

*Peace in your mind, peace on earth, peace at work, peace at home, peace in
the world – John Lennon*

Dear Armatage Families,

Happy December! With less than two weeks until winter vacation it's a great time to reflect on all that we have accomplished this year and what lies ahead.

First and foremost, thank you to all of our amazing Armatage parents! Your involvement in and support of the school is amazing. There is not a moment in any given day that we don't have parents in the building working with kids, assisting teachers or making a presence to support our school. It has been said a million times, but bears repeating; we could not do what we do without you!

Armatage students are a special group of children! I am always in awe as I visit classrooms, see the kids in the hallways and watch them interacting with each other. What I find most inspiring is how they care for each other. In a world filled with much discourse, it is heartwarming to see the kids treat their counterparts with empathy, compassion and a sense of ownership as part of the greater good.

Our staff is something else! Truly the most dedicated, hardworking and passionate group of educators I could ever imagine working together in one place. What happens behind the scenes to ensure your child is receiving a quality education cannot accurately be articulated, but suffice it to say, Armatage staff members are working long before the sun rises and sets; it's just who they are!

Construction

In August, the construction project began moving forward with some momentum. Although most of what is taking place is not visible yet, decisions about the blue print, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air conditioning), design & flow of traffic through the lunchroom and the color schematic for the floors and walls are in place.

The blue prints are in my office for your perusal; feel free to stop in anytime.

Data Meetings

In *September*, Sarah Hassebroek, Instructional Specialist/Literacy Specialist; Sue Gonyea, Math Specialist; and Paul Scanlon, Assistant Principal and I met with every classroom teacher to look at the classroom profile and determine what resources could potentially be adjusted to support them. It gave us a great opportunity to talk with teachers one to one and get a comprehensive overview of every classroom and grade level.

School Improvement Plan

In *October*, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) was finalized. The SIP is a “road Map” that keeps us focused on our goals. A few weeks ago it was updated to ensure accuracy and focus of the goals.

Roughly 55% of Armatage’s English language students are close to proficient in reading, listening, and speaking English. We are working to ensure that these students’ language proficiency help them increase their skills in Reading and Math as measured by our standardized tests.

- In *Reading*, we are working to ensure that at least half of these students show high to moderate growth on the (Measures of Academic Progress) MAP and (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) MCA tests.

- Likewise, in *Math*, we are working to ensure that at least half of these students show high to moderate growth on the MAP and MCA.

All of our students learn and practice kindness and collaboration in the classroom. We are working to ensure the development of all students’ social emotional and academic learning. Our goals are :

- To increase school-wide engagement for all students, we make sure that all students learn how to be kind and respectful toward one another through Responsive Classroom practices. We are looking into our current practices to see how well students are learning and practicing these skills.

- When a student makes a mistake, we use Restorative Practices. This is a strategy to help students learn from their mistakes, mend their relationships, and effectively work together. We are looking into our current practices to see how well students are learning and practicing skills of empathy, understanding, and self-control.

Standards of Effective Instruction

In *November*, each teacher received an observation of their instruction by Sue, Sarah, Paul or me. The purpose of the SOEI (Standards of Effective Instruction) is to look at the teachers’ instruction and have a post conversation with them to discuss learning targets and the strategies they are using to ensure every child is meeting their full potential. The Focus areas are:

Domain 1 : Planning and Preparation

- Indicator A – Knowledge of Content
- Indicator B – Knowledge of Planning Practices
- Indicator C – use of Assessment in Planning

Domain 2 : Classroom environment

- Teacher Relationships with Students
- The Culture of Learning
- Classroom Procedures and Expectations

Domain 3: Classroom Instruction

- Communication
- Engaging Students in Learning
- Using Assessment

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

- Reflecting on teaching
- Professional Development
- Professionalism

Second Semester

When we return from winter break, our 3rd – 5th grade students will take the (Optional Local Purpose Assessment) OLPA tests. It provides a risk-free environment for students to familiarize themselves with online testing and provides teachers with information to target instruction before the mathematics test (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) MCA test used for accountability in the spring.

Each question answered by a student helps determine the next question that the student must answer. This testing method provides a more precise measure of students' skills and knowledge. Students are able to pause at any point in the test and resume the test later within the testing window.

Our (Positive School Wide Engagement) PSWE team will continue to meet and discuss strategies to ensure our school has a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

The staff will have their second round of team planning days funded through Qcomp. These days are to facilitate long term planning, assessing the students and ensuring as a team the curriculum is aligned.

Ten staff members will complete their Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) training in January. It is professional development model to assist teachers in helping students with language acquisition, academic achievement and cross-cultural skills.

Gifts to District Personnel (Policy 3001)

As the holidays approach, parents often express their appreciation to staff members through generous gifts. Last fall the district General Counsel's Office met with principal's to provided / or reinforce the gift giving policy. The Armatage staff has been made aware of this policy.

Policy 3001 Article IV – ***Gifts from students and parents or parent organizations***

C. Principals and Teachers should advise their classes and parents that gifts to school personnel are not expected, nor will they be accepted if offered, if they do not meet the expectations contained herein.

1. Teachers may accept gifts from the students or parents of the students in class in the year in which the students are enrolled of a de minimus value. If the class, or any part thereof, makes a joint gift to the teacher, the gift must not be of value more than five dollars (\$5.00) per student.

In advance, thank you for honoring the district policy.

Help

Earlier this fall, one of our Armatage families donated a beautiful 700 lb. brass statue for our prairie. Unfortunately, the cost to have it moved 1½ blocks by the district could exceed \$1500.00; money our school budget does not have to allocate. I considered putting it on a 2 wheeler and walking it to the school, but people much wiser than me (the engineers and my husband) quickly kyboshed that idea ☹. I am wondering if anyone has access to / or any ideas on we could get this statue transported to our school in the next two weeks. There are only 21 of these statues in the world (seriously) and I would hate to lose it. Please let me know if you have any thoughts about transporting the statue.



Winter vacation is quickly approaching. A reminder there will be

No School

Monday, December 19, 2016 – Monday, January 2nd

I wish you a wonderful holiday season filled with moments of laughter, love and fun. Time flies by quickly and the memories you make today will be the treasures you will hold onto tomorrow. Below are some ideas of things available to do with kids:

1. Go ice skating on one of 47 outdoors rinks (in Minneapolis)
2. Visit an indoor trampoline park
3. Go to a public library (they have event calendars that can be previewed before venturing out)
4. Simply Jane in South Minneapolis for the artist in your children/ren (Go to the Simply Jane Website)
5. Museums, Museums, Museums
6. Indoor water parks
7. Exploring different cultures at the Midtown Global Market

Sincerely,

Joan Franks, Principal

[Help](#)

[Statute](#)