

Superintendent Corner A Great Start to the School Year!

Wow, what a great start to the school year! The teachers were hard at work getting ready six days before the first day of school. They were working on a number of important initiatives including curriculum writing, school climate, RtI, literacy, technology training, and voyage planning. It was a huge positive to finally have a full staff to begin the year. A big thank you to Margaret Foss, Michael Gillespie, Miranda Szcepanski and Michelle Jordan for their leadership in a number of key areas.

Then, the first official day came with the arrival of our students. They came marching in with an incredible positive Bucks' attitude! As principal, it is a wonderful feeling to have the building filled with students. Our all-school assembly was a hit with doughnuts supplied by the hype squad and the student council. After a pleasant all-school get-together, students and staff had the time to share what they did this summer. It was a great bonding time with students and staff before being dismissed to start their classes. The Bucks' spirit was at an all-time high for a first day.

Having a great start is only part of the story. The rest of the story will unfold in the weeks and months ahead as our teachers work hard to provide the best education possible. Equally important is our students' need to engage in the learning process that is being provided.

One of the initiatives we are working on is to improving student attendance. In school, staff are working hard to make sure students are on time and ready to learn when the class begins. In addition, our teachers have done an excellent job of working with students when they are absent to make sure they get caught up. Making up missed work is one thing, but losing out on valuable instruction is another. Students who miss numerous days struggle to catch up even with the best support. We want to make sure that every student is able to attend the maximum number of days of school to get the most out of it, so if a child is missing too many days or falling behind, we will be reaching out to parents to let them know. Overall, parents have been very willing to work with the school on challenges, and we are optimistic this partnership will make a difference.

Another key initiative is working to improve our schools math scores. This has been a long standing challenge for our district for many years. Last year we took a number of important steps to addressing this challenge that included, additional training for staff, curriculum development, implementation of new instructional materials, and parent involvement nights. We are starting to see the beginning of our work making a real difference, but there is plenty of work ahead. This year we have split the 3rd and 4th grade math classes, and we are looking to do the same with the 7th and 8th grade, to ensure maximum instruction to specific grade levels. Teachers will have all math curriculum mapping done by Christmas. Dr. Becky Walker will be joining us sharing her expertise to improve math instruction and achievement. We have a fully certified 5-12 math teacher, and this year we are implementing RTI for math for the first time. We are very optimistic these concrete steps will make meaningful changes for math instruction and address a number of systemic shortcomings. We are hoping in October to have a community presentation of our current math test scores and clearly outline specific measures our school is taking to address this issue.

We have had a great start, and we are very hopeful this will be reflective of the upcoming school year. There is plenty of work that lies ahead to achieve a multitude of important goals. I look forward to working students, staff, parents and community members to extend this great start into a great year.

Go Bucks!
Mati Palm-Leis
Superintendent