and training opportunity.
- 🌐 Target Services – Writing a grant through our ALC to provide summer and after school services to students in need.
- 🌐 Differentiated Instruction in Grades 1 and 3
- 🌐 RtI – instructional interventions for students academically at risk
- 🌐 Regional Professional Development –
- 🌐 Instructional coaching
- 🌐 EveryDay Math users group
- 🌐 NWEA users group
- 🌐 Adm. Retreat with NWEA
- 🌐 Integration of EXPLORE, PLAN data in 6 yr. Plan
- 🌐 Technology Bootcamp training

- 🌐 Excel training
- 🌐 Cleveland Report Card Task Force
- 🌐 HS staff using Naviance software for 6 yr. Plan
- 🌐 LCSC – History Grant

The district has maintained challenging academic programs as evidenced by numerous post-secondary opportunities for students to develop their career paths. These include:

🌐 **Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) Courses at FFHS**

- 🌐 College Writing I
- 🌐 College Writing II
- 🌐 Intro To Lit: World Drama
- 🌐 College Algebra
- 🌐 **Functions/Trigonometry**

**Advanced Placement (AP) Courses and Exams at FFHS**

- 🌐 (AP) Calculus AB
- 🌐 (AP) US History
- 🌐 (AP) Physics B
- 🌐 (AP) Psychology
- 🌐 Additionally, exams were offered for:
- 🌐 AP Chemistry
- 🌐 AP World History
- 🌐 AP U.S. Government and Politics

**Articulated Courses For College Credit at FFHS**

- 🌐 Personal and Business Law
- 🌐 Accounting I
- 🌐 Computer Applications II
- 🌐 Multimedia
- 🌐 Web Design I
- 🌐 Child Development and Guidance
- 🌐 Auto Service Technology I
- 🌐 Auto Service Technology II
- 🌐 Auto Service Technology III
- 🌐 Digital Imagery II

Plans have been developed to offer additional new courses at the high school in the 2009-2010 school year for:

- 🌐 AP U.S. Government and Politics
- 🌐 Engineering Design under Project Lead the Way

SMART Boards utilized in instruction in FACS, Industrial Tech and Business classes.