



If there is hope in the future...

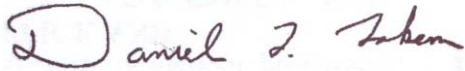
There is Power in the Present

Dear Staff and Stakeholders:

- ❖ Did you know that Byron Center Public Schools is home to more than 30 GRCC courses in the former Nickels Building (Admin) and BCHS. More than 650 students in total attend these classes. More than 200 attend on Monday and Tuesday nights, which is why the administration and surrounding lots are full on these evenings. Two of the courses are taught by our own teachers and GRCC adjunct instructors, Mike Merchant and Doug Adema. This is a growing partnership that brings extra opportunities to our students and community.
- ❖ The 1st Annual Sports Booster “Bulldog Bash” was a huge success! Staff from across the district met on the BCHS courts in January to claim bragging rights for the best basketball team. More than 1400 fans filled the stands to cheer on their favorite players from Jen “I have never played basketball in my life” Dussault, to Kathy “Too Tall” Jauw, to legendary court stars such as Justin Vandepol, Jared Crandell, Tara Merrihew, and Lindsey Fonesbeck. The Boosters brought in more than \$1,200 which was divided among the schools. Thanks to everyone who organized, participated, or attended the event. BCHS won the bragging rights...until next year!
- ❖ Bees, bees everywhere! Nickels Intermediate hosted a geography bee and a spelling bee recently to determine finalists who will go on to represent the school at the next level of competition. Congratulations to Clare Newhall (Champion) and Aleesha DeVries (Runner-up) for becoming the spelling bee finalists. More than 40 students qualified for and participated in the spelling bee this year. Congratulations, also, to Natalie Coaster (Champion) and Zach Bultsma (Runner-up) for becoming the geography bee finalists! More than 30 students qualified for and participated in the Nickels geography bee this year. We’re proud of all of our Nickels participants!
- ❖ First and second grade students at Countryside hosted a Coin Drive to help African children in an elementary school in the Mitumba Slum. Most parents in the Mitumba Slum are not able to pay a required fee for their children to attend school; however this school was recently started and has allowed 400 children to attend for free. Countryside students have raised \$612.26 toward purchasing books for this school! Teacher Melissa Austin will be traveling to Nairobi Kenya for family business. During her stay she will be visiting the Mitumba School and delivering books. Our thanks to everyone involved for helping children learn to read in another part of our world!
- ❖ The Watchdog Dad Program is in its second year at Brown. In addition to providing support to teachers and students, the program provides dads a snapshot of a day in their child’s life, making for more meaningful conversations at dinnertime. The Watchdogs’ enthusiasm for coming reminds us how fortunate we are to be working with kids. For example, this week, after working and playing with many different grades and students, one of the Watchdogs said, “Thanks for the opportunity to be here!”
- ❖ West Middle School has had some eventful academic successes! Students were busy sharpening their minds as they built atom models, dissected frogs (virtually and literally) and researched international connections by creating their Asia Travel Fair projects. Also, congratulations to 7th grader, Chelsea Fisk, who won the WMS Spelling Bee and for Jack Friesl (8th grader) for taking first place in the WMS Geography Bee. Both will move on to represent WMS at regionals.
- ❖ Did you know that Marshall is home base for the district’s childcare program? “Room to Bloom” has more than 200 children enrolled, ages infant through school age. One hundred students attend at the Marshall site, with another 100 students attending between Brown and Countryside Elementary Schools. This is a year round program with an awesome summer program full of extra-fun activities.

- ❖ Finally, I wanted to share a special moment from our January 18th Board meeting. We presented Lois "Grandma" Van Haitsma with an honorary diploma. Grandma Lois lives just north of BCHS on Burlingame. She will be turning 90 years old on February 4th. Mrs. Van Haitsma attended Corinth School with 48 students in grades 1-8 and no indoor restrooms. More than 25 family members attended to help honor their mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Below is a letter we received from the family after the presentation.

If there is hope in the future,
There is power in the present.



Dan Takens
Superintendent

DT:jb

1/18/10

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Dear Dan and School Board Members,

Words cannot begin to express the happiness that is ours as a result of the action you took to recognize the life and work of our mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother -"Grandma Lois"-this evening during your (January 18th) School Board Meeting. To say that the events of this evening far-and-away exceeded our wildest dreams would be but the half of it!!!! There is little doubt that the community is important to you as individuals and as a Board evidenced by your firm handshakes and understanding smiles and the fact that you so willingly extended both to "Grandma Lois" and our family will long be remembered.

Everyone knows that these are trying times for Public Education and the fact that you enthusiastically embraced this event, is certainly an indication that your priorities still lie in the hearts and lives of the people you represent despite tighter budgets and calls for tougher decisions. You did a wonderful thing tonight and our appreciation will be endless. We can only hope that in some measure you can grasp a sense of it.

We also want to extend our appreciation to Kathy Romeyn who so graciously kept in contact with us as she walked with us through the set up and planning of this event. She is gift!

Little did I know that so many of our own family members would be attendance! It is testimony to the love they have for my mom who considers everyone as a part of her family. Perhaps she summed it up best when she said, "Those people 'up front' were certain wonderful people and so important! I am humbled that they took the time from their busy schedule to give me this diploma and invite all those people to come. It must be a little of what heaven's going to be like."

God Bless you all!

In gratitude,



Dennis Van Haitsma

(And the entire Van Haitsma Family)