

August 2012

Dear Colleagues:

I want to take this opportunity to greet you at the start of a new school year and offer a warm welcome to those of you who are joining Northfield Public Schools for the first time this fall. I hope you had a wonderful and relaxing summer, and that you are ready to return, refreshed and renewed.

While facing challenges in the 2011-12 school year, the Northfield Public Schools continued to succeed by:

- Providing accurate information to our community about our financial needs due to inadequate State funding and the positive impact that increasing our Operating Levy and extending our Capital Projects Levy could have on maintaining a quality education for all of our students. With the successful passage of both levies, the District faces the 2012-13 school year without the need to make additional cuts.
- Maintaining a positive fund balance that allowed us to sustain most current staff and programs despite limited State funding increases for three years, State initiated short term borrowing from schools, and significant increases in late State Aid payments to schools.
- Continuing to spend over 70% of our District expenditures on direct classroom instruction by enhancing administrative efficiencies and renegotiating insurance and equipment contracts.
- Continuing weekly PLCs for every teacher that provided the opportunity to work with colleagues to identify student needs and develop teaching strategies and flexible groupings that help more students to be successful.
- Implementing staff training and curriculum.
- Continuing Bridges to K, Where Everyone Belongs (WEB), Link Crew, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy to support communication and connections between incoming students and caring adults as they enter a new building.
- Improving student achievement as measured by increased performance on site improvement goals, MAP and MCA tests and other assessments.
- Upgrading technology and wiring to provide fast and reliable information access for students and staff.

Northfield Public Schools students continued to achieve at high levels. In 2011-12:

- On the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP tests), Northfield students scored above national averages.
- Middle School students outperformed national averages on every section of the EXPLORE Grade 8 Exam.
- High School students outperformed Minnesota on every section of the American College Test (ACT) and PLAN Test, leading the State that leads the nation in ACT and PLAN test results. We produced 3 National Merit semi finalists and 7 Commended students.
- More high school students took Advanced Placement (AP) tests than last year with 80% achieving scores of 3, 4, 5, earning them college credit for AP classes taken in High School.

The Northfield Public Schools, Greenvale Park and Bridgewater continued to be impacted by the NCLB sanctions imposed when one subgroup of only 20 or more students in a district or a Title I building do not make grade level proficiency. With the approval of NCLB waiver for Minnesota, the sanctions imposed on our district and schools have been lifted for 2012-13. We will continue to find ways to help all of our students to succeed without the arbitrary structure of NCLB.

- More on Reverse Side -

At the same time, your efforts have made undeniable progress in helping our students demonstrate proficiency on the MCAs:

- Outperformed the State in the percentage of students at/above grade level in Reading, Math and Science proficiency at every grade level tested.
- Reduced the number of District students performing below grade level in Math and Reading.
- Increased the number of LEP, FRP and SPED students at/above grade level Reading or Math proficiency.

While facing challenges in the 2012-13 year, we have wonderful opportunities to continue our District's success by:

- Managing our financial resources to maximize the time we can maintain our current staff and programs despite limited increases in State funding and an unprecedented State payment shift of 40% of our 2011-12 State Aid into the 2012-13 school year.
- Implementing the Response to Intervention (RtI) problem solving model with the support of RtI coaches in each building. Providing scientifically-based interventions to students who need more support to reach proficiency in the classroom.
- Implementing Phase I of the iPad 1:1 initiative that will give all staff members the skills and technology they need to successfully use that technology to truly enhance student instruction.
- Continuing Wednesday morning Professional Learning Community time that directly supports teacher collaboration in improving instruction for their students.
- Continuing to implement District and building plans to address the needs of subgroups that are not making adequate yearly progress on MCA-II tests.
- Completing building improvement projects and continuing to upgrade our technology infrastructure to enhance safety, usability accessibility and reliability.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind each employee that it is their responsibility to read and be familiar with the following policies that can be found on the School District's website. [www.nfld.k12.mn.us](http://www.nfld.k12.mn.us), click on "About the District" and then "School Board" and then "Policies":

- Policy 102 – Equal Educational and Employment Opportunity
- Policy 409 – Employee Publications, Instructional Materials, Inventions and Creations
- Policy 410 – Family and Medical Leave
- Policy 413 – Harassment and Violence
- Policy 414 – Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse
- Policy 415 – Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults
- Policy 418 – Drug-free Workplace/Drug-free School
- Policy 419 – Tobacco-free Environment
- Policy 441 – Use of Technology and Telecommunications Systems by Employees
- Policy 514 – Bully Prohibition
- Policy 522 – Student Sex Nondiscrimination
- Policy 526 – Hazing Prohibition

Despite a variety of challenges, Northfield Public Schools remains committed to excellence and ready to help every child be successful. The credit for our success belongs to you, and I thank each of you for the work you do each day for our students. As we face these new challenges, everyone's collective efforts will be needed to accomplish what lies ahead. The successes we have achieved and will continue to achieve in the future are a testimony to the power of teamwork.

Have a great year!

Respectfully,



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