



Superintendent's Report

October 18, 2010

The Board met Thursday, October 14th. We are now entering the final week of the first quarter. It feels to me like the fall has just flown by. I attribute some of that to the exceptionally good weather we have had; it hardly feels like winter could be coming on when it's been sunny and 70 most days. But a few people I know who ran the M2M (Market To Market) relay run last year and again this fall pointed out that last year's event was held in a driving, blowing, sleet mix. There's no doubt this fall has been far preferable for outdoor activities. I also attribute that feeling of time flying by to working with a great team. I pull up in the parking lot every morning excited to come to work and face whatever challenges lie ahead, because I know I am surrounded by a pk-12 team that is well-equipped to deal with anything – you are so skilled and resourceful!

Slow down - & tell students to, as well

We had a one vehicle student accident last week just north of the intersection of 82nd & Olive Creek Roads. The student was not injured but the vehicle took a beating from getting ditched. The student was transported to Bryan LGH West as a precautionary measure to get checked out and then released. The young driver had cut across from 68th to 82nd after school as a shortcut around the long procession of cars leaving Norris and heading north on 68th. Did it ever occur to you to try that? Probably. You may have even used the 'gravel road shortcut around the detour' approach yourself a few times. Please don't sacrifice your safety or the welfare of others to save a few seconds!

I urge you to drive carefully and with caution and keep in mind that the detours do require a little additional time, especially during those peak volume times morning and afternoon.

Snow day procedures and notifications

LPS Superintendent Steve Joel has taken a bold stance that garnered some publicity in the *Journal Star* this weekend after declaring that school will not be called off until the mornings for snow days and decisions about school cancellations will be made based on current conditions, not forecasts.

Snow days are the bane of a superintendent's existence. No one wants to call school off and then have a mild weather day with very passable conditions because a forecast proved wildly inaccurate. Channel 8's Kevin Coskren just shrugs it off the next time he's on the air while the Sups who bit on his urgent warnings the night before look like fools! At the same time, however, one wants to avoid the situation of holding school when a severe winter storm is imminent and will create dangerous driving conditions which jeopardize the safety of students.

My approach toward snow days will remain the same as my predecessor's (Roy aka "Gramps" Baker – be sure to congratulate Roy when you see him on the birth of his granddaughter!). That approach is to take all relevant information into account, stay in touch with our Transportation Director, and make an informed decision on the basis of both the current conditions for drivers and the forecast. As you'll recall, there were several times last year wherein making a cancellation decision the night before was an obvious move with already-impassable roads and a winter storm warning.

Notification systems are in place for school cancellations and other emergency alerts. You will be able to receive school cancellation information via the following channels: Local radio and TV; the Norris home page; School Beacon (sign up for alerts using the home page if you have not already done so!); by following jskretta on Twitter; & Special Announcements / School Closing voice mail 791-0050.

Upcoming dates, events

Next month the Norris School Board will participate in the annual Nebraska Association of School Boards state School Board conference in Papillion. Masch and I will attend with the Board Wednesday the 17th through Friday the 19th.

Also coming next month, the Norris Foundation & Alumni banquet to be held Friday, November 19th at Yankee Hill Country Club in Lincoln. More information is forthcoming including speakers and ticket prices and availability.

Curriculum program presentation

Bambie Gushard, Paul Bade, Curt Carlson, and Becky O'Connor presented at the Norris Board meeting in September. They do a tremendous job in providing a vast range of guidance-related services and programming to our students by taking leadership in every area from career planning to anti-bullying curriculum to standardized testing to personal and social counseling. I thank the k-12 Guidance Offices for their great work and encourage you to check out their presentation and Mr. Carlson's Guidance Report (a veritable buffet of data for the numbers-hungry to devour) through the NASB public portal. Just go to <http://meeting.nasbonline.org/public/Agency.aspx?PublicAgencyID=4345&AgencyTypeID=1> and you can access Norris Board agendas, minutes, and posted meetings materials.

Ad hoc committees on the Cliff Effect

Everyone from Senator Adams (Legislative Education Committee chair) to Ed Commissioner Dr. Breed to our Governor has emphatically insisted that state aid is going to be cut. The question will not be whether, but how deep those cuts are. Norris will not be spared from these reductions.

I have formed several committees which will meet three to four times in coming months to gather input and share information about school finance. Brian and I will meet with these groups. The specific purpose of these committees is to allow us to gather diverse perspectives and for us to share information back with key stakeholders as we go forward. The internal groups will include Directors, Principals, and Norris Association elected officers (teachers). The external group includes a handful of

community members or parents and others with long ties to Norris, including Lenny Vermaas, Wes Shepard and Dale Harlan.

These ad hoc committees have no decision-making authority, but serve an important role in information-sharing about school finance. Decisions about the budget come down to Board approval of the Superintendent's recommendations. The groups will examine several state aid and school budget shortfall scenarios to help us prepare for decision-making when the legislature finishes wrangling over limited dollars and a reduced state aid package is actually certified.

Health & Wellness updates, PD

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to host the upcoming Nebraska Healthy Schools Forum Thursday the 21st. There will be over 100 School Wellness Council leaders (teachers, administrators, and food service directors among them) visiting our campus this Thursday for the all-day event hosted at Norris and sponsored by the Alliance For A Healthier Generation. Please welcome our guests and be



sure to check out the exhibitors' tables in HS main hallway over your lunch period and into the afternoon.

There will be regular Professional Development sessions for teachers throughout the morning of October 21st, including Google Apps support. A final schedule will be released by Tuesday at the latest. Professional development will run in the morning. Lunch will be provided for all staff. The afternoon is reserved for teacher work time.

Thanks for your relentless dedication to student learning and for helping each and every student in our district **THRIVE!**

Pics: We did the Mud Run at Soaring Wings Vineyard in September (except Sam, who was at a friend's B-day party). The Swamp Stomp is this Saturday at Chalco Hills, offering a brutal and beautiful 5 mile XC course. Angry Cow has a Halloween trail run (costumes encouraged) 10/29 in Panama – we're debating what to wear.