

September 16, 2009

The purpose of this newsletter is to update you on events that are happening in the district, provide information to address issues or rumors and provide you a forum to communicate with me on items of interest. If you are receiving this e-mail you are either an East Valley Staff member, you have signed up for this service, you have sent me an e-mail or have had some form of contact that we think would cause you to want this information. If you do not want to continue to receive this information you may unsubscribe by clicking the link below or contacting the district office.

The school year has gotten off to a smooth if somewhat slow start. One of the challenges we always face at the beginning of the year is the challenge of balancing class loads, filling contingency teaching positions and coordinating the transfer of students between schools. It is the displacement of students that creates the most heartache.

We do not know for certain how many students at each grade level will show up in any given school. We make the best estimates possible but in the end, the mobile nature of our society reduces our best planning to a guessing game. This year we had a total of 80 fewer elementary school students show up than we had anticipated. We however had about 50 more middle school students show up. Most of our middle school students were concentrated in the seventh grade. Some of our non-traditional programs that helped us to build our capacity last year were significantly lower in enrollment than we had anticipated.

Each of these imbalances requires us to make adjustments to our teaching staff, to our grade configurations and to where our kids go to school. Most of the decisions we make are driven by a set of pretty inflexible rules. While it is sometimes difficult for the outside observer to understand, by adhering to a set of rules we ensure that we treat all employees in a fair and equitable fashion. These rules also help us to ensure that we examine each case of a student transfer in a consistent manner.

We expect to continue to grow this school year. In spite of the continuing challenges we are facing in these economic times we are expanding our program offerings to better serve the students and families of EastValley. We have expanded options for all day kindergarten. We have put in place a freshman honors program. We have reviewed our math curriculum and are evaluating how we assess and report student progress. We have adopted a new writing curriculum and are busy helping teachers to master the new curriculum. We have brought a fire science class to teach students to become firefighters to the district. We continue to have teachers engage in the program to gain their national board certification. We have implemented a program to support pregnant and parenting teens. We have changed our elementary music programs to offer more opportunity for students to participate in band and orchestra. We have radically changed our food service program and we are actively engaging our community to implement a farm to school program that will provide numerous opportunities for both students and patrons to engage in agricultural activities.

Each of these activities and many more have room for your participation. First I ask you to participate by voting in the upcoming school director elections. As a district we are strictly forbidden from sending out information on the candidates. There are however many ways voters can access candidate information. The best way is to probably contact the candidate(s) directly. In the coming months we will be forming a facilities advisory committee. If you would like to participate on this committee please send me a note so that we can send you information once the scope and selection process for the committee has been defined.

Finally, your most important contribution is to simply stay connected. Let me know what is going well and what needs to improve. Visit your neighborhood school and see how hard we are working to build community and provide life enhancing skills to all of our students.

As always you may contact me at the district office at 924-1830, at home 928-0519, via e-mail glenewinkelj@evsd.org or regular mail, 12325 East Grace, Spokane Valley, WA 99216.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve this district.
John